

**AUGUST 2007**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

“This examination shall assess the candidate’s ability to find and state the meaning of an assigned passage of Scripture, demonstrating working knowledge of the original language of the text and ability to understand its historical situation.

“The candidate shall have access to any or all of the following:

Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools, including those which presuppose knowledge of the biblical languages. Using these, he or she will be asked to state the meaning of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church.” [G-14.0310d(1)]

1. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Write your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12 point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **JULY 27, 2007.** The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed on **SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 2007.** The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2007 at 9:00 AM.** The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Song of Solomon 1 OR John 11:17-44**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **AUGUST 25, 2007.**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 a.m., August 30, 2007.**

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions.
2. You are not required to provide a translation of your own for the entire passage under examination. However, you will be expected to demonstrate **a working knowledge of Hebrew or Greek** for the satisfactory completion of this exam. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer, and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.

**AUGUST 2007**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

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*Specific Instructions continued:*

3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
  - the educational institution or congregation where the writer studies or worships
  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
  - references to having taken the exam previously.

**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

- A. The Language of the Text
  - text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use
- B. Literary Issues
  - the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre
- C. Principal Contents and Theology
  - principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage
- D. History of Composition and Interpretation
  - the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history, and
  - its subsequent interpretation by communities of faith

To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR AUGUST 2007**

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**Song of Solomon 1                      OR                      John 11:17-44**

**Song of Solomon 1**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Song of Solomon 1 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and contents of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Hebrew text of Song of Solomon 1:4, or supply the modern translation of this verse that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues.
2. Comment specifically on the differences in these three modern translations of Song of Solomon 1:7b. Discuss the pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Which translation do you think is most accurate and why?
  - A: for why should I be like one who is veiled beside the flocks of your companions? (New Revised Standard Version)
  - B: Let me not be as one who strays beside the flocks of your fellows. (Tanakh)
  - C: That I may no more wander like a vagabond beside the flocks of your companions. (New Jerusalem Bible)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Describe the poetic structure of Song of Solomon 1:9-17, paying particular attention to literary subunits and conventions of Hebrew poetry. What insights into the meaning of the text are gained from this poetic analysis?
2. Given the ambiguity of the Hebrew particle וְ, the third word of Song of Solomon 1:5 (וְנִיִּים) can mean either “and beautiful” or “but beautiful.” With reference to its context in the chapter, explain how you would translate the phrase אֲנִי וְנִיִּים הִיא שְׂהוֹרָה . What point is the female voice making, and how does this inform your understanding of the passage as a whole?
3. Some commentators have noted that interpretive approaches to the Song of Solomon begin with one of four literary assumptions about the text: that it is an allegory, an anthology of love poetry, an extended drama, or a cultic liturgy. Identify and discuss the approach that is most helpful in your interpretation of this passage.

### C. Principal Contents and Theology

1. Discuss the concept of physical beauty portrayed in Song of Solomon 1. How does that understanding compare with the understandings of physical beauty in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 and Proverbs 31:10-31?
2. What portrait of love does Song of Solomon 1 offer, and what does this suggest about our relationship with God and each other?

### D. History of Composition and Interpretation

1. Karl Barth (*Church Dogmatics* 3.1, p. 313) described the Song of Solomon as an extended commentary on Genesis 2:25: “And the man and wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.” Do you agree or disagree? Give specific examples from Song of Solomon 1 to support your position.
2. Song of Solomon was the subject of more medieval commentaries than any other biblical book. David Carr observes that the shift in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from allegorical to literal interpretation has led to a “functional decanonization” of the Song of Solomon (*Canonization and Decanonization*, eds. A. van der Kooj and K. van der Toorn, p. 185). As the sexual nature of the Song of Solomon has received more emphasis, the church preaches and teaches the book less frequently. Informed by your study of Song of Solomon 1, discuss how the church might reclaim the Song of Solomon for teaching and preaching in the church today.
3. Athalya Brenner claims that certain poems in the Song of Solomon “are so essentially feminine that a male could hardly imitate their tone and texture successfully” (*A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, ed. A. Brenner, p. 90-91). Do you agree or disagree? What about the Song of Solomon, and chapter 1 in particular, supports your position, and what difference does that make for your interpretation of this passage?

### Section II: Exegetical Focus

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

### Section III: Application

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson plan would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

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OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS

Page 5 of 6

**John 11:17-44**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study John 11:17-44 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and contents of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of John 11:24-26, or supply the modern translation of these verses that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the text critical issue regarding the inclusion or exclusion of  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\eta}\ \zeta\omega\acute{\eta}$  found in verse 25.
2. Translate the Greek text of John 11:38-39, or supply the modern translation of this verse that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify this translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the differences in the following translations:
  - A: Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. (New King James Version)
  - B: Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. (New International Version)
  - C: Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. (New Revised Standard Version)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Is John 11:17-44 a complete and coherent literary unit? What literary evidence supports your answer? What is the significance of the placement of this passage in the larger context of the gospel for interpretation of John 11:17-44?
2. Identify the key characters in this story. Discuss how John's narrative describes each of them, the function they play within the narrative, and the way these characters move the story to a dramatic ending.

**C. Principal Contents and Theology**

1. How does Jesus' expression of emotion in John 11:33-40 inform your understanding of the meaning of the passage?
2. How does your understanding of the use of  $\pi\lambda\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  in the Gospel of John inform your understanding of John 11:25-26?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. An issue in the modern interpretation of the Fourth Gospel is the relationship between "realized" and "future" eschatology. In light of this debate, discuss the statements about resurrection made by Jesus and Martha, respectively, in John 11:23-27. The 1993 *Book of Common Worship* suggests this passage for use within the Service of Witness to the Resurrection. Based on your discussion, make a case for or against using this passage in such a service.
2. In John 11:21-22, Martha greets Jesus with what seem to be words of disappointment and complaint. In conversation with Psalm 130, which is paired with this text in the lectionary, discuss how the tradition of lament psalms might inform your understanding of Martha's interaction with Jesus.

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**JANUARY 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

“This examination shall assess the candidate’s ability to find and state the meaning of an assigned passage of Scripture, demonstrating working knowledge of the original language of the text and ability to understand its historical situation.

“The candidate shall have access to any or all of the following:

Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools, including those which presuppose knowledge of the biblical languages. Using these, he or she will be asked to state the meaning of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church.” [G-14.0310d(1)]

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2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12 point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **DECEMBER 27, 2007**. The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed on **SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2008**. The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008, at 9:00 AM**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**2 Samuel 1:17-27 OR Revelation 13:1-10**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **JANUARY 26, 2008**.

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, JANUARY 31, 2008**.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions. Please double-space your answers to Sections I and II.
2. You are not required to provide a translation of your own for the entire passage under examination. However, you will be expected to demonstrate **a working knowledge of Hebrew or Greek** for the satisfactory completion of this exam. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer, and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.

**JANUARY 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

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*Specific Instructions continued:*

3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
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  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
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**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

- A. The Language of the Text
  - text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use
- B. Literary Issues
  - the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre
- C. Principal Contents and Theology
  - principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage
- D. History of Composition and Interpretation
  - the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history, and
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To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR JANUARY 2008**

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2 Samuel 1:17-27                      OR                      Revelation 13:1-10

**2 Samuel 1:17-27**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study 2 Samuel 1:17-27 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and contents of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 1:17-18, or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues, as well as the two text critical notes.
2. Translate the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 1:19-20, or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues.
3. Translate the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 1:21b:

כִּי שֵׁם נִגְעַל מִיָּגוֹן גְּבוּרִים מִיָּגוֹן שָׂאוּל בְּלִי מִשִּׁיחַ בַּשָּׁמֶן:

Justify your translation by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the similarities and differences between your translation and the translations cited below:

- A: the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. (King James Version)
- B: the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more. (New Revised Standard Version)
- C: the shield of Saul – no longer rubbed with oil. (New International Version)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. The narrator introduces this poem as a **קִינָה**. Describe and discuss this genre as it appears in the Old Testament. How does this inform your understanding of the assigned passage?

2. Describe and discuss the poetic structure of 2 Samuel 1:19-27. What insights about the passage are gained by this poetic analysis?
3. Describe how the character of David is developed in the books of Samuel. What in particular does 2 Samuel 1:17-27 contribute to this development? How does the broader view of David's character inform your understanding of David's actions and words in 2 Samuel 1:17-27?

### C. Principal Contents and Theology

1. What does this passage reveal about David as a leader during a time of communal grief? What insights do you gain about the pastoral, theological, and political dimensions of David's leadership?
2. As readers, we know that the "spirit of God departed from Saul" in 1 Samuel 16:14. How do you make sense of the tension between God's rejection of Saul and David's expression of profound grief?

### D. History of Composition and Interpretation

1. How might this passage provide a paradigm for the church during times of public grief? With specific reference to the passage, suggest and discuss key elements of such a role.
2. Many scholars argue that the Samuel narratives were compiled in their final form in the context of the exile. Discuss how this passage may have been significant for the exilic community?

### Section II: Exegetical Focus

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

### Section III: Application

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop an annotated sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson plan would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

JANUARY 2008

OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS

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**Revelation 13:1-10**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Revelation 13:1-10 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and contents of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of Revelation 13:7-8, or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the placement of the phrase

ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου in the following translations:

- A: All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (New King James Version)
  - B: and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered. (New Revised Standard Version)
2. Translate the Greek text of Revelation 13:9-10, or supply the modern translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the differences between the following translations:
    - A: Such is the faithful endurance of the holy ones. (New American Bible)
    - B: Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. (New Revised Standard Version)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Identify at least three of the various genres reflected in Revelation 13:1-10. Discuss how the genres inform your understanding of the passage.
2. The book of Revelation gets part of its structure from four sequences of seven: letters, seals, trumpets, and plagues. Within these sequences, where is Revelation 13:1-10 located and how does this analysis of the book's structure contribute to the interpretation of the assigned passage?

**C. Principal Contents and Theology**

1. Discuss the theological significance of the sea in the book of Revelation. How does this discussion further the understanding of the sea and the emergence of the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1-10?
2. Revelation 13:5 states that authority was given to the beast for a specified period of time. Who gives this authority to the beast and what are the theological implications of this action?
  - 2 Compare and contrast references to worship in Revelation 13:1-10 with those in Revelation 7:9-17. What conclusions would you draw from this comparison about the nature of authentic and false worship? How does this contribute to the interpretation of Revelation 13:1-10?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. Compare and contrast Revelation 13:1-10 with the vision in Daniel 7:1-9. What does this suggest about how the author of the book of Revelation uses the earlier tradition in his contemporary context?
2. The book of Revelation is read in widely different ways. Some see it as purely symbolic of the timeless struggle between good and evil. Some see it as an account of discrete historical events written in advance. There are many other approaches. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these two approaches to this book along with one other approach of your choice for interpreting the book of Revelation. Which of the three (3) approaches do you find most helpful for teachers and preachers in the contemporary church setting?

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be the principal meaning of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop an annotated sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**AUGUST 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools.

1. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Write your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12 point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **JULY 25, 2008.** The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed, on **SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 2008.** The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2008.** The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Zechariah OR Matthew**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **AUGUST 23, 2008.**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, AUGUST 28, 2008.**

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions.
2. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.
3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.

**AUGUST 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

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*Specific Instructions continued:*

4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
  - the educational institution or congregation where the writer studies or worships
  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
  - references to having taken the exam previously

**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

A. The Language of the Text

- text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use

B. Literary Issues

- the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre

C. Principal Contents and Theology

- principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage

D. History of Composition and Interpretation

- the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history, and its subsequent interpretation by communities of faith

To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used.

*Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR AUGUST 2008**

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**Zechariah 9:9-13            OR            Matthew 20:1-16**

**Zechariah 9:9-13**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Zechariah 9:9-13 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:9 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues in the verse. Explain the basis for the different

renderings of צַדִּיק וְנוֹעַ הוּא

-“triumphant and victorious is he” (New Revised Standard Version)

-“just and having salvation is he” (King James Version)

-“he is legitimate and victorious” (The NET Bible)

2. Translate the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:10 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues in the verse. Include in your discussion the following issues:

- a. Explain the NRSV translation, “He will cut off,” given that most other translations read, “I will cut off.”

- b. Explain why some English translations render the Hebrew phrase

וְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹם as “speak peace” while others translate it as “command peace.”

3. Translate the Hebrew text of Zechariah 9:12 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues in the verse. Which use of the construct form in

אֲסִירֵי הַתְּקוּוּהָ informs your interpretation of the verse and why?

**B. Literary Issues**

1. What literary roles do verses 9-13 play within the flow of Zechariah 9? Identify who addresses the people in verses 9-13 (e.g., the prophet, the king, God). Is there one speaker or more than one? If more than one, who is speaking in which specific verses? Support your identification(s) with citations from chapter 9.
2. Discuss the special significance of the verb שׁוּב in prophetic literature. What were its literal and figurative meanings. Which of those meanings is most likely being called upon in verse 12, and why do you conclude that? How does the choice between a literal and figurative meaning inform the interpretation of the passage?

**C. Principal Contents and Theology**

1. What is the effect of the covenant on God's action here in Zechariah 9:9-13? Support your answer from the specific language in verse 11. How does this inform your understanding of the passage?
2. In almost every phrase of verses 9-13 it is possible to discern echoes of other prophetic passages, the psalms, or the sacred narrative traditions of ancient Israel. What are the theological implications of understanding the nature of prophecy given the connections between the language of verses 9-13 and the language of these earlier traditions? What might this understanding of prophecy's relation with other earlier traditions suggest for later readers who encounter Zechariah's oracles as canonical scripture?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. Discuss the identity and historical context of the prophet responsible for the "oracle" (נְשִׁיבָה) of which Zechariah 9:9-13 is a part. What are the implications of this historical context for understanding the prophet's conception of the identity and scope of the reign of the coming king in 9:10?
2. Discuss the appropriation of Zechariah 9:9 on Matthew 21:1-11. How does this evangelist see Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a "fulfillment" of this portion of the prophetic "oracle" in Zechariah 9-11? Could this be a case of an historical event interpreted in light of a prophetic tradition or a story created out of a prophetic text? What difference would that make to the modern church's understanding of Zechariah?

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**AUGUST 2008**

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**Page 5 of 6**

**Matthew 20:1-16**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Matthew 20:1-16 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of Matthew 20:2-4 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical, syntactical, and/or translation issues.
2. Translate the Greek text of Matthew 20:14-15 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical, syntactical, and/or translation issues, including the text critical note at the beginning of verse 15.

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Describe and discuss the structure of the assigned passage. What clues, if any, does the structure provide for understanding the message of the text?
2. Some commentators see a connection between Matthew 19:27-30 and 20:1-16. Would you agree? If so, explain why, and how you understand the relationship between Matthew 20:1-16 and what precedes it (Matthew 19:27-30). If not, explain why not, and explain what relationship you find between Matthew 20:1-16 and its immediate literary context.

**C. Principal Contents and Theology**

1. Matthew 20:1-16 ends with the comment “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (v. 16). Discuss the thematic relationship between this comment and the parable in vv. 1-15.
2. Identify and discuss any clues in the passage that would suggest a connection between the landowner’s actions toward the workers and God’s actions toward us. Note significant connections with language or themes elsewhere in Matthew or the rest of the Bible. What picture of God emerges from this parable?

3. David E. Garland (*Reading Matthew*, p. 206) writes about Matthew 20:1-16:

“Matthew is a Gospel that emphasizes the doing of righteousness; but this parable shows that Matthew also understands the scandalous nature of God’s grace.”

Describe and discuss the interplay between righteousness and grace in this parable, and what the parable contributes to these themes in Matthew’s Gospel as a whole.

#### **D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. Describe briefly the socio-historical setting in which you think Matthew’s Gospel was written. Discuss how Matthew 20:1-16 might have addressed the situation of the church in that context.
2. Identify and briefly discuss three ways in the history of interpretation that this parable has been applied to the life of individual Christians or the Christian community. Based on your study of the passage, which of these approaches do you find most faithful to the parable, and why?

#### **Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

#### **Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**JANUARY 2009**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools.

1. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Write your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12 point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **DECEMBER 23, 2008**. The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed, on **SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 2009**. The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2009**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Genesis OR Ephesians**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **JANUARY 24, 2009**.

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, JANUARY 29, 2009**.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions.
2. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.
3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.

**JANUARY 2009**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

**Page 2 of 6**

*Specific Instructions continued:*

4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
  - the educational institution or congregation where the writer studies or worships
  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
  - references to having taken the exam previously.

**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

A. The Language of the Text

- text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use

B. Literary Issues

- the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre

C. Principal Contents and Theology

- principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage

D. History of Composition and Interpretation

- the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history, and its subsequent interpretation by communities of faith

To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used.

*Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR JANUARY 2009**

**Page 3 of 6**

**Genesis 16:1-16**

**OR**

**Ephesians 4:17-32**

**Genesis 16:1-16**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Genesis 16:1-16 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Hebrew text of Genesis 16:1-2 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues.
2. Translate the Hebrew text of Genesis 16:13 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Include in your discussion the basis for the difference between the following two translations of 13b:

“by which she meant, ‘Have I not gone on seeing after He saw me!’” (Tanakh)

“for she said, ‘Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?’”  
(New Revised Standard Version)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Describe the structure of Genesis 16, focusing on the characters and their interactions. How does this help you understand the passage?
2. What is the significance of chapter 16 in the wider narrative context of Genesis? What is the relationship between this chapter and chapters 15 and 17? What are the implications of this wider context for the promise made to Hagar in verse 10?

**C. Principal Content and Theology**

1. What does the text reveal about God’s plans and promises and God’s response to human activities?

2. What is the function of the messenger of God in Genesis? How does this help you understand the messenger in this passage?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. In Galatians 4 Paul offers an allegorical reading of Genesis 16 in which he identifies Hagar and Sarai as symbolically representing two covenants. Discuss how two other interpreters identify Sarai and Hagar in their interpretation of Genesis 16. Which of these three interpretations of their identities most influences your understanding of the passage, and why?
2. In *Texts of Terror*, Phyllis Tribble has written,

[Hagar] experiences exodus without liberation, revelation without salvation, wilderness without covenant, wanderings without land, promise without fulfillment, and unmerited exile without return. ...All we who are heirs of Sarah and Abraham, by flesh and spirit, must answer for the terror in Hagar's story. To neglect the theological challenge she presents is to falsify faith. (p. 28).

Respond to Tribble. How does your engagement with Tribble affect your understanding of Genesis 16?

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

JANUARY 2009

OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS

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**Ephesians 4:17-32**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Ephesians 4:17-32 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and contents of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of Ephesians 4:25-27, or supply the modern translation of these verses that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the difference between the following translations:

“So then putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors” (New Revised Standard Version)

“Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor.” (New International Version)

2. Translate the Greek text of Ephesians 4:31-32, or supply the modern translation of these verses that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the difference between the following translations.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (New American Standard Bible)

“Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander” (New Revised Standard Version)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Is Ephesians 4:17-32 a complete and coherent literary unit? What evidence supports your answer? How does this passage function within the letter as a whole and how does this help you in your interpretation of the passage?

2. What is the rhetorical shape of the passage? How does the rhetorical shape inform your understanding of the passage?

### C. Principal Content and Theology

1. Identify and discuss the images in Ephesians 4:17-32 that are important to baptismal theology. How do the meanings of these baptismal images inform your understanding of the passage as a whole?
2. Though there is a debate about whether Paul wrote Ephesians, it is clear that the book is influenced by Pauline theology. Discuss the use of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$  in Pauline literature. What do you think the passage means when it talks about  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$ ? What is the relation between  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\zeta$  and one's conduct?

### D. History of Composition

1. Many interpreters acknowledge close connections between the language and themes of Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. Discuss the similarities and differences between these two chapters, noting how a comparison of the two brings the distinctive perspective of Ephesians 4 into clearer view.
2. Commentator Ralph Martin (*Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon*, Interpretation Commentaries, p. 56) argues that this passage is not so much about vices and virtues as it is about two ways of life: "what the New Testament gives is not directions but direction." Respond to Martin's assertion based on your study of Ephesians 4:17-32.

### Section II: Exegetical Focus

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

### Section III: Application

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**AUGUST 2009**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools.

1. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Write your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12 point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **JULY 31, 2009.** The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed, on **SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2009.** The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2009, at 9:00 a.m.** The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Psalms 100**

**OR**

**2 Peter 3:8-15a**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **AUGUST 29, 2009.**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 a.m., SEPTEMBER 3, 2009.**

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions.
2. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.
3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.

AUGUST 2009

## EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

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### SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS (continued)

4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
  - the educational institution or congregation where the writer studies or worships
  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
  - references to having taken the exam previously.

### REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any six (6) of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

- A. The Language of the Text
  - text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use
- B. Literary Issues
  - the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre
- C. Principal Contents and Theology
  - principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage
- D. History of Composition and Interpretation
  - the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history and its subsequent interpretation by communities of faith

To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

#### **Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

#### **Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

AUGUST 2009

OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR AUGUST 2009

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Psalm 100

OR

2 Peter 3:8-15a

**Psalm 100**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Psalm 100 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Discuss the differences (identified by underline) in the following English translations of Psalm 100:3. Explain how each translation choice is, or is not, based on the Hebrew text, discussing pertinent Hebrew grammar, syntax, translation nuances, and/or variant readings. Based on that discussion, and consistent with any conclusions you may have drawn, translate the Hebrew text of Psalm 100:3, or supply the modern translation of this verse that you think is most accurate and intelligible.

“Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

“Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” (*New American Standard Version*)

“Be sure that Yahweh is God, he made us, we belong to him, his people, the flock of his sheepfold.” (*New Jerusalem Bible*)

“Acknowledge that the LORD is God; He made us, and we are His, His people, the flock He tends.” (*Tanakh*)

2. Discuss the differences (identified by underline) in the following English translations of Psalm 100:5. Explain how each translation choice is, or is not, based on the Hebrew text, discussing pertinent Hebrew grammar, syntax, and/or translation nuances. Based on that discussion, and consistent with any conclusions you may have drawn, translate the Hebrew text of Psalm 100:5, or supply the modern translation of this verse that you think is most accurate and intelligible.

“For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

“good indeed is the LORD, Whose love endures forever, whose faithfulness lasts through every age.” (*New American Bible*)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. The genre or form of Psalm 100 is a “hymn” (or “hymn of praise”). Describe and discuss the structure of Psalm 100 in relation to the typical elements and structure of the “hymn” form. In particular, explain how the imperative verbs and the **וְ** clause in verse 5 function in terms of this genre or form.
2. Some scholars have made a connection between Psalm 100 and the so-called “Enthronement Psalms” (Psalms 93, 95-99). Discuss what these “Enthronement Psalms” have in common, and what relationship you perceive between these psalms and Psalm 100. What insights are gained from this comparison for the interpretation of Psalm 100?
3. Discuss how knowledge of Hebrew poetic parallel structures helps one to understand the relationship between the three clauses in verse 5.

**C. Principal Content and Theology**

1. Discuss the theological affirmations that Psalm 100 makes about God, the people of God, and “all the earth.”
2. Psalm 100:3 uses the metaphor of “sheep” to describe the people of God, implying that God is their shepherd. Discuss one example each from the Old and the New Testament where “shepherd” is used as an image/metaphor for God. What is the significance of understanding God as “shepherd” for the interpretation of Psalm 100?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. What clues do you find in Psalm 100 that point to how it might have been used in Israel’s worship? Describe and discuss what picture of Psalm 100’s liturgical use might be constructed from these clues.

2. Psalm 100 has enjoyed a long history of paraphrase in the hymnody of the Christian church. The following hymn is based on Psalm 100. Describe and discuss how it interprets the psalm. Does it follow a particular translation option? Does it go beyond the psalm itself in its theological emphases? Based on this discussion, would you conclude that the hymn faithfully reflects the psalm itself, and why?

“All People That on Earth Do Dwell” (Ascribed to William Kethe, 1561; alt.)

- 1) All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,  
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell, Come ye before Him and rejoice.
- 2) Know that the Lord is God indeed; Without our aid He did us make;  
We are His folk, He doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take.
- 3) O enter then His gates with praise, Approach with joy His courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless His name always, For it is seemly so to do.
- 4) For why? the Lord our God is good, His mercy is forever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood, And shall from age to age endure.

### **Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

### **Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

AUGUST 2009

OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS

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**2 Peter 3:8-15a**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study 2 Peter 3:8-15a using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen **at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D)**. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of 2 Peter 3:10 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation by discussing pertinent Greek grammar, syntax, translation nuances, and/or variant readings. Explain the basis for the different translations of the segment below in the cited versions:

“everything that is done on it will be disclosed” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

“its works will be burned up” (*New American Standard Bible*)

Why do you prefer one of these translations over the other, or why have you chosen another translation? What difference does the translation of this segment of the verse make to your understanding of the passage?

2. Translate the Greek text of 2 Peter 3:11 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation by discussing pertinent Greek grammar, syntax, translation nuances, and/or variant readings. The verb  $\lambda\upsilon\omicron\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\nu$  is conjugated/inflected using the future form. To what time period (past, present, or future) does the verb refer within this context? What nuance is conveyed by the choice of this tense form to refer to actions in that particular time period?

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Discuss the simile in verse 10 that describes the coming of the “day of the Lord” as being “like a thief.” What are some points of comparison between that “day” and a “thief,” and what are some aspects of contrast? Who specifically is the “Lord” whose “day” is coming according to this verse, and on what do you base your identification?
2. According to the standard Greek lexicons, the noun  $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\acute{\epsilon}\iota\alpha$  that appears in verse 10 can refer to three different things. What are these three uses of that Greek noun? Based on an analysis of the other vocabulary in this passage, which of these three uses do you think is most probable here?

### C. Principal Content and Theology

1. In verses 11-12, the author directs the readers to lead “lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” Discuss the author’s suggestion that the manner of Christians’ lives affects the timing of “the day of God.”
2. At several points in this passage there are references to the destruction of the current created order and the coming of “new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home” (see verse 13). Discuss the implications of this passage’s anticipation of a coming “new earth” for considering Christians’ responsibilities as stewards of the current earth.
3. Discuss the tension in this passage between divine wrath and judgment implicit in the fiery destruction of this world, on the one hand, and divine grace and redemption expressed in God’s patience in providing opportunity for salvation, on the other. How does this passage contribute to your understanding of the relationship between God’s justice and mercy?

### D. History of Composition

1. By the end of the first century, the “delay of the Parousia” had become a critical issue in many Christian communities. What two reasons are suggested within this passage for why Jesus had not yet returned to bring the current age to a close? How do you think modern Christians should regard those reasons now that the “delay” has lasted not just a century but two millennia?
2. Many modern commentators have suggested that both 2 Peter and Jude are dependent upon an earlier Jewish apocalyptic text. What specific features of 2 Peter 3:8-15a might be used to argue in favor of that proposal? What features might be used to argue against it? Would direct literary dependence on a non-canonical Jewish source change the way this passage is understood and applied by the modern church? Why or why not?

### Section II: Exegetical Focus

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

### Section III: Application

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**JANUARY 2010**

## **EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

### **GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools.

1. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Write your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
2. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers may be used to produce this examination. If so, double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12-point font throughout. When finished staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book. Examinations may also be handwritten in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be graded.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of illegibility or poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** Candidates are expected to do their own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
5. **IMPORTANT DATES.** The books from which the passages are drawn will be announced on **DECEMBER 22, 2009**. The specific passages will be announced, and the exam questions distributed, on **SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2010**. The completed examination is due on **THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2010, at 9:00 a.m.** The time of submission will be strictly observed.

### **ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**1 Kings 17:17–24**

**OR**

**Mark 8:27–9:1**

Your proctor will inform you of the specific passages on **JANUARY 23, 2010**.

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 a.m., JANUARY 28, 2010**.

### **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. To assist the readers of your examination in understanding your intentions, number or letter your answers in a manner consistent with the examination questions.
2. In choosing which questions on the examination to answer and in formulating your answers to any and all questions, remember that your readers will be looking for your demonstration of facility with the original language of the text.
3. You are expected to provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.

EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Page 2 of 6

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain the anonymity of the writer so as to insure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - the name of the person writing the exam
  - the educational institution or congregation where the writer studies or worships
  - the names of professors with whom the writer has studied, except as they may appropriately appear in citations or bibliography
  - references to having taken the exam previously.

**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. Specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

After studying the passage, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions. At least one question from each category (A, B, C, and D) must be answered for the examination to pass.

- A. The Language of the Text
  - text-critical issues, translation, grammar, syntax, and word use
- B. Literary Issues
  - the passage's boundaries, structure and composition, literary context, and genre
- C. Principal Contents and Theology
  - principal motifs, themes, and ideas developed in the passage
- D. History of Composition and Interpretation
  - the passage's historical/sociological setting, redaction history and its subsequent interpretation by communities of faith

To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by letter and number. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your understanding of the principal meaning of the passage as indicated in your exegetical focus statement, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Page 3 of 6

1 Kings 17:17–24

OR

Mark 8:27–9:1

**1 Kings 17:17–24**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study 1 Kings 17:17–24 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any **six (6)** of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Hebrew text of 1 Kings 17:18 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the similarities and differences between your translation and the translations cited below.

“So she said to Elijah, ‘Why have you done this to me, O man of God? Have you come to me to call attention to my guilt and to kill my son?’” (*New American Bible*)

“She then said to Elijah, ‘What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!’” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

2. Translate the Hebrew text of 1 Kings 17:21–22 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment on the fact that the LXX reads ἐνεφύσησεν where the Masoretic Text has **וַיִּתְמַרְדֵּר**.

3. Translate the Hebrew text of 1 Kings 17:24 or supply the modern translation that you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent grammatical and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the similarities and differences between your translation and the translations cited below.

“Now I know that you are a prophet and that the LORD really does speak through you.” (*NET Bible*)

“Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

“Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD is truly in your mouth.” (*Tanakh*)

**B. Literary Issues**

1. 1 Kings 17:17–24 stands between Elijah’s pronouncement of the drought as a judgment and the ending of the drought following the contest on Mount Carmel. How does the plot development within this passage relate to the unfolding of the plot in that broader literary context? How does the wider context of 1 Kings 17–18 inform the interpretation of 1 Kings 17:24?
2. Does the characterization of the woman change between her first statement to Elijah and her last? Support your answer by details of the text and knowledge of the conventions of Hebrew narrative.

**C. Principal Content and Theology**

1. Discuss the uses of the verb **דָּבַר** and the noun **דִּבְרָה** in 1 Kings 17 as a whole and the theological implications of the occurrence in 1 Kings 17:24.
2. Describe and discuss the theology contained in the widow’s statement to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:18 and in Elijah’s question to God in 1 Kings 17:20. Articulate a response to this theology from a Reformed theological perspective.

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. Luke 7:11–17 tells the story of Jesus and a widow whose son has died. In that story the crowd comes to the conclusion that Jesus is a prophet. How does 1 Kings 17:17–24 help one to understand the role of a prophet?
2. Malachi 4:5 states that God will send “the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes” (*New Revised Standard Version*). This expectation is present in the synoptic gospels (e.g., Matthew 11:13–14; Mark 9:11–13; Luke 1:17). What details in 1 Kings 17:17–24 contribute to this understanding of Elijah’s role as the herald of the arrival of the messianic age?

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**Mark 8:27–9:1**

**Section I: Exegetical Study and Responses to Exegetical Questions**

Study Mark 8:27–9:1 using appropriate resources (which you should list in your bibliography). Give careful attention to the form and content of the assigned text and to its literary and historical settings. On the basis of your study, answer any six (6) of the following questions, being sure that you have chosen at least one question from each of the four categories (A, B, C, and D). *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**A. The Language of the Text**

1. Translate the Greek text of Mark 8:31 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify your translation by discussing grammar and syntax in the verse. In light of the Greek text, comment specifically on the differences between the following translations.

“suffer many things” (*New International Version*)

“undergo great suffering” (*New Revised Standard Version*)

2. Translate the Greek text of Mark 8:33 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify your translation by discussing grammar and syntax in the verse. Specifically discuss the verb ἐπιτιμάω as it appears in verse 33 and compare its use here with the other two times it appears in the assigned passage.
3. Translate the Greek text of Mark 8:34 or supply the modern English translation you think is most accurate and intelligible. Justify your translation by discussing grammar and syntax in the passage. Comment specifically on the two imperatives.

**B. Literary Issues**

1. Briefly describe the structure of the Gospel of Mark. What is the significance of the placement of this passage in the larger context of the gospel for interpretation of Mark 8:27–9:1?
2. In verse 30 Jesus mandates secrecy; in verse 32 he speaks openly. Discuss the seeming contradiction in these two verses. What is to be kept secret, and what does Jesus discuss openly? How do these two actions contribute to your understanding of the passage?

**C. Principal Content and Theology**

1. Compare and contrast the use of the phrase “Son of Man” in Mark 2:10 with its use in 8:38. How does the use of “Son of Man” in that earlier verse inform your understanding of what Jesus is saying in the assigned passage?
2. Jesus first issues a call to discipleship in Mark 1:17. What has been added to that call in 8:27–9:1? How do these calls contribute to what it means to follow Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark?

**D. History of Composition and Interpretation**

1. Briefly discuss the concept of the “messianic secret” as a feature of Mark’s gospel. What does this concept contribute to your understanding of Mark 8:27–9:1?
2. In Mark 9:1, Jesus tells the disciples, “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power” (New Revised Standard Version). Discuss at least two interpretations of the relationship between the disciples’ deaths and the coming of the kingdom of God with power. Which contributes more to your own interpretation of this passage and why?

**Section II: Exegetical Focus**

On the basis of your exegetical work, state what you consider to be a faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 100 words.*

**Section III: Application**

On the basis of your exegetical focus statement in Section II, develop a sermon outline or lesson plan for this passage. Include a brief description of the context in which this sermon or lesson would be used. *Limit your outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**AUGUST 2010**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description approved by 2008 General Assembly.)

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Amos 5:16-20**

**OR**

**Luke 1:46-55**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, SEPTEMBER 2, 2010**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. You must do your own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.
2. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
3. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
4. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
5. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
6. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.

**AUGUST 2010**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

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**REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a “Satisfactory” examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas.

1. *Language of the Text:* word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community.
2. *Historical Situation:* the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God’s people has come.
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context:* the passage’s relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church.

A total of **four** responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

AUGUST 2010

EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS

Page 3 of 7

**FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

You may write your answers in ink in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use a pencil to write your responses; **papers written in pencil will be returned without being evaluated.** If you handwrite your examination, do not skip lines in the examination book. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). **Illegible papers shall be returned without being evaluated.**

You are encouraged to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You must confirm with the proctor in advance of the testing date what equipment (power strips, computers, printers, etc.) is available at the testing site.

If you use a computer:

- A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the test site. Not turning in a printed copy will result in failure. You are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment and software are properly working and coordinated.
- Number the pages.
- Include your candidate number on each page of the exam, **but not your name.**
- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

**Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found as unsatisfactory:**

- **Do not include your name**
- **Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery**
- **Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended**
- **Do not identify professors with whom you have studied**
- **Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before**

OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR AUGUST 2010

Page 4 of 7

Amos 5:16-20

OR

Luke 1:46-55

**Amos 5:16-20**

**Ministry Context:**

You are leading a midweek adult Bible study on Amos, and at the same time preaching through the book of Amos. This coming week, the focus of your teaching and preaching is Amos 5:16-20. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your outline for this sermon.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Amos 5:16-20, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each response to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text***

**First Required Response**

In comparing translations of Amos 5:18, you notice a difference in the following three translations:

Why do you want the day of the LORD? (*New Revised Standard Version*)

What will this day of the LORD mean for you? (*New American Bible*)

For what good is the day of the LORD to you? (*New King James Version*)

Explain the basis for these different translations of לַמָּוֶת-יְהוָה לָכֶם. How would you translate this phrase and why?

**Second Required Response**

As you were identifying segments for your series on Amos, you asked yourself if 5:16-20 forms a coherent unit of text. Explain how 5:16-20 does or does not form a coherent unit. Support your conclusion by discussing pertinent Hebrew grammar, syntax, and/or vocabulary in this passage, and its placement within Amos.

**2. *Historical Situation***

**Third Required Response**

What is the historical context of Amos's prophetic ministry? What aspects of Amos's message and of Israel's situation might have led to conversation about "the day of the LORD" (יְהוָה יום)? What insights do you gain from this context for the interpretation of Amos 5:16-20?

**3. Scriptural and Theological Context**

**Fourth Required Response – CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.** In Amos 5:17 God declares to the people of Israel, “I will pass through the midst of you” (NRSV). The same Hebrew construction, **ב** followed by **עבר**, occurs in Exodus 12:12. How does the Exodus tradition relate to Amos’s prophetic message? How does that tradition inform your understanding of what God plans to do in Amos 5:16-20?

**OR**

**B.** Your study drew your attention to the language of mourning and wailing in Amos 5:16-17. Identify and discuss similar imagery elsewhere in the book of Amos. What is the function of this imagery for Amos’s prophetic message? What is the significance of this imagery in Amos 5:16-17?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION IN BIBLE EXEGESIS  
PASSAGES FOR AUGUST 2010**

**Page 6 of 7**

**Luke 1:46-55**

**Ministry Context:**

You are preparing a sermon for the fourth Sunday of Advent. The community you minister in was once a thriving town, but lately the economy has been difficult. The session has been discussing how your congregation might respond to the increasing needs of the poor. What message will you deliver this Sunday in light of the session discussion and your community's changing needs? This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your outline for this sermon.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Luke 1:46-55, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text***

**First Required Response**

In your study of the text you note that all of the verbs in verses 51-53 are in the same tense. How does the author's choice of this tense influence your interpretation of the passage? What might the tense of these verbs say about God?

**Second Required Response**

Within the literary structure of the first two chapters of Luke there are four songs: the Song of Mary (1:46-55), the Song of Zechariah (1:68-79), the Song of the Angels (2:14) and the Song of Simeon (2:29-32). How do these songs relate to one another in terms of their literary aspects and function(s)? How does your understanding of that relationship influence your interpretation of the Song of Mary?

**2. *Historical Situation***

**Third Required Response**

Luke 1:46-55 proclaims a vision of social reversal. Discuss what you know from your study about the early Christian community for whom this Gospel was written. Informed by your study do you think the readers would have identified with Mary as one who is exalted or with the rich whose positions of privilege are being threatened? How would that identification have affected the ways they would have understood this song? How do modern tendencies to identify with the rich or the poor affect the way the song is understood today?

**3. Scriptural and Theological Context**

**Fourth Required Response – CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.** One of the basic issues in New Testament theology is the tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” between what God has already done in the world and what has not yet been realized in the fullness of God’s reign. In light of that tension, is this passage a song of praise to God for help granted or a prophecy of salvific hope for the future? Discuss and support your answer with reference to other passages in the Gospel of Luke.

**OR**

**B.** The Gospel of Luke is known to use Old Testament models. Compare and contrast the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 with the Song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55. How does this affect your understanding of Mary’s song?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

1. ***Focus Statement:*** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. ***Supporting the Interpretation:*** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**JANUARY 2011  
EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

Dear *Candidate*:

There is a contradiction in the instructions for the Exegesis examination on the Deuteronomy passage: While the opening “Ministry Context” states that the examination response should present a “Bible Study,” the instructions for “Section III: Application” call for the paper to “present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context).”

***Those choosing to write on the Deuteronomy passage should present a BIBLE STUDY as specified in the “Ministry Context” at the beginning of the examination.***

**JANUARY 2011**

**EXAMINATION IN OPEN BOOK BIBLE EXEGESIS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description approved by 2008 General Assembly.)

1. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers must be used to write this examination. Double space your answers to Sections I and II, using a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will be returned without being evaluated.
2. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Include your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar/syntax will be returned ungraded.
4. **HONESTY.** You must do your own work, without giving aid to or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11 OR 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, FEBRUARY 3, 2011.** The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
3. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.

*Specific Instructions continued:*

5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will grade the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain your anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned ungraded:
  - your name
  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. Failure to complete any of these sections will result in the failure of the examination as a whole. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas.

1. *Language of the Text:* word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community.
2. *Historical Situation:* the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come.
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context:* the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church.

A total of **four** responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement:* Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation:* Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

OR

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

**Ministry Context:**

You are working with the Worship Committee to come up with new ways to integrate stewardship emphases into worship. You are planning a retreat to work with them on this topic. During this retreat you will be presenting a Bible study on Deuteronomy 26:1-11. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your lesson plan for this Bible study.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Deuteronomy 26:1-11, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text***

**First Required Response**

In comparing translations of Deuteronomy 26:5 you notice that the *New Revised Standard Version* and most English versions translate the word נָסַח as “wandering,” but the *New King James Version* reads “perishing.” In addition to “wandering” and “perishing,” identify one other option for translating נָסַח in this verse. What are the implications of each of these three translations for understanding Deuteronomy 26:5? Which translation would you choose and why?

**2. *Historical Situation***

**Second Required Response**

Some scholars propose that the text of Deuteronomy has been strongly shaped by the experience of the exile. How would the liturgical confession in verses 5-10 be heard in the context of exile from the land?

**3. Scriptural and Theological Context**

**Third Required Response – CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.** After the priest is presented with the first fruits, the worshiper, “the Levites and the aliens ... shall celebrate” (Deuteronomy 26:11). Within Deuteronomy, who are the Levites and the aliens? Why must they be included in the celebration?

**OR**

**B.** The idea of the “first fruits” is not unique to Deuteronomy 26:1-11. It occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:9-21). Discuss the significance of the Old Testament concept of first fruits as an offering to God. How might the concept of the first fruits offering enrich the Christian community today?

**Fourth Required Response**

In the speech quoted in verses 5-10 you notice a shift in pronouns from “he” to “we” to “I.” What is the significance of this shift both for those addressed within Deuteronomy 26:1-11 and for later readers?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

1. ***Focus Statement:*** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. ***Supporting the Interpretation:*** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

**Ministry Context:**

You are serving as pastor at a church where you and the Worship Committee have a strong commitment to using the Scripture lessons assigned in the Revised Common Lectionary. You are planning your sermons for the fall stewardship campaign. In reviewing the passages for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, you find that 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 touches on themes of work, reliance upon the community for support, and financial support for those engaged in ministry to the church. You choose to preach on that text. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your outline for this sermon.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text***

**First Required Response**

In comparing translations of the passage you notice that some translators use terms like “idleness” in verses 7 and 11 (*New Revised Standard Version*) where others use terms like “undisciplined” (*New American Standard Bible*) and “disorderly” (*New King James Version*). Discuss the related Greek words ἀτακτέω and ἀτάκτως. How were they used in ancient Greek literature? How does the specific content of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 influence the translation choice? What translation of these terms do you find most helpful in communicating your understanding of the passage, and why?

**2. *Historical Situation***

**Second Required Response**

2 Thessalonians was written in response to abuses from a group within the church who enthusiastically promoted the imminent return of Jesus, even to the extent of believing “the day of the Lord is already here” (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Some commentators on this passage have argued that those described as having stopped working were motivated by such belief. Discuss the arguments for and against this identification of the “idle” people in this passage. Which argument do you find more convincing, and why?

**3. *Scriptural and Theological Context***

**Third Required Response**

This passage reasserts an apostolic command: “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat” (verse 10). The command is further supported by the principle that everyone is “to do their work quietly and to earn their own living” (verse 12). How do you understand the relationship between these commands and the responsibility elsewhere in Scripture to care for the poor and disadvantaged in society (e.g., James 1:27)? Support your understanding

with reference to the overall context of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and/or the specific wording of the command in verse 10.

**Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.** In commissioning the Twelve, Jesus said both that those who have received God's blessings should "give without payment" and that those who do the work of the gospel should be supported by the community because "laborers deserve their food" (Matthew 10:8b-10). Similarly Paul both claimed the "right" to be financially supported for his ministry and yet "boasts" that he made "the gospel free of charge" (1 Corinthians 9:8-18). Compare and contrast 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 with these other statements by Jesus and Paul. What insights do you draw from this comparison regarding the model of support for Christian ministry presented here in 2 Thessalonians? How would you respond to the apostles' example as a model for the church today?

**OR**

**B.** The recipients of this letter are reminded that they "ought to imitate" (δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι, 3:7; see also verse 9) the example of the apostles. This theme of "imitation" is a recurring one in the Thessalonian letters and elsewhere in the Pauline letters. Compare and contrast the use of "imitation" here in 2 Thessalonians 3:7 and 9 with its use in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 2:14. How do you understand the command here in 2 Thessalonians 3 in light of those passages and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description was approved by the 2008 General Assembly.)

1. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers must be used to write this examination. Double-space your answers to Sections I and II; use a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will not be evaluated.
2. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Include your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar or syntax will be returned unevaluated.
4. **HONESTY.** You must do your own work without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Proverbs 3:1–8    OR    John 3:16–21**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc. and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
3. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.

*Specific Instructions continued:*

5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.
6. In order to maintain your anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned unevaluated:
  - your name
  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. If any of these sections is incomplete the entire examination will be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas:

1. *Language of the Text*: word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community
2. *Historical Situation*: the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*: the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church

A total of **four** (4) responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement*: Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation*: Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation with a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

## Proverbs 3:1–8 OR John 3:16–23

**PROVERBS 3:1–8****Ministry Context:**

You are officiating at the wedding of a young couple in your congregation. They have requested that you preach on Proverbs 3:1–8. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your sermon outline.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Proverbs 3:1–8, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. Language of the Text****First Required Response**

In comparing translations of Proverbs 3:2, you notice a difference in the following four versions:

For they will bestow on you length of days, Years of life and well-being. (*Tanakh*)

... for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. (*New International Version*)

For length of days and years of life and peace will they add to thee. (*JPS Holy Scriptures, 1917*)

... for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they will give you. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

Discuss the differences in the translation of . Which translation do you find most appropriate for this passage? Why?

**Second Required Response**

The *Book of Common Worship* includes Proverbs 3:3–8 among the passages suggested for use in a service of Christian marriage. The engaged couple have asked you to preach on Proverbs 3:1–8. From your study of the book of Proverbs and chapter 3 in particular, determine the proper boundaries of this passage. Support your decision on the basis of the biblical text.

**2. Historical Situation****Third Required Response**

Proverbs 1:1 attributes what follows to “Solomon son of David, king of Israel” (*New Revised Standard Version*). Therefore, one might say that, within the Bible at least, the narratives of Solomon in 1 Kings provide a historical context for the Book of Proverbs, including Proverbs 3:1–8. In 1 Kings 3:1–14, Solomon prays to God for wisdom and receives God’s answer to his prayer. How might 1 Kings 3:1–14 inform your understanding and interpretation of Proverbs 3:1–8?

3. *Scriptural and Theological Context***Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. As you read Proverbs 3:3, the words “bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart” (*New Revised Standard Version*) remind you of Deuteronomy 6:4–9. In addition, you discover that similar language also appears in Proverbs 6:21 and 7:3. Compare Deuteronomy 6:4–9 with Proverbs 3:3, 6:20–21, and 7:1–3. How are these verses similar or different? How does this comparison inform your understanding of Proverbs 3:1–8?

**OR**

B. Proverbs chapters 1–9 form a large unit within the book of Proverbs, with the theme of

interpretation of this passage?

and the

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**JOHN 3:16–21****Ministry Context:**

You are the preacher at a youth conference and are given John 3:16–21 as the text for the closing worship service. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your sermon outline.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying John 3:16–21, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

As you study John 3:16–21, you notice that forms of κρίσις or κρίνω are translated differently, such as *condemn*, *judgment*, and *verdict*. Discuss both Greek words as they appear in this passage and the nuances of meaning in the Greek that permit the different English renderings of the words.

**Second Required Response**

As you read through the Gospel of John and study this passage, you notice key concepts that pervade the Gospel. One of them is the verb πιστεύω. You also realize that the noun πίστις never occurs. What are the implications of John's use of only the verb for your understanding of John 3:16–21?

**2. *Historical Situation*****Third Required Response**

There have been various reconstructions posited for the Johannine community; describe one. To what experience of this community might John 3:18 be referring? How do your findings about this experience affect your interpretation of the assigned passage?

**3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*****Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. What is the relationship between John 3:1–15 and John 3:16–21? How might this larger context aid your understanding of John 3:16–21?

OR

B. What theology of salvation do you discern in John 3:16–21? Support your answer with specific references from within the passage.

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

**Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline (as specified by the required ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline to 2 pages.*

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

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3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar or syntax will be returned unevaluated.
4. **HONESTY.** You must do your own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Genesis 11:1–9    OR    1 Timothy 5:17–22**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **9:00 AM, FEBRUARY 2, 2012**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
3. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.

*Specific Instructions continued:*

5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.
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  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. If any of these sections is incomplete the entire examination will be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas:

1. *Language of the Text*: word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community
2. *Historical Situation*: the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*: the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church

A total of **four** (4) responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement*: Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
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Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Present a sermon outline or lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your sermon outline or lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**Genesis 11:1–9 OR 1 Timothy 5:17–22****GENESIS 11:1–9****Ministry Context:**

You are the pastor of an urban church with a diverse congregation. With the approach of Pentecost, Year C, you want to explore the way in which the Pentecost story in Acts 2 seems to reverse the story told in Genesis 11:1–9. Realizing that you do not have the time in a Pentecost sermon to do justice to the Old Testament reading, you propose a weekly Bible study of Genesis chapters 1–11 and plan for the lesson on Genesis 11:1–9 to come in the week preceding Pentecost. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your lesson plan for this Bible study.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Genesis 11:1–9, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

Theodore Hiebert has suggested this translation of God’s speech in verse 6:

There is now one people and they all have one language. This is what they have begun to do and now all that they plan to do will be possible for them. (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, 126, no. 1, 2007, p. 45)

Compare Hiebert’s translation with the *New American Bible* and the *Tanakh* translations.

If now, while they are one people, all speaking the same language, they have started to do this, nothing will later stop them from doing whatever they presume to do. (*New American Bible*)

If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach. (*Tanakh*)

Which translation, one of these three or your own translation, do you think is most faithful to the original Hebrew? Justify your choice by discussing the grammar and syntax of the verse.

**2. *Historical Situation*****Second Required Response**

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are often referred to as “Primeval History.” Briefly describe at least three characteristics of this primeval history. How do these characteristics inform your interpretation of Genesis 11:1–9?

### 3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

#### **Third Required Response**

The Revised Common Lectionary pairs Genesis 11:1–9 with Acts 2:1–21 for Pentecost, Year C. How does looking at Genesis 11:1–9 in connection with Acts 2:1–21 affect your understanding of the Genesis passage? Describe what you learn about Genesis 11:1–9 from comparing and contrasting the two texts.

#### **Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. In Genesis 1:28 God commands humankind to “fill the earth” (*New Revised Standard Version*). How does this command inform your understanding of God’s statement in Genesis 11:8–9?

**OR**

B. There are genealogies in Genesis 10 and 11 preceding and following Genesis 11:1–9. What is the function of Genesis 11:1–9 in the context of Genesis 10 and 11? How does its placement within the genealogies affect the understanding of Genesis 11:1–9?

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Present a lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**1 Timothy 5:17–22****Ministry Context:**

As pastor of a church, you have been asked by the session to help plan a retreat for elders and deacons on the topic of church leadership. The session would like to know what biblical teachings there are on church leadership, especially after some elders and deacons noted that Presbyterian churches have elders but no priests or bishops, as some other churches have. Others have asked what leadership roles are actually “biblical” and what we know about church leaders in the Bible. In response you prepare a lesson plan on 1 Timothy 5:17–22. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present your lesson plan for this Bible study.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying 1 Timothy 5:17–22, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer to each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

In preparing for the retreat, you come across the following translations of 1 Timothy 5:17a:

Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour .... (*Douay-Rheims Bible*)

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor .... (*New Revised Standard Version*)

Elders who provide effective leadership must be counted worthy of double honor .... (*New English Translation*)

Discuss at least two translation possibilities for *πρεσβύτερος* in the wider Pauline corpus. Include in your discussion how *πρεσβύτερος* is related to *ἐπίσκοπος* (e.g., Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5–7) and how *πρεσβύτερος* could be translated in 1 Timothy 5:1. How would you translate *πρεσβύτερος* in the context of 1 Timothy 5:17–22, and why?

## 2. *Historical Situation*

### Second Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B

A. How would the word *πρεσβύτεροι* have been understood in the Greco-Roman context of the passage? How would the instructions concerning them have been understood in that context? How does this historical context affect your interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:17–22? Given this historical context, discuss ways this passage might guide the church today.

OR

B. Discuss what 1 Timothy reveals about the Christian community assumed by the text. How do your findings affect your understanding of what is said about the *πρεσβύτεροι* in 1 Timothy 5:17–22 (e.g., what is expected of them, how they have been behaving, how they should be viewed or treated)?

## 3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

### Third Required Response

Identify the sources of the quotations used in verse 18. Discuss the canonical issues related to the quotations used in 1 Timothy 5:17–22. Include in the discussion the canonical or theological significance of understanding both 18a and 18b as “scripture.”

### Fourth Required Response

Identify and discuss the instructions in 1 Timothy 5:19–22 with regard to the *πρεσβύτεροι*. What theological issues are involved in verses 19–22? How are these instructions regarding the *πρεσβύτεροι* relevant for other church members, i.e., those who are not *πρεσβύτεροι*? How do instructions given elsewhere in 1 Timothy shed light on your interpretation of 5:19–22?

## Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1. ***Focus Statement:*** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. ***Supporting the Interpretation:*** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

## Section III: Application

Present a lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your lesson plan to 2 pages.*

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description approved by 2008 General Assembly.)

1. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers must be used to write this examination. Double-space your answers to Sections I and II; use a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will not be evaluated.
2. **IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.** Include your identification number (not your name) at the top of each page of the exam.
3. **FORM.** Examinations that cannot be understood because of poor grammar or syntax will be returned unevaluated.
4. **HONESTY.** You must do your own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Ezekiel 34:11–16    OR    Matthew 3:13–17**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **12:00 PM, AUGUST 30, 2012**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
3. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
4. Include a bibliography of consulted works.
5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.

*Specific Instructions continued:*

6. In order to maintain your anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the ordination exam process, an examination that contains any of the following will be returned unevaluated:
- your name
  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. If any of these sections is incomplete the entire examination will be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas:

1. *Language of the Text*: word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community
2. *Historical Situation*: the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*: the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church

A total of **four** (4) responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement*: Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation*: Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Provide either a lesson plan, or an outline or summary description of the major themes of a sermon (as specified in the Ministry Context description). Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

## Ezekiel 34:11–16 OR Matthew 3:13–17

Ezekiel 34:11–16**Ministry Context:**

You are serving an immigrant fellowship congregation of about 125 members in an agricultural community. Many of its members are refugees of war and social unrest and they have settled in the United States. At the last presbytery meeting, the presbytery approved that the fellowship be fully recognized as a congregation of the presbytery, and you have chosen to preach on Ezekiel 34:11–16 at the service celebrating the new status of the fellowship congregation. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will provide an outline or summary description of the major themes for your sermon.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Ezekiel 34:11–16, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

Translate Ezekiel 34:16 or supply the translation that you think most faithfully represents the Hebrew text. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent textual, grammatical, and syntactical issues. Comment specifically on the verb שָׁמַד and the alternative reading שָׁמַר.

Why might one be a textual variant of the other, and what are the implications for translation and interpretation for the choice of one over the other?

**2. *Historical Situation*****Second Required Response**

The image of God as shepherd in Ezekiel 34:11–16 follows on the heels of the condemnation of the “shepherds of Israel” in verses 1–10. Scholars disagree about the identity of these “shepherds of Israel.” Provide at least two options for the identity of these shepherds and describe the historical events that would have led to God's condemnation of the shepherds in each of these cases. Choose the option that you find most plausible, and discuss how your choice informs your understanding of Ezekiel 34:11–16.

**3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*****Third Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. Walther Zimmerli argues that Jeremiah 23:1–8 is “unmistakably the model for Ezekiel 34.” (Zimmerli 214). Compare Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23:1–8, giving at least three examples of how Ezekiel uses and modifies the prophecy of Jeremiah. Discuss how Jeremiah 23:1–8 affects your interpretation of Ezekiel 34:11–16.

**OR**

- B. The image of God as shepherd is a recurring one in the Old Testament, occurring not only in Psalm 23, but in other places as well. Identify at least one other passage in the Old Testament that is neither in Ezekiel nor in the Psalms in which this image occurs, and then discuss the characteristics of this shepherd-God which are developed in Ezekiel 34:11–16, Psalm 23, and the passage(s) you have chosen.

#### **Fourth Required Response**

Ezekiel 34:11–16 is one of several passages in the Old Testament that envisions an ingathering of God's dispersed people. Identify at least two other passages in the Old Testament in which the promise of divine ingathering occurs, and discuss the similarities and differences between these visions of divine ingathering and the one in Ezekiel 34:11–16.

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Provide an outline or summary description of the major themes for your sermon that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

**Matthew 3:13–17****Ministry Context:**

You are a pastor teaching an adult church school class that has voted to spend Lent studying Christology in the Gospels. As a part of the series, Matthew 3:13–17 has been chosen as a text to prompt reflection on how the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is portrayed in the Gospels and what that might mean for the church’s thinking about Christology. The class has been enriched and perplexed by the different ways the Gospels present the story of Jesus, as a result of which you have been asked continually about the differences that occur among them. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will provide a lesson plan for the church school class.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Matthew 3:13–17, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

The heavenly voice in Matthew says, “οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα” (3:17). You notice in a commentary that “σὺ εἶ” is as a variant of “οὗτός ἐστιν.” Discuss the significance of this variant reading. How does the difference in the Greek clauses illuminate the Christology implied in Matthew’s narrative of Jesus’ baptism?

**Second Required Response**

Translate Matthew 3:16, or supply the translation that you think most faithfully represents the Greek text. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent textual, grammatical, and syntactical issues. Pay particular attention to the bracketed definite articles before πνεῦμα and θεοῦ. Discuss the significance of these textual variants. How does your translation inform your reading of Matthew 3:13–17?

**2. *Historical Situation*****Third Required Response**

The canonical Gospels are generally understood as works by particular authors for particular believing communities and concerns. What does Matthew 3:13–17 indicate about the community addressed by Matthew? How does John’s hesitation to baptize Jesus illuminate characteristics particular to Matthew’s community, and how might those characteristics inform your reading of this text?

### 3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

#### Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B

A. As part of your study, you discover the importance of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew. Describe the semantic range of δικαιοσύνη in passages other than Matthew 3:13-17. Informed by your study, how do you understand the use of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew 3:15? How does this inform your theological understanding of Matthew 3:13–17?

OR

B. Some members of the church school class have already asked you to teach about the fact that the parallel passages in Mark 1:9–11 and Luke 3:21–22 do not contain the conversation between John and Jesus in Matthew 3:14–15. Compare the Christologies evident in the three synoptic baptismal narratives. What does Matthew 3:13–17 indicate about the Christology in the Gospel of Matthew?

#### Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### Section III: Application

Provide a lesson plan that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world.

The candidate shall have access to Hebrew and Greek texts, translations, commentaries, and other exegetical tools. Using these, he or she shall provide a faithful interpretation of the passage, show how he or she arrived at this interpretation, and suggest how this passage might be used in the contemporary life of the church. (This description approved by 2008 General Assembly.)

1. **TECHNOLOGY.** Computers must be used to write this examination. Double-space your answers to Sections I and II; use a 12-point font throughout. Section III may be single-spaced. When finished, staple the printed copy to the inside of the exam folder. Handwritten examinations will not be evaluated.
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4. **HONESTY.** You must do your own work, without giving or receiving aid from anyone after the passages are announced. The exam will not be proctored.

**ASSIGNMENT OF PASSAGE**

Choose from selected passages:

**Joshua 24:14–28    OR    Romans 11:13–24**

Your examination is due to your proctor at **12:00 PM, JANUARY 31, 2013**. The time of submission will be strictly observed.

**SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Clearly identify each section of the exam. Within Section I label your answers "First Required Response," etc., and indicate "A" or "B" where appropriate. Identify the parts of Section II by number.
2. In formulating your answers, remember that your readers will be looking for an ability to work with the passage in its original language and to communicate the findings of biblical scholarship to those who have not had the opportunity of formal training in the field.
3. You must provide original answers to the exam questions. When using written material from other sources, you must identify the author, title, and page number. You must also identify electronic sources, either software or on-line. You may use parenthetical citations within the text of your answers, endnotes, or footnotes.
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5. Readers will be looking for logical organization and consistency within the examination. They will evaluate the exam as a unit and not in parts.

*Specific Instructions continued:*

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  - the educational institution or congregation where you study or worship
  - the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in citations of their published works in references or your bibliography
  - mention of your having taken the exam previously.

### **REQUIRED PARTS OF A SATISFACTORY EXAMINATION**

The following sections are required parts of a satisfactory examination. If any of these sections is incomplete the entire examination will be evaluated as unsatisfactory. The specified ministry contexts for each passage and specific questions in each of the categories of Section I will be provided when the passages are announced.

#### **Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying the passage, answer the questions in the following subject areas:

1. *Language of the Text*: word meanings, grammar, literary and other features with respect to both its original language and its translation into the language of the modern community
2. *Historical Situation*: the influence of the historical and cultural context in which the engagement between God and God's people has come
3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*: the passage's relation to the broad teaching of Scripture and theological tradition of the church

A total of **four** (4) responses will be required in Section I of the examination, and there will be a *600-word limit per response*. You will be required to respond to three specified questions and will be permitted to select between an option of either A or B in the other response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by required response number and letter (as necessary).

#### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. *Focus Statement*: Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. *Supporting the Interpretation*: Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

#### **Section III: Application**

Provide either a lesson plan, or an outline or summary description of the major themes of a sermon (as specified in the Ministry Context description). Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

## Joshua 24:14–28 OR Romans 11:13–24

**Joshua 24:14–28****Ministry Context:**

You have been preparing several adults for baptism. After the date has been set for their profession of faith and their baptism, you decide to preach on Joshua 24:14–28. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will provide an outline or summary description of the major themes for your sermon.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Joshua 24:14–28, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response**

Translate the Hebrew text of Joshua 24:15 or supply the translation that you think most faithfully represents the Hebrew text. Justify the translation you have chosen, discussing grammar and syntax. Comment specifically on אֶת־יְהוָה לַעֲבֹד בְּעֵינֵיכֶם לְעַבְדָּהּ.

**2. *Historical Situation*****Second Required Response**

Identify and describe three similarities or differences in the telling of Israel's history in Joshua 24:1–13 and the history as told in the Pentateuch. How does the rendering of history in Joshua 24:1–13 affect Joshua's call to covenant relationship with God in Joshua 24:14–28?

**3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*****Third Required Response**

Discuss the theology expressed in Joshua 24:19–20. Compare and contrast it with at least one other Old Testament description of God, e.g., Exodus 34:6–7. Respond to the theology of Joshua 24:19–20 from a Reformed perspective.

**Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

A. In Joshua 24:15 Joshua challenges the people to make a choice between the God of Israel and other gods. Discuss the choice the people are asked to make. How is the worship of other gods treated in the book of Joshua? What could be the consequences of the people's choice in Joshua 24:14–28 for Joshua, for the people, and for God?

**OR**

B. Identify and discuss one passage in the Pentateuch where God makes covenant with God's people. How is the covenant in Joshua 24 similar to or different from the other covenant you have identified? How do your discoveries help you understand Joshua 24:14–28?

**Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. **Focus Statement:** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. **Supporting the Interpretation:** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

**Section III: Application**

Provide an outline or summary description of the major themes for your sermon that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

**Romans 11:13–24****Ministry Context:**

You are a minister in a community where there recently have been incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti painted around the town. A local, ecumenical group of Christian ministers has decided to engage the community in a series of theological and ethical discussions relating to Jewish-Christian relations. As part of these discussions, you agree to give some seminars on the Reformed perspective on interfaith relationships starting with a Bible study on Romans 11:13–24. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will provide your lesson plan for this study.

**Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context**

After studying Romans 11:13–24, answer the questions in the following required areas of response. To assist the readers of your examination, clearly label this portion as Section I and identify each response by number and letter as necessary. *Limit your answer for each question to 600 words.*

**1. *Language of the Text*****First Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.** You notice that in the Greek of Romans 11:15 there are no verbs. In the NRSV, the translators supply verbs in two different tenses: “For if their rejection *is* the reconciliation of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead!” (emphasis added). Discuss the choices that the translators of the NRSV make. What other tenses might be chosen to translate this passage? Which tenses would you choose, and what difference does this make in your interpretation of the passage?

**OR**

**B.** Romans 11:14 is the conditional statement “εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν.” Describe the two different kinds of conditional clauses that are possible in the translation of 11:14. What difference does your choice of conditional clause make in your interpretation of the passage?

**2. *Historical Situation*****Second Required Response**

Scholars have proposed various reasons for the animosity between Jews and Gentiles recorded in Romans 11:13-24. Discuss at least two such proposals that draw from the history of Jews in Rome under the emperors Claudius and Nero. Choose one proposal that you think is most likely and discuss how it informs your reading of Romans 11:13-24.

### 3. *Scriptural and Theological Context*

#### **Third Required Response**

You notice the metaphor of the root and the branches in Romans 11 with its repetition of *κατὰ φύσιν* and *παρὰ φύσιν*. Describe Paul's use of *φύσις* in Romans 1, Romans 11 and at least one other place in the undisputed Pauline letters. Compare these usages and discuss how they affect your understanding of Paul's use of the metaphor of the olive tree in Romans 11?

#### **Fourth Required Response**

In Romans 11:13-24, Paul outlines a perspective that Gentile converts to Christianity should adopt toward Jews who are not converts. Summarize this perspective. The Presbyterian Church (USA) has often considered the relationship between Christians and Jews. In 1987, the General Assembly adopted a statement that said, in part:

We affirm that Jews and Christians are partners in waiting. Christians see in Christ the redemption not fully visible in the world, and Jews await the messianic redemption. Christians and Jews together await the final manifestation of God's promise of the peaceable kingdom. ("A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews," 199<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 1987)

How does this statement affect your understanding of the assigned passage?

### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

1. ***Focus Statement:*** Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*
2. ***Supporting the Interpretation:*** Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Identify the parts of Section II by number.

### **Section III: Application**

Provide a lesson plan (as required by the specified ministry context) based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your lesson plan to 600 words.*

Presbyterian Church (USA) Standard Ordination Exam  
Open Book Bible Exegesis  
August 2013

Old Testament: Genesis 22:1-19

Ministry Context

You are the teaching elder in a 100-member congregation that includes life-long Presbyterians, members who have joined the Presbyterian church from other denominations, and people new to the Christian faith. One of these new Christians comes to your study and says, “I have a friend who says that somewhere in the Bible God asks a man to kill his son to show that he is faithful to God. Is this true?” As part of your response to this question, you decide to offer a Bible study lesson on Genesis 22:1–19. In the final section of this examination, you will provide your lesson plan for this study. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

Section I

**First Required Response**

In your study of Genesis 22, you see that most contemporary English versions of the Bible translate רָאָה as “provide.” From your study of Hebrew, you remember that רָאָה is usually translated “see.” Discuss the grammatical, linguistic, and contextual evidence that supports each of these two translations. Explain why you would choose one of these, and state how your choice affects your interpretation of Genesis 22:1–19. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**Second Required Response**

The assigned passage draws attention to the practices of child sacrifice among Israelites and other cultures around the ancient Mediterranean. Discuss at least two references (biblical or extra-biblical) to child sacrifice in the ancient Mediterranean. Include as one of these 2 Kings 3:26–27. Explain how this discussion informs your interpretation of Genesis 22:1–19 in which God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**Third Required Response**

In light of the statement in Genesis 22:1, “God tested (נִסָּה) Abraham,” discuss the assigned passage as it relates to God’s testing of individuals and the people of God. Include at least two Old Testament texts outside the book of Genesis in your answer. Explain how your answer informs your interpretation of Genesis 22:1–19. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

Genesis 22:15–18 seems to suggest a conditional covenant between God and Abraham: “Because you have done this, and not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you . . . .” Discuss conditional and unconditional covenant language between God and Abraham by comparing Genesis 22:15–18 with examples from Genesis chapters 12, 15, and 18. Explain how this informs your interpretation of the assigned passage. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --

**Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

The Christian tradition has emphasized the faithfulness of Abraham based on Genesis 22:1–19. Compare and contrast the portrayal of Abraham and Isaac in Hebrews 11:8–19 and James 2:21 with that of Genesis 22:1–19. Explain how Genesis 22:1–19 enriches your understanding of these New Testament passages as they address issues of faithfulness and obedience. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --

Section II

**1. Focus Statement:**

Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

**2. Supporting the Interpretation:**

Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

Section III

**Application**

Provide a lesson plan that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

**Works Consulted**

In the text box below, please provide a bibliographical listing of all research materials consulted during the preparation of your exam responses.

New Testament: Mark 6:1-6a

### Ministry Context

An adult Bible study group of the congregation you serve as pastor has decided to spend six months studying the Gospel According to Mark. Some of the members become perplexed by theological difficulties raised as they read critical commentaries on Mark. Desiring some guidance, the group invites you to lead them in studying Mark 6:1–6a by presenting your interpretation of the text. In the final section of this examination, you will provide an outline or summary description for your two-hour presentation. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

### Section I

#### First Required Response

As part of your study, you find the following in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):

“. . . many who heard him were astounded.” (6:2b)

“And he was amazed at their unbelief.” (6:6a)

Explain how the words “astounded” and “amazed” shape your understanding of Mark 6:1–6a. Discuss how other uses of ἐκπλήσσω and θαυμάζω in Mark inform your interpretation of Mark 6:1–6a. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### Second Required Response

Translate Mark 6:3c: καὶ ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ. Discuss and justify your translation of ἐσκανδαλίζοντο. How does this use of σκανδαλίζω compare to other ways it is used in Mark? Explain how your understanding of σκανδαλίζω in verse 3 informs your reading of Mark 6:1–6a. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### Third Required Response

Discuss the meaning of Mark 6:3a (“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” [NRSV]) in its historical context. Include in your answer the connotations or implications of referring to Jesus as (1) the carpenter and (2) the son of Mary. Include also a discussion of the textual variant [τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός] as well as the parallel passage in Matthew 13:55. Explain how your findings inform your understanding of Mark 6:1–6a. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B

##### A.

Consider the immediate context of the aphorism in Mark 6:4. How do verses 5–6a inform your understanding of the meaning of verse 4? How does ἀπιστία in verse 6a inform your understanding of the relationship between δύναμις and ἀπιστία in Mark 6:1–6a? What are the implications for Christology in Mark, especially when compared with Matthew 13:58? *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

## **Fourth Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

### **B.**

Discuss the theme of faith in Mark 6:1–6a in the light of Mark 5:21–43, the preceding passage. Explain how this discussion affects your understanding of faith in Mark 6:1–6a. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

## Section II

### **1. Focus Statement:**

Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

### **2. Supporting the Interpretation:**

Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

## Section III

### **Application**

Provide an outline or summary description of your presentation that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

### **Works Consulted**

In the text box below, please provide a bibliographical listing of all research materials consulted during the preparation of your exam responses.

Exegesis  
January 2014

Old Testament

Ministry Context

You have just become the interim pastor for a small congregation that sees itself in a slow decline in membership, finances, and energy. Their pastor has just left after 10 years of ministry, and many of them feel abandoned. The people are downcast and see little joy in their worship. They come because that is what they have done all their lives. Their passion for mission is fading along with their hope. The lectionary suggests Isaiah 40:1–11 for the second Sunday in Advent, and you hear the words as a call to renewed energy for worship and hope for a new day. In the final section of this examination, you will provide an outline or summary description of the major themes for your sermon. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

Section I

**First Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

Provide an analysis of the forms of the verbs נהם, קרא, and דבר in Isaiah 40:1–2. In light of your analysis, discuss to whom the voice is speaking and for whom the message is intended. How do these verses serve as a prologue to the rest of Isaiah chapter 40? Explain how your responses to these questions influence your understanding of Isaiah 40:1–11. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

**First Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

Isaiah 40:6 has been translated:

A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” (NRSV)

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? (KJV)

The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? (ASV)

Discuss the differences in these translations, including a consideration of the Masoretic text and its variants. Choose one of these translations or provide your own translation. Justify the translation you have chosen by discussing pertinent textual, grammatical, and syntactical issues. Explain how your discussion affects your understanding of Isaiah 40:1–11. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

**Second Required Response**

Most scholars argue that Isaiah 40:1–11 reflects the cultural and historical context of its time in regard to the people’s experience of the Babylonian exile. Discuss the ways in which Isaiah

chapter 40 responds to the situation of exile. Explain how your discussion of the context affects your interpretation of Isaiah 40:1–11. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### **Third Required Response**

Discuss the relationship between punishment and comfort that come from God in: (1) Isaiah 40:2, (2) the assigned text as a whole, and (3) at least two Old Testament texts outside of Isaiah. Explain how your theological reflection on the texts you have chosen affects your interpretation of Isaiah 40:1–11. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### **Fourth Required Response**

Discuss the role of the herald (מְבַשֵּׂרָה) in Isaiah 40:9 as it relates to the call for consolation of the people in Isaiah 40:1–11. Include in your response a consideration of Isaiah 40:6–8 and 10–11. Explain how this discussion influences your use of Isaiah 40:1–11 as part of the Advent cycle of preaching. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

Exegesis  
January 2014

New Testament  
Ministry Context

You are the new pastor of a downtown congregation of 100 members. Most of the congregation members no longer live in the neighborhood. The population of the congregation's neighborhood has grown significantly. At the same time, this neighborhood has been hit hard by the recent economic downturn. People from the neighborhood have visited the congregation, but have not stayed, reporting a sense of not feeling welcomed. As part of a congregation-wide process of discernment about its mission and future, you have chosen to lead a Bible study on James 2:1–26. In the final section of this examination, you will present your lesson plan for this study. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

Section I

**First Required Response**

As you read James 2:25, you notice in the text-critical notes that some early manuscripts of the letter of James contain alternative readings to the word ἀγγέλους. Identify two of these possible alternative readings. Discuss the effect each one has, if any, on the meaning of James 2:25. Discuss the criteria of text-criticism that led to the choice of ἀγγέλους as the best reading. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**Second Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

There is a significant scholarly debate on the dating of the book of James. Briefly outline two of the arguments about the dating of James. Include in your discussion the significance in this debate of the use of συναγωγή rather than ἐκκλησία in James 2:2. Informed by your work, choose the argument you find most persuasive and explain your choice. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

**Second Required Response — CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

Bruce Malina and other social-scientific critics argue for the importance of the honor/shame dialectic in the understanding of the New Testament world. Describe briefly the role of honor and shame in James 2, paying special attention to James 2:1–9. Explain how your assessment affects your interpretation of James 2:1–26. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

**Third Required Response**

Compare and contrast James's use of δικαιόω with Paul's use of the same verb in Romans. Explain whether or not you find a fundamental disagreement between James and Paul on the use

of δικαίω. How does this affect your interpretation of James 2:1–26? *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### **Fourth Required Response**

James 2:5–6 refers to οἱ πλούσιοι. Consider the use of πλούσιος in the letter of James. What does this use of πλούσιος suggest about James's ethics concerning wealth and poverty? Explain how this affects your reading of James 2:1–26. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

## Exegesis, Summer 2014

### Ministry Context: John 1:1-18

An adult church school class in the congregation you serve as pastor is planning to devote six weeks to study the Nicene Creed. Members of the class are particularly interested in learning about the second section of the creed (Nicene Creed, 1.2) because they noticed how different it is from that of the more familiar Apostles' Creed. They have requested that you address this portion of the Nicene Creed, especially regarding the divinity of Christ. You have decided in discussions with them that you would prepare a lesson on John 1:1–18 as part of their plans for broader Christological discussions. In the final section of this examination, you will provide an outline or summary description of your lesson. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

### Section I, First Required Response

Discuss two different ways of translating θεός in the clause καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος in John 1:1 and how each would affect the understanding of ὁ λόγος in the context of John 1:1–18. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I, Second Required Response

In reading commentaries as part of your study, you find that there is a question of whether ὁ γέγονεν concludes or begins a sentence. Explain how each possibility affects the translation of John 1:3–4. Discuss how these possibilities shape your interpretation of John 1:1–18. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I, Third Required Response

John 1:1–18 has been called the “hymn to the λόγος.” Discuss the concept of λόγος in both Stoic philosophy and Second Temple Wisdom tradition. How does this historical background inform your understanding of John 1:1–18? *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I, Fourth Required Response

In response to the church class members' request, you focus on the first half of the Christological section of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit

and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. (Nicene Creed, 1.2)

Explain how John 1:1–18 informs the Christology in this passage of the Nicene Creed. Identify at least two (2) Christological issues in John 1:1–18 that are reflected in the Nicene Creed. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### **Application**

Provide an outline or summary description of your lesson that addresses the required ministry context.

## **Bible Exegesis Fall 2014**

### Ministry Context: Psalm 139

A member of the congregation you serve has come to you with a concern about her 85-year-old father who lives in another state. He is a life-long church member who is contemplating his mortality. He is consumed with thoughts about an act of dishonesty he committed earlier in his life. He admitted his wrongdoing to the involved parties. However, he has not prayed about it and is continually troubled about God's view of him in light of his behavior. He has committed many passages of the Bible to memory, including Psalm 139, the content of which leaves him feeling uneasy and worried. You realize that several members in the congregation may have similar concerns. You prepare a sermon on Psalm 139 to address these concerns. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination.

### Section I: 1. Language of the Text

The following are some English translations of Psalm 139:14a:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (New Revised Standard Version)

I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. (Revised Standard Version)

In light of the Hebrew text, discuss the differences between these translations. Choose or provide a translation you find most faithful to the Hebrew text, paying close attention to your understanding of the word **נִפְלְאֵתִי**. Justify your choice and explain how it affects your understanding of Psalm 139. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I: 2. Language of the Text

In reviewing commentaries, you notice that verses 19-24 are not included in the lectionary reading for Year C, the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Compare and contrast these verses to the rest of Psalm 139. Include in your response a discussion of the genres that may apply to this psalm. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I: 3. Historical Situation

Discuss the phrase, "in your book were written all the days that were formed for me," in verse 16b. Identify and discuss at least one (1) reference to such a "book" in other literature from the eastern Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE. Compare the use of such a heavenly book and its significance for Israelite and non-Israelite cultures. How might a wider understanding of a heavenly book influence your interpretation of the assigned passage? *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

### Section I: 4. Scriptural and Theological Context

Discuss the understanding of awareness of self and the presence of God in Isaiah 6. Compare and contrast this with the awareness of self and the presence of God in Psalm 139. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

## Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

### **1. Focus Statement:**

Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

### **2. Supporting the Interpretation:**

Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

## Section III:

### Application

Provide an outline, or a summary description of the major themes, for your sermon that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

### Works Consulted

In the text box below, please provide a bibliographical listing of all research materials consulted during the preparation of your exam responses.

## Bible Exegesis, Winter 2015

### Ministry Context: Philemon

The congregation you serve as pastor has an active book group that is reading *Dwelling Place*, by Erskine Clarke, in commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the United States Civil War. In a previous meeting, the group came across the following statement: “The most famous of the biblical slaves was Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon” (Clarke 2005, 138). Upon discussion, many members of the group realized that they had never heard of either Onesimus or Philemon. They ask you to come to their next meeting and lead a two-hour study of Paul’s letter to Philemon. This ministry context should inform your responses throughout the examination. In the final section of this examination, you will present an outline or summary of the plan for your Bible study.

### Section I

#### 1. Language of the Text

##### First Required Response

The Letter to Philemon is addressed, in part, Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν. Describe the possible grammatical relationships between the adjectives ἀγαπητός and συνεργός in verse 1. Explain how your understanding of the grammatical relationship affects your translation of the verse. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### 2. Language of the Text

##### Second Required Response

In Philemon 20, you read: ναὶ ἀδελφέ, ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ. You notice that the verb ὀναίμην is in the optative mood. Describe the different uses of the optative mood. Explain which use of the optative mood occurs in Philemon 20 and how this affects your understanding of Philemon 1-25. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

#### 3. Historical Situation

##### Third Required Response

Describe slavery in the Roman Empire during the time of Paul as a possible socio-historical context for Philemon. Explain how this description informs your understanding of Paul’s letter to Philemon. *Limit your answer to 600 words.*

## **4. Scriptural and Theological Context**

### **Fourth Required Response**

In *Dwelling Place*, Erskine Clarke relates that Presbyterian missionary Charles Colcock Jones preached from Paul's letter to Philemon to "a large congregation of slaves." Jones preached against the "character of Runaways" and the "folly, the impropriety, the impolicy of their course" (138). According to Clarke, Jones was surprised that his interpretation was resisted by the slaves.

The Scots Confession argues that biblical interpretation should be consonant with the principal points of our faith, the "plain text of Scripture," and the "rule of love" (Scots Confession, 3.18). Using these Reformed principles for biblical interpretation, demonstrate from Philemon how one might interpret this letter in a way that does not condemn those who seek to escape from slavery.

### **Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation**

#### **1. Focus Statement:**

Write a focus statement based on your broad study of the passage (not just material presented in Section I) that articulates a central theme of your faithful interpretation of the passage. *Limit your statement to 50 words.*

#### **2. Supporting the Interpretation:**

Write an essay presenting your faithful interpretation of the passage consistent with the central theme in the focus statement. Support your interpretation by a careful and critical analysis of the text. You may draw on any material in areas of the required responses in Section I and other exegetical methods and evidence relevant to the interpretation. *Limit your essay to 1,200 words.*

### **Section III:**

#### **Application**

Provide an outline or summary plan for your Bible study that addresses the required ministry context. Your work must be based on your faithful interpretation of the passage and be consistent with your focus statement. *Limit your work to 600 words.*

#### **Works Consulted**

In the text box below, please provide a bibliographical listing of all research materials consulted during the preparation of your exam responses.

AUGUST 2007

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY  
OPEN BOOK  
MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of either the 2005-2007 *Book of Order*, or the 2007-2009 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines or other resources may be used. Questions will be from the *Form of Government*, the *Directory for Worship*, and the *Rules of Discipline*.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of the grades received on all three Sections, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination’s overall merit. However, the paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three Sections in order to be considered Satisfactory.

**You may use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. If you use one of these means:**

- **You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam.**
- **Since a printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam and failure to do so will result in failure, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.**
- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print your responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.**

**AUGUST 2007  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

**Warning:** exams written in pencil and illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be graded accordingly.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

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**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**AUGUST 2007  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

	<b>ONE HOUR</b>	<b>OPEN BOOK</b>	<b>REQUIRED</b>
<b>G-4.0300</b>	<b>Principles of Presbyterian Government</b>		
G-4.0301	Presbyterian Polity		
	The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms, within the context of its commitment to the Church universal, a special commitment to basic principles of Presbyterian polity: ...		
	b. This church shall be governed by presbyters (elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament, traditionally called ruling and teaching elders);		

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Using chapters other than 1-4 of the *Form of Government*, cite and briefly discuss at least four (4) *Book of Order* references (e.g. X-0.0000) that demonstrate how this principle is lived out in the church.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an essay on this “basic principle of Presbyterian polity” for use as an introduction in a church officer handbook.

**AUGUST 2007  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

As pastor, you are leading a training retreat for session. The following discussion occurs:

Terry: I just visited my mother's church, and they have a board of deacons. Mom Said that they visit the sick. What else do deacons do?

Ricky: Our session members are too busy to visit the sick. Let's ask some people To help and call them deacons.

Jorge: Why do some Presbyterian churches have deacons while we don't?

Pat: I think we need deacons; what do we need to do to have them?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least four (4) issues raised in the situation. For each issue cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a Presentation to respond to the session.

**AUGUST 2007  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

As pastor, you are attending your first meeting of the congregation's nominating committee. The committee is charged with nominating church officers. The following comments are made:

Beth: Our community and our church are changing, and of course we're aware of more racial ethnic persons in our congregation. By accepting them as members, are we not obligated to ask some to be officers?

Bob: It seems to me we ought to be color-blind and nominate people whose gifts match what we need.

Mary: If we did nominate one of the racial ethnic members, shouldn't that person feel obligated to represent the other racial ethnic people and vote accordingly?

Tad: The congregation elected us to this nominating committee, but as I look around the table, we're not really very representative of the congregation.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least one issue raised by each committee member. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, explain to the nominating committee your understanding of the church's commitment to representation and how it should be practiced in the local congregation.

**--OR--**

**AUGUST 2007  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

You are a minister member of the presbytery serving in a specialized ministry and have agreed to preach at a church whose pastor has recently left to accept another call. The clerk of session asks you to moderate the annual meeting of the congregation at which officers are to be elected. The meeting is scheduled immediately after the worship service at which you are preaching. The clerk then informs you that the previous pastor always ordained and/or installed newly elected elders and deacons at the close of the same congregational meeting. She wants to know if you will please do that as well.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised by these requests. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of the issues identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the clerk.

**JANUARY 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY  
OPEN BOOK  
MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the 2007-2009 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines or other resources may be used. Questions will be from the *Form of Government*, the *Directory for Worship*, and the *Rules of Discipline*.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. Sections I and II are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

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- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print your responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.**

**JANUARY 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

**Warning:** exams written in pencil and illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be graded accordingly.

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- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

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**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**JANUARY 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**G-4.0302      Presbyterian Unity**

The nature of Presbyterian order is such that it shares power and responsibility. The system of governing bodies, whether they have authority over one or many church, sustains such mutual relationships within the structures as to express the unity of the church.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Cite and briefly discuss one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) that is a direct expression of this principle, from each of the following:
  - the *Form of Government* (except chapters 1 – 4),
  - the *Directory for Worship*, and
  - the *Rules of Discipline*,Each citation must provide a different example of how governing bodies share power and responsibility in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an article for a congregational newsletter explaining this principle of shared governance.

**JANUARY 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The longtime clerk of session died while in office. As pastor, you are moderating a meeting of session one week later. The following comments are made.

Lorene: How do we go about getting a new clerk of session? Pastor, can't you just appoint someone?

Harry: The clerk doesn't do anything but take the minutes. Why can't we just have our church secretary do that?

Vivian: How long does a clerk serve? Do we really have to have one?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify four (4) issues raised in the situation. Cite one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, instruct session regarding the office of clerk of session.

**JANUARY 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

You, as pastor, are teaching a class for prospective members. Several participants ask “who runs this church?”

Lewis: In my last church the minister made most of the decisions because he was ordained. Isn't it the same here?

Ilva: What officers are there? Who appoints them?

Rafael: What do officers do, and how long do officers serve?

Maria: I was in a church where all the elders were men over 65 years old.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least five (5) issues raised in the class. Cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, write an article about the leadership of the church for a prospective member information packet.

**--OR--**

**JANUARY 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

One weekday morning two members invite you to see a change in the sanctuary. They unveil the old communion table to reveal a newly etched and gilded engraving on the front, visible even from the last pew. The engraving reads: “In loving memory of **Betty B. Worker**, wife, mother, friend and sister in Christ.” Easter lilies have been painted on both sides of the inscription.

“Don’t you think it’s lovely, Pastor? Betty worked so hard and faithfully all these years to make our sanctuary beautiful. She always loved lilies!”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) problems raised in this situation. Cite and briefly discuss one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each problem.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, outline a presentation for session on both memorial gifts and sanctuary furnishings.

# CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION

1. Do *not* include your name in this examination.
2. Do *not* include in this examination the name of the congregation or presbytery where you are a member.
3. Do *not* include in this examination the name of the seminary you attend or have attended.
4. Do *not* include in this examination the names of professors with whom you have studied, except in a footnote or bibliographical reference.
5. If you have taken the examinations before, do *not* include any reference to that in this examination.
6. Do *not* use a pencil to write your responses.
7. Clearly identify at the beginning of each of your responses the number of the section and/or required response which you are answering.

***If these instructions are not followed, the examination will be returned ungraded.***

If you type or print your examination, staple your responses to the first few pages of this booklet. Placing page numbers on your responses will assure that the readers see your response(s) as you intended.

**AUGUST 2008  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined”

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

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**AUGUST 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

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- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

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**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION**

**BEFORE BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**AUGUST 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**G-4.0104 A Particular Presbyterian Church**

Each particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. Its officers are ministers of the Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. Its government and guidance are the responsibility of the session. *It shall fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.* (Emphasis added)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Cite and briefly discuss at least three (3) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* that describe how a particular congregation seeks to “*fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.*”
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a proposal for discussion at a church officer retreat suggesting how the congregation can fulfill its responsibilities as a local unit of mission.

**AUGUST 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

Dave, a young elder at the church where you are pastor, says, “As I listened to your recent sermon series, ‘The Gifts of the Spirit,’ I felt called to use my gifts to develop a recreational sports program for the community around our church. I want it to be a ministry of our congregation. We have that large space out back that could easily be made into sports fields. Here is a fifteen-page plan that I have prepared as a starting point. I feel God wants me to do this. What are the next steps?”

The two of you agree to meet in one week to discuss the “next steps.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss three (3) significant considerations raised by this situation and cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, describe what you will say to Dave about next steps when you meet with him.

**AUGUST 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**A.**

You are pastor of a church in the center of a growing suburban area. The traffic light at the corner of the church property controls a central intersection and has been under review by local government leaders. You attended a public hearing some time ago but have heard nothing recently about the plans for the intersection.

One day an engineer from the Department of Transportation comes into your office. She explains that improvements are about to be made and asks you to sign a paper agreeing to sell to the local government nearly a thousand square feet of the church front lawn in order to add a turning lane. She indicates that your signature is all that is needed for the project to begin in two weeks.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues for the church in this situation. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the engineer, and outline what next steps you would take and with whom you would take them.

**--OR--**

**AUGUST 2008  
CHURCH POLITY EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY  
(Continued)**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

During a heated discussion with the chair of the session Personnel Committee, the pastor says, "I guess my ministry at this church is done. It is time for me to leave!" After returning home, the pastor emails the Personnel Committee chair, reiterating his intention to leave. The chair forwards the email to all session members. She also notifies the moderator of the Committee on Ministry (COM) that their pastor has resigned, and she asks how to proceed.

The moderator of COM contacts the pastor, who states that he never intended to resign. He does agree to meet with a representative from COM and the rest of session at a special meeting. As a member of COM, you have been asked to be that representative.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify three (3) issues in the situation. Cite and briefly discuss one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write the opening statement that you will use to frame the discussion and provide the information needed by all parties for this special meeting.

**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

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**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**PAGE 2 OF 6**

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- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION**

**BEFORE BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**PAGE 3 OF 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The Historic Principles of Church Order, in G-1.0301, quote the *Westminster Confession of Faith*: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men<sup>1</sup> which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”

The *Form of Government* states in G-6.0108b, “in becoming a(n) ... officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds.”

<sup>1</sup> The word “men” in this quotation from the eighteenth century should be understood as applying to all persons.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay of describing how a pastor or elder might live with the tension between these two affirmations. Include at least three (3) additional citations from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) that offer guidance in these considerations.

**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**PAGE 4 OF 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

A new church school curriculum was approved by session with an 8-1 vote after a protracted and heated discussion. After adjournment, you and a few elders are gathered in the parking lot where the following comments are made:

Elder Alphonse: Pastor, why couldn't we get Elder Bently to change her vote and support the new curriculum proposed by the Christian Education Committee? I don't think we can proceed to change the curriculum without a unanimous action of session. This is too important an issue to implement with a divided vote. I think we should reconsider it at our next meeting.

Elder Daniels: Pastor, isn't there some formal way that elders like Elder Bently can register their opposition to a decision without us having to revisit the entire debate?

Elder Engel: Elder Bently always finds reasons to object to new ideas. I think it is time for us to vote her off the session. Clearly she is not interested in the future of the congregation.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised in the parking lot discussion. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, describe what you would say, and in what setting or circumstance, you would address each of the elders named above, exercising appropriate pastoral sensitivity.

**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**PAGE 5 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**A.**

You are the pastor of a Presbyterian church. Late one Thursday afternoon you receive a telephone call from the leader of a neighborhood group of Muslims requesting to use a room in the church the next day for Friday prayers. The meeting space that they have been renting has just been destroyed by a fire. The Muslim leader indicates that the Islamic Society might also be interested in a long-term rental of space in the church building.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least two (2) issues raised by this request. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the Muslim leader, explaining the reasons for your reply.

**OR**

**JANUARY 2009  
CHURCH POLITY EXAM**

**PAGE 6 OF 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**B.**

You have been certified ready to be examined for ordination, pending a call. Last Sunday, on the recommendation of its Pastor Nominating Committee, the congregation of a Presbyterian church voted to call you as pastor. You begin to think about what additional steps need to be taken in order for you to become the installed pastor.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) constitutionally required steps between the congregational election of a pastor and hearing the words “you are now a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation.” (W-4.4006d(1)) Provide one (1) or more citations from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) for each step you have identified.
2. Briefly describe each step identified in your answer in Required Response 1, stating who (including yourself) needs to be involved and the particular role or responsibility of each person or entity.

**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

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**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 2 of 6**

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**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION**

**BEFORE BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 3 of 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

One of the great themes of the Reformed tradition is

the recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by *seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God*. (emphasis added)

(G-2.0500a [4])

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Excluding Chapters G-1 through G-4, cite and explain the significance of at least three (3) references from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) that are expressions of “*seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God*.”
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an article for a church newsletter about the call for “*seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God*.”

**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 4 of 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

During your first year in a new pastorate, the treasurer for a neighboring PC(U.S.A.) church, who serves on its session, schedules time to meet with you. In your office she says,

While our pastor was away on vacation, I received in my box two credit card account statements that I had never seen before. They both had names of mission projects we support as well as the church's name. When I opened the statements, I telephoned the bank and discovered that the pastor was the only person authorized to sign. I could find no record of the accounts in any session document for the last two years. When I asked our pastor about them, I found her to be defensive, vague, and evasive. I am frustrated and confused about what to do. Can you help me?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised by the scenario. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, suggest a course of action for the elder. What action, if any, would you, as the new pastor, take?

**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 5 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

While serving as pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church, you are visited by a woman who says,

Pastor, I have been attending Sunday services for the last few months and have found the worship very meaningful. I would like to know if I can become a member. Is that possible? What would I have to do? Please explain membership to me.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Citing at least one (1) relevant *Book of Order* passage (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of the following, explain to the woman

- (a) the requirements for membership;
- (b) the responsibilities of membership; and
- (c) the steps to become a member.

**OR**

**AUGUST 2009  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 6 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY  
(continued)**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

You are pastor of The Stained Glass Church in the City, where you have served for two years. One Friday afternoon, you receive a call from the previous pastor of the church asking if the sanctuary will be open that evening for the wedding rehearsal. You are not aware of a wedding scheduled for this weekend. After further inquiry, you are told that he had been asked by a couple who are members of your church to officiate at their wedding. He had agreed.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised by this scenario. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) reference for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, outline the correct procedures that should have been followed by all involved.

**JANUARY 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK  
MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

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**JANUARY 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

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**BEFORE BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**JANUARY 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 3 of 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

One of the Historic Principles of Church Order addresses mutual forbearance. *The Book of Order* states,

we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.

(G-1.0305)

Note: The words “men” and “man’s” throughout this quotation from the eighteenth century should be understood as applying to all persons.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite and briefly discuss direct expressions of this principle for individuals or for entities of the church. Use at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from each of the following:
  - Form of Government (except chapters G-1 through G-4)
  - Directory for Worship
  - Rules of Discipline.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an article for a congregation’s newsletter explaining this practice of Presbyterian governance.

**JANUARY 2010**  
**EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 4 of 6**

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

A fellow Presbyterian minister seeks your advice. She is the chaplain at a pediatric hospital. She tells you one of the patients confided in her that the pastor of a nearby Presbyterian church touched the patient inappropriately during a recent youth group retreat. The patient expressed concern that others may have had a similar experience.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite and briefly discuss at least three (3) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* that address the situation above. Include at least one (1) reference from each of the following:
  - Form of Government
  - Directory for Worship
  - Rules of Discipline.
  
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, advise the chaplain.

**JANUARY 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 5 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

At a regular meeting of session, it is reported that the next meeting of presbytery will include proposed actions pertaining to the state's regulation of homeless shelters. Elder Lin suggests that JB be elected as a commissioner to that presbytery meeting. "She is the leading public advocate in the state on this social justice issue and a well-respected member of our church."

Elder Pat, the clerk of session, says,

"JB is not an elder. We have to elect elders as commissioners to presbytery."

Elder Kim adds,

"Maybe we could have her brief us on the details before the meeting and tell commissioners how to vote on the proposals."

Elder Lou comments,

"I don't think anyone who has a well-known public position on such matters should be allowed to participate in a presbytery meeting. Couldn't our tax-exempt status be threatened for practicing politics at presbytery?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least three (3) polity issues expressed in the comments of the elders. Cite and briefly discuss one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a presentation for the session that explains how its commissioners to presbytery are chosen, and how they serve.

**OR**

**JANUARY 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**Page 6 of 6**

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY  
(continued)**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

As pastor, you are meeting with the nominating committee that is considering Lucy Snowbird to serve as deacon. She is a part-year resident in this community and actively participates in the life of the congregation. She is a member of a Presbyterian church in another state.

The chair of the committee says, "Lots of our members are not as regular in attending as she is, so it's OK for us to nominate her, isn't it?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite and briefly discuss at least three (3) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* that relate to this situation.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a presentation to the nominating committee about the rights and privileges of membership in a particular church, and the qualifications for election and service as deacon.

**AUGUST 2010  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY**

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to "assess the candidate's working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined."

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. All three sections are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour. In order to receive a Final Evaluation of "Satisfactory" on this exam, two of the three sections must receive a "Satisfactory."

The readers, in evaluating the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

## EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

Page 2 of 6

You may write your answers in ink in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use a pencil to write your responses; **papers written in pencil will be returned without being evaluated.** If you handwrite your examination, do not skip lines in the examination book. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). **Illegible papers shall be returned without being evaluated.**

You are encouraged to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You must confirm with the proctor in advance of the testing date what equipment (power strips, computers, printers, etc.) is available at the testing site.

If you use a computer:

- You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other resource on the computer or a network during the exam.
- A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the test site. Not turning in a printed copy will result in failure. You are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment and software are properly working and coordinated.
- Number the pages.
- Include your candidate number on each page of the exam, **but not your name.**
- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

**Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found as unsatisfactory:**

- **Do not include your name**
  - **Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery**
  - **Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended**
  - **Do not identify professors with whom you have studied**
  - **Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before**
- All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a "Satisfactory" evaluation on at least two of the three sections to be considered "Satisfactory."

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:      READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**  
**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

In **G-3.0401** we are told that

*The Church is called:*

*d. to a new openness to God's continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be a more effective instrument of mission in the world.*

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite & briefly discuss at least three (3) *Book of Order* references (e.g., X-0.0000) that illustrate how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to respond to this call. Include at least one citation each from the *Form of Government* and the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Informed by your answer to Required Response 1, write a presentation for your session that explains how “*God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical*” enables your congregation to be “*a more effective instrument of mission in the world.*”

**SECTION II CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

You are a member of the presbytery's administrative commission overseeing a growing Korean Presbyterian New Church Development (NCD). The organizing pastor calls and asks to talk to you. When you get together, he says, "As you know we are nesting in Memorial Presbyterian Church. This last week, the Memorial session informed me that, because they are down to fifteen active members, they are going to sell their building to a Montessori school. They said we have one month to find a new place to worship. We have been there for over four years and are committed to continuing the mission of the PCUSA in this neighborhood. We don't want to leave this building, but we can't afford to buy it. Is there anything we can do about this?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised in this scenario. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) relevant *Book of Order* references (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Based on your work in Required Response 1, prepare a presentation for your presbytery administrative commission identifying a course of action and the implications for both Memorial Presbyterian Church and the NCD.

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You, as pastor, are leading a confirmation class and a question is asked about what happens to all of the money that the church receives in the offering each week. Before you answer the question, you ask what they think.

Lucia: I heard that all of the money goes to the Presbytery Office and they give each church what they need.

Nicole: I thought that the pastor took all of the money, paid the bills, and got to keep what was left over.

Tim: Aren't the Elders somehow involved in what happens to the money?

Kim: I thought it all went to feed the hungry.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least one (1) issue raised by each person above, a different issue for each person. Cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer to Required Response 1, respond to each young person.

**- OR -**

**SECTION III            CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**CHOOSE ONE: A or B**

**ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED**

**B.**

During a staff meeting, the music director of the congregation you pastor announces proudly, “I’ve just ordered the set of bells that I’ve been wanting so we could start a hand bell choir. I got tired of waiting for approval, so when the bell company’s annual sale came around, I just ordered them! They were a real good buy!”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised by this situation; cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer to Required Response 1, address the staff, responding to the situation created by the music director’s action.

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates shall utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the 2009-2011 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines or other resources may be used. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. All three sections are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour. In order to receive a Final Evaluation of Satisfactory on this exam, two of the three sections must receive a Satisfactory.

**You are required to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor**

- **You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam.**
- **You have three hours to read and compose your responses.**
- **Since a printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area [not doing so will result in failure of the exam], you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.**
- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy in the exam cover.**

**Page 2 of 6**

Be advised that exam printouts must be complete and legible. Also, papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax or grammar will be returned without being evaluated.

The readers, in evaluating the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:      READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE**  
**BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

**G-1.0307 states:**

(7) *That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church governing body ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God.*

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Excluding chapters G-1 through G-4, cite and briefly discuss at least three (3) references (e.g., X-0.0000) using three different chapters of the *Book of Order* that illustrate how the exercise of church power in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is “*only ministerial and declarative.*”
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write a presentation for an elder training class that explains how power is exercised in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**SECTION II CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

You are the new pastor at the Crabtree Presbyterian Church. Elder Susan, the moderator of the nominating committee, invites you to their meeting. At the meeting the following comments are made.

- Susan:            Our previous pastor picked the nominees each year after checking the giving and attendance records.
- Pat:                Last year we had a hard time finding people willing to be nominated. Do we really need to elect members from the congregation to serve on the nominating committee?
- Barbara:         I want to nominate my husband Mike for one of the elder slots. He really wants to serve and it would give us something to do together.
- Eriberto:         Let's nominate Herb and his wife since they are the biggest givers in the church.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify four (4) issues raised by this scenario, citing one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue raised.
2. Respond to the committee, clarifying your role as pastor and the responsibilities of the nominating committee.

**III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR          OPEN BOOK          REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You have been called to be the first ever Associate Pastor at the Covenant Presbyterian Church. At the church picnic, you sit at a table of some of the newest members. You are asked the following questions:

Sean:            What exactly is an associate pastor? Are you a pastor in training like the assistant manager at my job?

Aretha:        How long do you get to stay here?

Cindy:        Are there things that you are not allowed to do until you become a “real” pastor?

Juan:          How did Pastor Jean find you?

Ian:            I hear that Pastor Jean is going to retire in five years. Will you take her place?

Marsha:       Who decides what you will do around here?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least one (1) issue raised by each of four (4) people, a different issue for each person. Cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your work in Required Response 1, respond pastorally to each of the four people.

**III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

**B.**

A wealthy member of your congregation, who recently lost a spouse, comes into your office. “Pastor, I’ve been bothered by that plain glass window toward the rear of our sanctuary. So I’ve commissioned a stained glass window portraying our dog and cat to be installed in its place. Here’s the artist drawing of the window. The glass factory has been making the pieces and will begin the installation next week. You’re going to love it!”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least four (4) issues raised by this situation; cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified. Include at least one (1) citation each from the *Form of Government* and the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Informed by your answer to Required Response 1, respond to the member about the issues identified.

AUGUST 2011

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined.”

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

The examination consists of three Sections. All three sections are required. Section III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

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In evaluating the examination, the readers will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

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- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts



AUGUST 2011

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

**Page 3 of 6**

**SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

A Historic Principle of church order in G-1.0303 is:

(3) That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, *but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty*; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God. (*emphasis added*)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Citing at least four (4) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order*, write a summary for an officers handbook that will explain how officers are expected “*to exercise discipline, for the preservation of truth and duty*” in both their personal life and in their role as officers in the PC(USA).

AUGUST 2011

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

Page 4 of 6

**SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

You are pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church. A member of the youth group asks to speak to you confidentially and says that on a recent retreat the Associate Pastor for Youth was showing images on the laptop computer that were sexually suggestive and inappropriate.

After arranging to counsel further with the youth, you begin to put together a plan of action to deal with what the youth has told you.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues raised by this scenario. Cite and discuss at least one (1) relevant *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, describe your plan of action in detail.

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You are conducting a training class for ruling elders in your presbytery. Someone in the class says, “Our pastor is about to retire. Presbytery has told our congregation it will need a temporary pastor until a permanent pastor is called. What is the difference between a temporary pastor and a permanent pastor?” You ask the members of the class how they would respond.

Emily: Both are members of presbytery. Both preach and celebrate the sacraments. Both moderate the session. I think the only difference is how long they stay.

Shin: A few years ago we had a temporary supply. One time our session had a tie vote and our supply told us that only a permanent pastor can vote at a session meeting.

José: Maybe that pastor hadn’t been installed yet. I think there are things a minister can’t do before being installed, but once your temporary pastor is installed you’ll have a real pastor.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least one (1) issue raised by each of the three (3) ruling elders, Emily, Shin, and José, concerning the differences between teaching elders in temporary and permanent relationships. Provide and briefly discuss one (1) citation (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Emily, Shin, and José.

**- OR -**

AUGUST 2011

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

Page 6 of 6

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

After worship on Sunday morning, one of the college students who has attended regularly since the beginning of the fall semester approaches you. She says, “Pastor, I’d love to become more active in this church. I’ve heard that it’s possible to become an associate member without giving up my home church membership. Is that true?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify and discuss three (3) citations (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* relevant to the conversation.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, explain to the college student the requirements of membership, and whether it is possible for her request to be granted.

JANUARY 2012  
EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

**OPEN BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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**ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**THREE HOURS**

**OPEN BOOK**

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- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts





**SECTION II            CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

Early on Monday morning, Marsha, a ruling elder who teaches the confirmation class, knocks on your study door and comes in.

Pastor, I need to talk with you! After our class yesterday, one of the middle school girls in the class asked to talk with me. She said that last week's youth retreat was very upsetting. One of the ruling elders leading the retreat paid too much attention to her, always trying to get her alone and asking questions that were too personal. Before leaving, the ruling elder even put an arm around her and stroked her hair. What do we do?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Cite and briefly discuss at least three (3) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* that address the situation above. Include at least one (1) reference from three (3) of the following:
  - The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
  - The Form of Government
  - Directory for Worship
  - Rules of Discipline
  
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Marsha.

**SECTION III            CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

A.

You are a teaching elder serving as the solo pastor of a 200-member church in a rural community. You are driving back from a presbytery meeting at which a ruling elder was commissioned to serve a small church in a neighboring town. One of the ruling elders, riding with you in the car, asks, “What is the difference between you and the ruling elder commissioned today?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Citing at least three (3) references from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000), explain what is similar and different between a teaching elder serving as an installed pastor and a ruling elder commissioned to serve a church.

— OR —

**SECTION III            CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

B.

You are having a conversation with a young couple that expressed interest in attending a class for prospective members. During the conversation Patrick asks, “Pastor, does someone need to be a member of a church in order to be a good Christian?” Christine asks, “What will be expected of us if we become members?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Drawing on the *Book of Order*, identify at least two (2) issues raised by Patrick and at least two (2) issues raised by Christine. Cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, explain to Patrick and Christine the reasons for becoming members, and the privileges and responsibilities of membership.



## SECTION II CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH

### ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED

You have recently been installed as pastor and are conducting a training session for newly elected members of session. When you begin to instruct the class about “teaching elders” and “ruling elders” several members of the class begin to raise issues and ask questions:

Joshua: I feel uncomfortable calling you an “elder.” To me it belittles the call to ministry to say “elder,” rather than “pastor” or “minister.”

Esther: Pastor, why do they call you a “teaching” elder? Wouldn’t it make more sense to call you a “preaching” elder?

Matthew: I’ve been an elder in this church for thirty years. I used to think that “ruling elder” was what you called an elder in active service on session. You’re saying something very different. I don’t understand.

Ruth: Since we’re changing our terminology and using more inclusive language, shouldn’t we get rid of the word “elder” altogether? Aren’t we supposed to have session members of all ages?

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Drawing on the *Book of Order*, identify at least one (1) issue raised by each of the four elders and cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write a page for an officer instruction manual that succinctly describes the roles of a ruling elder and a teaching elder in a particular church and what the two roles have in common.

**SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

**A.**

Jeff, a ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church, expresses concern to you, his pastor, about whether he should accept a nomination to the presbytery committee responsible “to guide, nurture, and oversee the process of preparing to become a teaching elder.” (G-3.0307) Jeff asks, “How is a person who isn’t a pastor supposed to know how to help inquirers and candidates through the preparation process? They would be better served under the guidance of experienced pastors. Why are ruling elders required to be on this committee?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Drawing on the *Book of Order*, identify at least three (3) issues raised by Jeff. Cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Jeff.

August 2012

**SECTION III CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR          OPEN BOOK          REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

**B.**

You are the associate pastor teaching a confirmation class. One of the confirmands asks you the following question: “I was in worship last week when the pastor announced that there would be a meeting of the congregation following the service next week to talk about how to finance a new roof on the sanctuary. You told the class that the session makes the decisions for the church. Why do we need to have this congregational meeting?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Using at least four (4) different citations from **more than one chapter** of the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000), explain to the class why congregational meetings may be called and under what circumstances next Sunday’s meeting would or would not be appropriate.

January 2013

## SECTION I

## CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE

### ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED

F-1.0202 states “Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone *rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church* as he wills.”  
[*emphasis added*]

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. “Christ alone *rules, calls, teaches and uses the Church* as he wills.” Drawing from more than one of the four parts of the *Book of Order*, cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of these four areas of Christ’s authority. Four different references are required for this response.
2. Drawing on the citations in Required Response 1, write a reflection for a session retreat on how “Christ alone *rules, calls, teaches and uses the Church* as he wills.”

## **SECTION II CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH**

### **ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

You are teaching a new member class on the topic “Deacons: Who They Are and What They Do.” You begin by asking what the class thinks about deacons. You get the following responses:

- Bob:            In the denomination that I grew up in, the deacons ran the church.
- Roberta:        I read in the book of Acts that the first deacons were all men and had to provide meals for widows.
- Frieda:         Don’t they take the flowers to shut-ins and collect food for the food bank?
- Anita:          I know they report to the pastor.
- Bruce:          I think they serve communion, don’t they?

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify at least four (4) issues raised about the work of deacons in the PC(USA), citing a different *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue.
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, write a brief essay explaining who deacons are and what they do, addressing each of the issues identified in Required Response 1.

**SECTION III            CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

**A.**

The nominating committee is considering potential candidates for service as ruling elders. A member of the committee reports “I heard that one of our nominees pleaded guilty to shoplifting a few months ago.”

Joseph:    But we know this person has served this church well and faithfully for many years. I think that is what matters, not what happened outside the church.

Hannah:    If a person can't be trusted in the world, I believe we can't trust them with a position of authority in the church.

Mary:        Shouldn't we be about grace and forgiveness? Don't we demonstrate that best by showing that we trust this person even if others do not?

Elkanah:    If this is true, doesn't the Bible say “By their fruits you will know them”?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Drawing on the *Book of Order*, identify at least one (1) issue raised by each of the four named members of the nominating committee and cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified. This response requires at least four (4) different citations.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to each of the four named members of the nominating committee.

### **SECTION III CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR            OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

#### **B.**

The church treasurer has suggested reviewing the membership rolls in order to reduce the per capita apportionment in the future. Several session members respond:

Suzanna: We could save a lot of money if we only report the members who pledge.

Samuel: I can name several members of the church who have moved in the last three years and have not transferred their membership. Let's just remove them from the rolls.

Judith: We all know members who live right here in town who haven't attended services for years, yet we still pay per capita for them. I think we should vote tonight to delete them from membership.

Hosea: I move we instruct the pastor to call on our members in town who are not participating in the life of the church and invite them to come back to worship. If the members don't come back, I move we authorize the pastor to delete their names from the roll book.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Drawing on the *Book of Order*, identify at least three (3) issues raised by the ruling elders about the care of church members and/or the management of the church rolls. Cite and briefly discuss at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the ruling elder(s) who raised the issues identified.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Standard Ordination Exam  
Church Polity  
August 2013

Section I

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity F-1.0302b states:

Holiness is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Through the love of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God takes away the sin of the world. The holiness of the Church comes from Christ who sets it apart to bear witness to his love, and not from the purity of its doctrine or the righteousness of its actions.

Because in Christ the Church is holy, the Church, its members, and those in its ordered ministries strive to lead lives worthy of the Gospel we proclaim.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Drawing on this foundational principle, write an essay, citing at least three (3) different references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order*, excluding Section I (The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity), for a training manual that explains the expectation that those in ordered ministry "lead lives worthy of the Gospel we proclaim."

Section II

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

You are a member of the presbytery's commission responsible for the oversight of its congregations and teaching elders. The clerk of session of First Presbyterian Church calls and says, "Three of our largest givers passed away last year. The treasurer has informed the session that we no longer have the income to continue paying our current full-time pastor the same salary and benefits. As the session discusses this, what are our options?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Citing at least three (3) different references from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000), discuss the responsibilities of the session, the congregation, and the presbytery. At least one (1) citation each for the session, the congregation, and the presbytery is required.
2. Informed by your work in Required Response 1, respond to the clerk.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You are a minister member of presbytery, moderating a special session meeting of a neighboring congregation at the request of the installed pastor. Mrs. Kay, a ruling elder not currently serving on session, has sent the session a letter alleging voting misconduct in a recent congregational meeting. The letter accuses the pastor and clerk of deliberately allowing ineligible people to vote. In the letter Mrs. Kay demands that the pastor and clerk be reprimanded. As the session discusses the matter, various questions and assertions are put forward:

Emily:	Elder Kay should have challenged the vote at the meeting. Now that the meeting is over it's too late to do anything.
Ricardo:	Does anyone remember if Elder Kay was present at the meeting? She can't make accusations about the voting if she wasn't there, can she?
Roseanne:	I think we should ignore the whole thing. We don't really know if any ineligible people voted or not. Even if they did, we don't know that their participation affected the outcome.
Yuri:	It seems to me we should delegate some ruling elders to try to resolve this with Elder Kay. We trust our pastor and our clerk. I believe the voting was in order. We need to tell her to stop this nonsense and stop harassing them.
Michelle:	If Elder Kay is determined to see that someone is rebuked, shouldn't she write a letter asking the presbytery clerk to file charges?

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Identify at least three (3) issues in the dialogue at the session meeting, being sure to choose issues raised by at least three (3) different ruling elders. Identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the session, addressing the issues you have identified.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

### Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED  
BOOK OF ORDER ONLY  
(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

#### **B.**

You are a pastor of Springfield Presbyterian Church. The session of the congregation has a policy that members of staff cannot be members of the congregation. The choir director of five years asks to speak with you. When you meet, he says, "Pastor, I know that my wife and I are members elsewhere, but we feel like this is our church home. We would like to have our new baby baptized here. What steps need to be taken to make this happen?"

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Identify the steps necessary if this child were to be baptized at Springfield Presbyterian Church, citing at least three (3) *Book of Order* references (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Informed by your work in Required Response 1, respond to the choir director's question.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

Polity  
January 2014

Section I

**OPEN BOOK          REQUIRED  
BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

The *Book of Order* declares that after time for discernment and discussion, the vote of “a majority shall govern” (F-3.0205).

Yet the *Book of Order* repeatedly upholds the principle of *freedom of conscience*.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Discuss at least three (3) different ways in which the *Book of Order* provides for a presbyter’s exercise of *freedom of conscience* even when a majority vote in a council has prevailed against the conscience of that presbyter. Include at least one (1) different citation (e.g., X-0.0000) for each way identified.
2. Discuss at least one (1) limitation in the *Book of Order* on a presbyter’s exercise of *freedom of conscience* when a majority vote in a council has prevailed against the conscience of that presbyter.

## Section II

### **OPEN BOOK            REQUIRED BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

You have been called to a congregation that recently merged with a smaller neighboring congregation with Congregationalist polity. You have been asked to host a retreat to explain the Presbyterian system of government led by ruling and teaching elders working together.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite four (4) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* that illustrate the principles of shared governance by ruling elders and teaching elders. Choose the citations as follows:
  - one from The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity that illustrates the *heritage* of shared governance,
  - one from The Form of Government that illustrates the *practice* of shared governance,
  - one from The Directory for Worship that illustrates how shared governance affects *worship*, and
  - one from The Rules of Discipline that illustrates how shared governance affects Presbyterian *discipline*.
2. For each citation identified in Required Response 1, describe how that reference illustrates the theme of shared governance.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED  
BOOK OF ORDER ONLY  
(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You are a member of the presbytery's commission responsible for the oversight of its teaching elders. You receive a phone call from a teaching elder in your presbytery who has been seeking a call for over a year. He has been in conversation with a local Missionary Baptist congregation that has asked him to be their Interim Pastor. He is asking you what steps need to be taken for him to receive permission to serve in this role.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Cite (e.g., X-0.0000) and discuss four (4) different references in the *Book of Order* that address his request.
2. Explain to the teaching elder why this request may or may not be granted.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED  
BOOK OF ORDER ONLY  
(CHOOSE ONE A or B)**

**B.**

You have been called as pastor of Mid-State Presbyterian Church, a young, growing congregation. The members believe they need to expand the congregation's boards. At the next session meeting, one of the ruling elders says that when he was growing up the congregations he attended had a session and a board of trustees. That begins a discussion:

Megan:	What's a trustee, and would they affect the way our church functions?
Rudolpho:	That sounds archaic. Do churches even have trustees anymore?
Samuel:	My former church had deacons. What difference does it make if you have deacons or trustees?
Sean:	In the church I grew up in, the session and trustees were always fighting about which board was really responsible for the building and budget.
Marisha:	What steps would we need to take to establish a board of trustees here?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Describe the responsibilities appropriate to a board of trustees.
2. Respond to at least three (3) different questions raised by the ruling elders, citing at least one (1) different reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each question answered.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

## **Church Polity, Summer 2014**

### **Section I**

In F-1.0302 the *Book of Order* states:

With all Christians of the Church catholic, we affirm that the Church is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Excluding section one, The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, cite and briefly discuss at least four (4) references (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order*, one (1) for each of the four (4) marks of F-1.0302. These citations should show how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives witness to the oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church of Jesus Christ.
2. At an upcoming retreat you plan to challenge the congregation to put the four marks of the Church into practice in the year ahead. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, identify specific activities in which the congregation can engage to demonstrate each of the four (4) marks of the Church, and briefly explain how each activity gives witness to the respective mark of the Church.

## Section II

As pastor of Mizpah Presbyterian Church, you have been notified that a member of the congregation is making a donation to the church of forty acres of farmland near the intersection of two major roads in a rapidly developing part of your town. At the next meeting of session, after agreeing that this is a wonderful gift that provides many opportunities for the church, the following discussion takes place:

Luke: The only course of action for us is to sell the land and use the money to create an endowment fund. It will provide income for future generations to use here at Mizpah.

Leigh: Since it is farmland already, we can create a ministry that grows fresh food for the underprivileged in our community.

Amy: I think we should sell this building and move out there. We would have room for sports fields that we could use for ministry.

J J: A number of our new members live in that area. We could start a satellite church and really broaden our ministry. We could get one of those big tents and hold services this summer to get it started.

### REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Identify three (3) issues raised in the dialogue, citing one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified. Be sure to choose three (3) distinct issues, one (1) each from three (3) different ruling elders.
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, pick one (1) of the suggestions for the use of the gift and respond to the ruling elder, outlining the steps necessary to make it happen.

### **Section III**

The session of the congregation you serve as pastor has been studying the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) constitution and finds itself in disagreement with several parts of *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*. The session asks you to help them understand how the constitution can be changed. They raise a variety of issues:

Roland: Everything in *The Book of Confession* is doctrine; it's been the teaching of the church for hundreds of years. We can't do anything about it.

Juanita: Doesn't the *Book of Order* say that the majority rules? It doesn't matter how long something has been in the constitution; if a majority of the members of the PC(USA) is ready to change something it can be changed.

Hiroko: I don't believe it's that simple. I think there has to be a difference between revising church rules and redefining church beliefs.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) issues raised in the conversation, citing at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue raised. Be sure to choose three (3) distinct issues, one (1) each from the three (3) different ruling elders.
2. Drawing on the relevant material in your answer to Required Response 1, outline a training class for the session that briefly describes the two parts of the constitution and how each part can be amended.

**Fall 2014  
Church Polity**

**Section I: Constitutional Heritage**

The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity F-2.05 states:

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed tradition. Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who in Christ and by the power of the Spirit creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. Related to this central affirmation of God's sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:

The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;

Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;

A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation; and

The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Drawing from more than one (1) section of the *Book of Order* and excluding section one, The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, cite at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each of these four (4) great themes of the Reformed tradition related to the sovereignty of God.
2. Drawing on Required Response 1, prepare a page for your Session Training Manual discussing these four (4) great themes of the Reformed tradition.

**Fall 2014**  
**Church Polity**

**Section II: Constitutional Order for the Particular Church**

You serve on the committee that is responsible for the oversight of the teaching elders and the congregations of the presbytery. The pastor emeritus of Bountiful Harvest Presbyterian Church comes to you with a proposal. A regional planning commission is promoting a new urban center in an undeveloped area. Three ruling elders from Bountiful Harvest have decided to donate a banquet hall that they own in that area in order to form a new church. These ruling elders along with three other families from Bountiful Harvest would be part of this new congregation. The pastor emeritus has agreed to serve as the organizing pastor of this new congregation.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) issues raised by this scenario, citing at least one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order*, using a different citation for each issue raised.
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, outline the steps that would be required to establish a new church in this facility.

**Fall 2014**  
**Church Polity**

**Section III: Constitutional Order as a Tool for Ministry**

You have just begun to serve as pastor of a congregation whose pastor recently retired. You have been looking at the church's financial practices and are concerned about what you have seen. You are now meeting with the Leadership Team: the clerk of session, the moderator of deacons, the president of the trustees, and the treasurer. In response to your questions they give you the following information:

Lena: The trustees are responsible for counting the weekly receipts. This month it's my turn. For as long as I can remember, our twelve trustees take turns, one trustee every month, for counting and depositing the money.

Keanu: I've been treasurer for two years. To be truthful, Pastor, I don't even know how many accounts the church has; nobody knows. Each organization has its own treasurer and its own funds. Sometimes the funds are divided into several accounts.

Carl: Pastor, you asked about funds for people who come to the church seeking help. You will have a bank card for that purpose. Next week we'll finish transferring it to you. As clerk, I've already handled most of the paperwork. The bank just needs your signature. I can't give you many details because the statements will come to you as pastor. We expect you to keep such personal information secret.

Whitney: You need to sit down with me and the rest of the deacons. We're responsible for the church's benevolence budget, and I'd like to begin thinking about next year's budget soon. You'll be doing the same thing with the clerk, and the treasurer, and the session for the operational budget.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify at least three (3) issues, each issue raised by a different member of the Leadership Team, citing the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) and **quoting the most relevant portion(s) of the citation** for each issue. (A citation may be used more than once as long as a different relevant portion of the citation is quoted.)
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, respond to each of the three (3) people you identified.

## Section I, Constitutional Heritage

D-1.0102 states:

The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, 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, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Using only The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity section of the *Book of Order*, cite four (4) references (e.g., F-0.0000) and prepare a presentation for a session retreat that demonstrates how this statement grows out of the foundational principles of Presbyterian polity.

## Church Polity, Winter 2015

### Section II, Constitutional Order for the Particular Church

Ruling elder Christine asks to speak to you and says, “Pastor, we recently found out that one of our members was in the hospital. Carrie Binks visited her Tuesday afternoon and decided to administer communion to her. Since we already have a ministry that takes communion to nursing homes after worship, she assumed this was okay. Was it?”

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify three (3) issues in the scenario. Cite and discuss one (1) reference (e.g., X 0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each issue identified.
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, write a lesson plan to train elders and deacons on the proper administration of the Lord’s Supper for those isolated from the community’s worship.

### SECTION III CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY

#### Commissions

Dustin, a ruling elder in the congregation you serve as pastor, is also a lawyer. He has been asked to serve on the presbytery's permanent judicial commission. The news of his nomination begins a conversation among the elders about commissions:

Gerry: That's quite a responsibility, isn't it? Doesn't a commission have the same power that the whole presbytery has?

Jacqueline: Before I moved here I was a session member in a church that had a huge fight. The presbytery appointed a commission that came in and basically took over the church, the session, and everything. That commission sure had a lot of power. For a while I thought they were going to kick out our pastor!

Carlos: When I was elected to session my work schedule kept me from coming to the session meeting where new officers were examined and approved for office. The church commissioned session members to conduct my examination so I could be ordained. That was all the power they had.

Minerva: Are you sure it's about power? It sounds as if it's about particular responsibilities. You don't need to be a lawyer to do that kind of work. I thought Dustin was nominated for the judicial commission because of his experience as a lawyer.

#### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Identify and briefly discuss three (3) different issues, each issue raised by a different ruling elder, citing at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue raised. (A citation may be used more than once as long as a different relevant portion of the citation is quoted.)
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, respond to each of the three (3) elders you identified.

**AUGUST 2007**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [*Book of Order* G-14.0310d(3)]

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and/or contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question utilizing *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be graded down for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

**AUGUST 2007  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [Book of Order G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (published in 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Sections II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

You may write your answers in ink, in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use pencils for your answers. Any such answers shall be returned ungraded. Please write on every line in the examination book supplied for the examination. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded.

**You may use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. If you use one of these means:**

- **You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam.**
- **Since a printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam and failure to do so will result in failure, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.**
- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.**

Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar shall be graded accordingly.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.

**AUGUST 2007  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

The third article of the Nicene Creed states:

- 1 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
- 2 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
- 3 who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
- 4 who has spoken through the prophets.
- 5 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
- 6 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
- 7 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
- 8 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

A theologian has recently written:

The third article of the Nicene Creed . . . may give the impression of being a few general affirmations about the Holy Spirit followed by a laundry list of disconnected doctrinal leftovers. The impression is a false one, however, for . . . the third [article] provides a coherent narrative of God's being and action.<sup>1</sup>

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay in which you *relate the Holy Spirit to the affirmations in lines 5 through 8 above*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions* other than the Nicene Creed as you write your essay.

<sup>1</sup>Quotation left anonymous by permission of the author.

**NOTE: You must use a clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, copyright 2002 or later, for Section I. For the purposes of this examination, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document. Turn in your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor by the end of the first hour of the examination. The proctor will then give you Sections II and III (pp. 5-7) of the examination.**

**AUGUST 2007  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 4 of 7**

**THIS PAGE HAS BEEN INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.  
UPON COMPLETING SECTION I,  
TURN IN YOUR COPY OF THE *BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.  
THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**AUGUST 2007  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

You are talking with some elders of the church you serve as pastor. They are discussing popular concepts of God.

Joanna: There's a support group that meets weekly at the restaurant where I work. They talk about their "Higher Power." Personally, I'm not comfortable calling God "my Higher Power." What do you think?

Toby: One of my favorite TV shows always ends with God helping some unfortunate character or another. I think it appeals to a broad audience because the writers simplify God.

Leah: My mentor calls God the Divine One. The name doesn't matter, as long as the Supreme Being helps me get in touch with my inner spirituality, and evolve along my personal spiritual path.

Chong Su: Our mayor says in her speeches that our city is blessed by God. I think she's right; the Master Builder is helping our local economy prosper.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay from a Reformed perspective about *limitations of popular concepts of God as one who helps us do good and feel better*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building upon your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the elders above.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

Young adult members regularly gather for coffee and conversation at the church you serve as pastor. One week you join them and hear this discussion:

Ophelia:        Spirituality is so personal, so individual. Each person has to figure out his or her own spirituality. It doesn't matter what it is, as long as it feels right. Religion is just one option for being spiritual.

Teresa:         I'm not sure about that. I think it's more mystical; you have to have some sort of radical experience to be really in touch with God.

Grace:         I suppose it might be mystical, but really, being a spiritual person demands discipline and patience, even when you don't feel close to God.

John:          I think we forget that the light of Christ is always in us. We just have to let it shine through us, so that it flows from God through us to others.

Solomon:       I don't hear any of you saying anything about the church. We have a duty to go to church. That's how we are spiritual and that's how we have fellowship with God.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay articulating the *importance of Christian community for the way Reformed Christians understand spirituality*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building upon your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to at least three (3) of the people above.

**– OR –**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

Recently, a man in your state was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. The wife of the victim, as an expression of Christian faith, says she has forgiven the murderer. One Sunday after the trial, members of the church you serve as pastor are having a conversation. Among their comments you hear:

Petra: Even after I forgive people, I still get angry and want them to pay. And then I feel like I have to forgive all over again. Aren't there limits on forgiveness?

Helene: My mother always told me, "forgive and forget," but isn't it more likely that we will prevent bad things if we remember the bad things people have done?

Raphael: I'm not even sure forgiveness is a good idea; it gets in the way of pursuing justice.

Walter: I think forgiveness can be a form of justice because it makes people feel guilty and obligated to you.

Anna: I know that we should forgive people for what they do to us, but we don't have the right to forgive people for what they do to others.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on the *implications that forgiveness has for society*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to at least two (2) of the persons above.

**JANUARY 2008**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

This examination shall assess the candidate's capacity to make effective use of the classical theological disciplines and of the confessional documents of the church in relating the Gospel to the faith and life of the church in the contemporary world. [*Book of Order* G-14.0310d(3)]

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and/or contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, and/or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Interpreting a confessional stance faithfully in context. An open book question utilizing *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will be included on this examination. The purpose of this question is to explore the candidate's capacity to articulate the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be graded down for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

**JANUARY 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (published in 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Sections II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

You may write your answers in ink, in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use pencils for your answers. Any such answers shall be returned ungraded. Please write on every line in the examination book supplied for the examination. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded.

**You may use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. If you use one of these means:**

- **You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam.**
- **Since a printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam and failure to do so will result in failure, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.**
- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.**

Papers that cannot be understood by the readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar shall be graded accordingly.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

It is recorded in the Scriptures that a Jew from Nazareth named Jesus was executed outside Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago with the assent of the religious leaders of the Jews and by the legal authority of the governing powers of the Roman Empire.

It is further asserted in the Scriptures that this execution had profound and far-reaching effects:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

(Romans 5:6-9, English Standard Version)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *how this death accomplished forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000), from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

**NOTE: You must use a clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, copyright 2002 or later, for Section I. For the purposes of this examination, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document. Turn in your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor by the end of the first hour of the examination. The proctor will then give you Sections II and III (pp. 5-7) of the examination.**

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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**UPON COMPLETING SECTION I,**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF THE *BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.**

**THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**JANUARY 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

As you are driving to the church you serve as pastor, the onslaught of slogans on the radio becomes overwhelming:

“Shouldn’t you get the best to protect your family?”

“You deserve a break today.”

“Isn’t it time for an upgrade?”

“Because you’re worth it.”

Then, somehow, you hear a still small voice:

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17, New Revised Standard Version)

When you arrive at the office, you consult *The Book of Confessions* to expand upon what this means:

**Q. 80.** What is required in the Tenth Commandment?

A. The Tenth Commandment requireth full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor and all that is his. (Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.080)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *what the tenth commandment says to Christians in an economy that depends on convincing people that they want more than they need*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**JANUARY 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You, as pastor, are leading an adult education class on growing in the Christian faith. The following discussion takes place:

Abe:        I'm frustrated because I feel like I'm not growing in faith. I spend so much time preparing meals and sharing transportation duties for the kids. With so much to do for my family, when is there time for God?

Jordan:    I used to attend prayers at church every morning, but now I feel guilty that I can't.

Lakisha:   I'm busy too. Even though I live alone, I work long days, have a long commute, and when I get home I'm the only one to do chores.

You are concerned enough about this conversation to refer to *The Book of Confessions* after the class. There you read the following affirmation of Christians' home life: activities when done

in truth faith by way of domestic duties and the management of their households are in God's sight holy and truly good works. They are no less pleasing to God than prayers, fasting, and almsgiving.

(Second Helvetic Confession, 5.250)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *the connection between Christian faith and everyday home life*. Base your essay on your understanding of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building upon your answer in Required Response 1, briefly describe the next two sessions you will plan for the class.

**– OR –**

**JANUARY 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

As pastor of a church, you are planning a retreat to help the congregation experience the goodness of God in the beauty of creation. You have provided the following two quotations for participants to read before the retreat:

Has the Lord clothed the flowers with great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our nostrils, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, and our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? Did he not render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?

(Calvin, *Institutes*, III.x.2)

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

(Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.001)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay in preparation for the retreat reflecting theologically on *the goodness of God made manifest in the extravagant beauty God created*. Base your essay on your understanding of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**AUGUST 2008**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Articulating the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

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**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

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It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**AUGUST 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

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**AUGUST 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION I. CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

**(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

Recent events in your town and in the life of your church members leave you struggling to help them understand the providence of God in a world that seems incoherent. A minister colleague points you to two resources:

**Q. 27. What do you understand by the providence of God?**

A. The almighty and ever-present power of God whereby he still upholds, as it were by his own hand, heaven and earth together with all creatures, and rules in such a way that leaves and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and everything else, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

(Heidelberg Catechism, 4.027)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39, New Revised Standard Version)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE:**

Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *how the doctrine of providence is illuminated by God's love*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. You may not use the quotation from the Heidelberg Catechism given above as one of the three. You may use other quotations from the Heidelberg Catechism.

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**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

You, as pastor, are leading the weekly confirmation class. You are explaining the importance of the Prayer of Confession and the Declaration of Pardon in the Service for the Lord's Day. The following discussion ensues among the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds in the class:

Rick: When I confess sin and hear the Declaration of Pardon, I don't feel forgiven until I hear the person I hurt tell me, "I forgive you."

Sally: Are you ever on a guilt trip! We're all basically good people. You don't need to confess anything; just get on with life!

Jane: I went forward at a revival meeting at my friend's church. I told God I was sorry. I even cried. The preacher said repenting once was enough. That means I don't have to say I'm sorry anymore.

Mike: But when I feel guilty, how do I know that I'm forgiven? What if I'm not?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *confession and repentance*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the students in the class.

**AUGUST 2008**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You, as pastor of a Presbyterian church, are on the planning committee for a joint worship service among Christian churches in your community. The committee has chosen the theme of “Christian unity and diversity.” The committee has selected two quotations to express the theme.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

(Revelation 1:4a, New Revised Standard Version)

One, then, is the River, but many the channels of the gifts of the Spirit.

(Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *relations among Christian churches*. Include reflection on the above quotations. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, state at least two (2) particular theological emphases Presbyterians bring to ecumenical dialogue and discuss how those emphases could be expressed in the ecumenical worship service.

**– OR –**

**AUGUST 2008  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

Ray, a member of the congregation you serve as pastor, comes to you and says:

I met Tom while working at the local homeless shelter. It was clear by just looking at him that he was not the average homeless person. When I took him out to dinner the next night I discovered that he's a graduate student.

I think God's telling me to help. I have an old garage in my backyard and feel like I should allow Tom to sleep there until he gets his feet on the ground. I remember Jesus' words, "I was a stranger, and you took me in."

He asks you what you think.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *hospitality*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, guide Ray theologically and pastorally.

**JANUARY 2009**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

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3. Articulating the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
4. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

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It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**JANUARY 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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**JANUARY 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

**(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

The news has been covering a report from another part of the world where one ethnic group is seeking to kill all members of another ethnic group. You, as pastor of a local church, participate in the following conversation with members of your congregation:

- Mary: I think God will judge our country for not responding to this horrible situation.
- Adam: I don't think God judges countries. I think Christ will judge the heart of each person when he returns.
- Ruth: But God's judgment can have an impact on our current actions. Regardless of Christ's return, the threat of judgment motivates us now to do what God wants.
- Samuel: All this talk of judgment makes me nervous. The Christian God is a merciful God. Judgment is just for unbelievers; Jesus already took our judgment upon himself.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *God's judgment*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions* as you write your essay.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the members' comments above.

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**JANUARY 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.  
THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**JANUARY 2009**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

A member in your congregation asks to meet with you and says, “Pastor, I’m really struggling with my faith. I know that I am baptized. But how can I really know that God loves me and has chosen me to belong to God forever?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay, from a Reformed perspective, on the *relationship between baptism and election*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, describe briefly how you would respond theologically to the member.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

The session of the church that you serve as pastor is studying The Theological Declaration of Barmen and comes to the following passages:

The Christian church “has to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with its faith as with its obedience, with its message as with its order, that it is solely [Christ’s] property, and that it lives and wants to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance.” (8.17)

“We reject the false doctrine, as though the church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.” (8.18)

The session is especially interested in the notion that the church makes a theological testimony through its order—that is, through the way it organizes its life. Moreover, the session decides that it would like to apply these words to the way it will organize its *own* life.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay, from a Reformed perspective, on theological principles that should guide a session as it seeks *to order its life as a testimony to its identity in Jesus Christ, thereby resisting temptations to order its life according to prevailing ideological and political convictions*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Identify and discuss at least three (3) practical steps a session could take to order its life according to the theological principles you have articulated in Required Response 1.

**– OR –**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

You, as pastor, are leading the church youth group in a discussion of the relationship between marriage and the Christian life. The young people are especially interested in your comment that, for Christians, marriage is a “calling.” They pose the following questions:

Rashad: How can you know if you are called to marry a particular person?

Alicia: Isn't marriage first of all a matter of getting my needs met?

Samuel: Why do Christians take marriage vows if they can't be sure that they will fulfill them.

Barbara: What does marriage have to do with our Christian calling to discipleship?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *Christian marriage as a calling*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources—the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to each of the four (4) young people.

**AUGUST 2009**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE**

**(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Articulating the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

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It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. (*Book of Order* G-6.0108b)

**AUGUST 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (copyright 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Sections II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

You may write your answers in ink in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use pencil; any such answers shall be returned ungraded. If you handwrite your examination, do not skip lines in the examination book. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). Illegible papers shall be returned ungraded.

**You are strongly urged to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. If you use one of these means:**

- **You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam.**
- **A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the test site. Not turning in a printed copy will result in failure. You are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.**
- **Number the pages.**
- **Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.**
- **Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.**
- **When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.**

Syntax and grammar will not be graded. However, the grades of papers that cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar may be affected.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three sections. Rounding up or down shall be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three sections to be considered Satisfactory.

**AUGUST 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(*THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY*)**

Several members of the congregation you serve as pastor have been discussing a popular television documentary on the historical Jesus. One of these members drops by your office and says, “The church worships Jesus as God. But scholars in the documentary said that even though he was a great religious leader, he was just a human. I’m not sure what to believe.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay from a Reformed perspective in which you discuss *the divinity and humanity of Jesus*. Use and discuss citations from *The Book of Confessions* (e.g., 0.000), at least two (2) citations for Jesus’ divinity and at least two (2) citations for Jesus’ humanity. Citations must come from at least four (4) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, explain at least one (1) way in which the doctrine of the two natures of Christ makes a difference for Christian belief.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.**

**UPON COMPLETING SECTION I,**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF**

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**THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**AUGUST 2009**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

During a training session for newly elected officers you, as pastor, read aloud the third ordination question:

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? (W-4.4003c)

In the discussion that ensues, you hear the following comments:

David: I like some of the more recent confessions, but the older ones seem out of date to me. Why does our denomination have so many confessions from the past?

Olivia: I'm uncomfortable promising to be led by the confessions. The freedom of my conscience is important to me.

Matt: Most of the people in our congregation have never even heard of *The Book of Confessions*. What difference do these confessions really make for our church?

Theresa: I've noticed that on Sundays we use one of the confessions in worship. I've never quite understood why we do that.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay in which you explain from a Reformed perspective *the purpose and authority of the church's confessions of faith*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the officers above.

**AUGUST 2009  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You, as pastor, are teaching the youth class on Sunday morning. In one session, you introduce the topic of creation using the following passage from the Westminster Confession:

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

(Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.022)

Jeremy, a young man in the class, responds, "I learned in biology class that life forms began in the ancient seas and evolved over millions of years into human life. How can the church believe that God created the world? Do I have to believe this? It doesn't make any sense."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *God's creation of the world*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, discuss how you would respond theologically to Jeremy.

**OR**

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

You are pastor of a church whose elders review the session's duties each year at a retreat. During the retreat, one of the elders reads the following passage from the *Book of Order*:

When persons baptized as infants reach an age when they are ready to make public their profession of faith and accept their responsibility in the life of the church, the session should invite, encourage, and help them prepare for their responsibility as active church members. (G-5.0101c)

Elders note that in the past many teenagers have left the congregation before their public profession of faith. The elders agree that something better should be done to bring young adolescents into the active membership of the church.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of the *public profession of faith for adolescents baptized as infants*. Base your essay on your understanding of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least three (3) practical ways the session can “invite, encourage, and help [adolescents] prepare for their responsibility as active church members.”

**JANUARY 2010**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

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**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

Richard is a new Christian and is now attending the church you pastor. One week you preach about the grace we receive in Jesus Christ. After the service, Richard asks you to explain what you meant by saying that grace helps us “to work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). He asks, “I thought Jesus just forgives our sins. Isn’t that what salvation is all about?”

As you think about how to respond, you remember that Calvin referred to justification and sanctification as two aspects of one act of grace.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *how Christ’s one act of grace is at work in both justification and sanctification*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond briefly to Richard’s question.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

You, as pastor, are leading an adult class on the way worship shapes people's theology.

Because you will baptize an infant in worship next Sunday, the class asks you to focus on baptism. You decide to emphasize how the church's practice of baptizing infants makes a profound theological statement about how Christians understand who God is.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay in which you explain from a Reformed perspective *how the church's practice of baptizing infants makes a theological statement about the character of God*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, write a prayer to be used at a baptism, reflecting these aspects of God's character.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

Members of your congregation have recently returned from a mission trip to rural Mexico where they helped construct a church building. They are making a presentation to the session and recommend that the congregation begin a partnership with the Mexican congregation.

Members of the session make the following comments:

- Joseph: I think we should invite some members of the Mexican church to come here for a week next year instead of our going there. They may be able to learn from observing our church.
- Monica: I'm not sure sending our members on mission trips is good stewardship. Wouldn't it be more help to the Mexican church if we just sent them money?
- Sandra: How can we really be in meaningful partnership with people hundreds of miles away when just a few of us spend time with them for only a week?
- Klaus: Jesus tells us to go into all the world to make disciples. We should do mission in places where people need to hear the gospel, instead of visiting Christians in other countries.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed theological understanding of *Christian mission, engaging some of the issues raised by the members of session*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to three (3) of the elders.

**- OR -**

**JANUARY 2010  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

You are a pastor teaching an adult class on God's self-revelation. The following comments are shared:

Isaac: I really like what the Psalmist says about creation: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). If we just meditate on the beauty of nature, we can know so much about God.

Nan: Nature is not enough. We call the Bible the Word of God; we never call nature the Word of God.

Robert: That's a good point. We learn about God through Christ and not through creation. Since the Bible tells us about Christ, all we need is the Bible.

Mary: But the Bible is often hard to understand. I agree with Isaac: nature speaks to me more powerfully and clearly about God. Remember what Romans says: "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made" (Romans 1:20).

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of *the relationship between Scripture and nature as means of God's self-revelation*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of the following resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) of the class members.

**AUGUST 2010**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

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**AUGUST 2010  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS** (continued)

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You are encouraged to use a computer. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You must confirm with the proctor in advance of the testing date what equipment (power strips, computers, printers, etc.) is available at the testing site.

If you use a computer:

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- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

**Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found as unsatisfactory:**

- **Do not include your name**
- **Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery**
- **Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended**
- **Do not identify professors with whom you have studied**
- **Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before**

All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a "Satisfactory" evaluation on at least two of the three sections to be considered "Satisfactory."

**AUGUST 2010  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

Several people in the congregation you serve as pastor have recently asked about the passing of the peace during the worship service. In response, you and the session decide that peace will be the subject of the next adult education series.

In preparation, you turn first to John 14:27 (New Revised Standard Version), in which Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

As you consider the many different types of peace, you turn to *The Book of Confessions*.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay in which you identify and discuss *different aspects of a Christian understanding of peace* from a Reformed perspective. Use and discuss four (4) citations (e.g., 0.000) from *The Book of Confessions*. Citations must come from four (4) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

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**UPON COMPLETION OF SECTION I**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.**

**THE PROCTOR WILL THEN GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III  
OF THE EXAMINATION.**

**AUGUST 2010  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

As pastor, you are leading the worship committee of the session in a discussion of the concept of Sabbath. You share the following section from The Heidelberg Catechism:

**Q. 103. What does God require in the fourth commandment?**

A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and Christian education be maintained, and that I diligently attend church, especially on the Lord's day, to hear the Word of God, to participate in the holy Sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian service to those in need. Second, that I cease from my evil works all the days of my life, allow the Lord to work in me through his Spirit, and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath. (4.103)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay reflecting on *the theological meaning of Sabbath for life today*, from a Reformed perspective. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**AUGUST 2010  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

Linda, a member of the congregation you serve as pastor, comes to see you the week after Easter. Her husband has been struggling with Alzheimer's disease. She says,

Pastor, it was so hard for me to listen to the Holy Week services this year. So much of our faith is about remembering: Jesus telling us to share the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him; the thief on Good Friday asking Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom; and then on Easter you asked us to remember our baptism.

My husband can't even remember who I am, let alone that he was baptized, or anything about Jesus or the church. I had to put him in a nursing home, where he doesn't know or recognize anyone. We have loved each other for fifty years. I think about him every day. What does his faith mean when he can't remember anything?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay in which you identify and discuss *two (2) theological issues* important in the Reformed tradition that underlie Linda's concern about her husband. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond *theologically* to Linda's question.

**- OR -**

**AUGUST 2010**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

You are pastor of a church and post a sign-up sheet for a trip to a local art exhibit. Members begin the following conversation with you.

Lois: Pastor, I am surprised that you would suggest this trip. I thought that, given the Reformation, Presbyterians were against art.

Tim: My former church had an artist-in-residence who helped us understand God through the use of sculpture and painting.

Bruce: I think the arts are a bridge to help us understand our culture and bring the gospel to culture.

Abby: But some particular works of art today are just anti-Christian.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of *the place of the arts in Christian life*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your essay in Required Response 1, respond *theologically* to three (3) of the comments above.

**JANUARY 2011**

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

The Examination of Theological Competence seeks to determine the candidate's readiness for ministry in the use of biblical, classical, and contemporary theological insights within the Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The examination may deal with questions of confessional, doctrinal, historical, or ethical significance. Accordingly, questions intend to test a candidate's ability to discern the theological issues inherent in a situation and to address them competently as follows:

1. Articulating the contemporary relevance of the Reformed tradition as it is embodied in the confessional documents.
2. Showing that Christian doctrines as expressed in the Reformed tradition illuminate Christian faith and life.
3. Applying Reformed theology in the practice of ministry in relation to questions of ecclesiastical, political, social, economic, and personal ethics.

The word "Reformed," wherever it is used in this examination, means a theological perspective in broad agreement with the theology of John Calvin, the confessional literature of the Reformed churches, and *The Book of Confessions*.

**WHAT IS NOT BEING EXAMINED**

This examination does not seek to examine personal faith or to determine the acceptability of the candidate's views within Presbyterian confessional standards. That determination rests with the presbytery. Rather, this examination seeks to determine the candidate's competence to work within the Reformed theological heritage. There is some latitude within this heritage, and an answer will not be evaluated more rigorously for taking one position rather than another within the heritage. However, answers outside the scope of the Reformed heritage would tend to demonstrate lack of readiness for Presbyterian ministry.

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. [*Book of Order* G-6.0108b]

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**A clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions* (copyright 2002 or later) will be needed as a resource for Section I of the examination. (The Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document for the purposes of this examination.) No additional books, notes, outlines, or other outside resources may be used.**

Sections II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

**JANUARY 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS** (continued)

You must use a computer to prepare your responses. **Handwritten papers or those that are illegible for any reason will be returned without being evaluated.** Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You must confirm with the proctor in advance of the testing date what equipment (power strips, computers, printers, etc.) is available at the testing site.

You must comply with the following requirements:

- You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other resource on the computer or a network during the exam.
- A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the test site. Not turning in a printed copy will result in failure. You are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment and software are properly working and coordinated.
- Number the pages.
- Include your candidate number on each page of the exam, **but not your name.**
- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

**Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found unsatisfactory:**

- **Do not include your name**
- **Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery**
- **Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended**
- **Do not identify professors whom you have studied**
- **Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before**

All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a "Satisfactory" evaluation on at least two of the three sections to be considered "Satisfactory."

**JANUARY 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED  
(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

During a class for prospective members, you, as the pastor, introduce a familiar definition of faith from Calvin's Institutes for discussion:

...a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

*(Institutes of the Christian Religion, 3.2.7)*

In response, the class starts to comment on the definition:

Mark: This is great. I've never thought about faith having to do with both heart and mind.

Ruth: I agree that it sounds good, but don't "mind" and "heart" mean about the same thing?

Luke: No, to me they're very different. Faith should be more a matter of the heart; the mind has more to do with logic and science.

Esther: I don't think faith is a matter of the heart. I'm a rationalist who knows that emotions and feelings can be misleading.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

From a Reformed perspective, write an essay on *how faith involves both the mind and the heart*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

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THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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**UNPON COMPLETING SECTION I**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.**

**THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**JANUARY 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

The news has reported recent incidents of hateful speech and violence against immigrants in your area. The next Sunday, you, as pastor, are leading an adult education class on I Corinthians, and read: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13:13, New Revised Standard Version)

You mention the view that these three theological virtues, faith, hope, and love, must be given to us by God; we cannot develop them by our own human power. You also point out that Aquinas wrote, "Love is friendship first with God and secondly with all who belong to God." (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, 25, 4)

The following discussion takes place in the class:

Matt: That sounds so theoretical. Considering the recent news, I want practical advice about how to love the immigrants at my work place when others ridicule them.

Jonah: Maybe in heaven we will be able to love perfectly, but right now, I'm worried I will lose my job to a new worker.

Chloe: I feel torn. It seems like I have to be *against* the people who hate in order to be *for* the immigrants who are hated. I thought I was supposed to love everyone.

Deb: It's not so complicated. Why can't we just love people as Jesus did?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of *love of neighbor*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond *theologically* to three (3) members of the class.

**JANUARY 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

During a session meeting at the church you serve as pastor, the elders are struggling with a decrease in giving that has strained the church's budget. In order to keep up with increasing utility costs, some elders suggest eliminating the church's annual contribution to The House of Bread, a local mission that provides food and services to poor and homeless people. Others add their opinions:

Adam: As much as I'd rather not say it, we do have to deal with our church's needs. I'm sure losing our donation won't make a big difference to The House of Bread.

Ellen: I can't believe what I'm hearing! We should eliminate other things before we stop helping the poor people in our area!

Jim: Exactly! Jesus told us to give money to poor people and we will have treasure in heaven. What would Jesus do?

Mary: What would Jesus do? Didn't he also say that we would always have the poor with us? The gospel is about the salvation of souls, not social work.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. From a Reformed perspective, write an essay on *how the church is called to respond to poverty and poor people*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond *theologically* to two (2) of the session members.

**JANUARY 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

Elizabeth, a deacon in the church you serve as pastor, does regular hospital visitation. She begins a conversation with you.

Pastor, before my mother-in-law died she shared her favorite Bible verses, received communion, and seemed at peace with God. But even though my father was a devoted church member, he fought his death every step of the way, didn't want any family around him, and was even angry at God. Because of my work as a deacon, I need help in understanding what it means to die in Christ.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *dying in Christ*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond *theologically* to Elizabeth's concern.

AUGUST 2011

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**WHAT IS BEING EXAMINED**

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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Sections II and III of the examination are **CLOSED BOOK**.

**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS (continued)**

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- Double-space your responses and use a 12-point font.
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**IMPORTANT:            READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED  
(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

As pastor of a church, you are leading an adult church school series on the Jewish Holocaust. While talking about the role of the church in Germany during World War II, you read a few excerpts from The Theological Declaration of Barmen. The following discussion ensues:

- Jeff: I really appreciate what you've been saying about the Barmen Declaration and think we should remove the American flag from the sanctuary.
- Barbara: As a veteran, I must say that the flag has never conflicted with my faith. As a Christian citizen, I have duties to both God and country, right?
- Seth: I agree. After all, we're a Christian nation founded on biblical principles of freedom and justice.
- Matthew: But aren't we called to be *in* the world without being *of* the world?
- Leah: Yes, we are called to be *in* the world, therefore the church should advocate for specific government policies.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay from a Reformed perspective in which you discuss *the relationship between the church and the civil government*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. One of the documents must be The Theological Declaration of Barmen.

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**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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**UPON COMPLETING SECTION I**

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OF THE EXAMINATION.**

**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

You have recently been installed as the new pastor of a church that is in decline. There is serious pessimism about the church's future, but people are hoping the new pastor will turn things around. The congregation longs for the "good old days" when both the pews and the nursery were full.

You have been asked to give a presentation at the church's 100th anniversary dinner. With the congregation's situation in mind, you consult *The Book of Confessions* as a resource. You find the following:

Biblical visions and images of the rule of Christ, such as a heavenly city, a father's house, a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents the triumph of God over all that resists his will and disrupts his creation. Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in [people] and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption. (The Confession of 1967, 9.54)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing how a Reformed understanding of *eschatology* is relevant to *congregational decline*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, briefly describe at least two (2) key points for the presentation that relate eschatology to the congregation's situation.

**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

At a session meeting, you lead a devotion on the following verse:

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”  
(Ephesians 4:29, English Standard Version)

After the meeting, Elder Lydia comes to you, her pastor, asking for advice. She says:

I saw Elder Virginia at a restaurant with her male neighbor when her husband was out of town. I was concerned that she might be heading toward an affair. When I brought up my concern to her, Virginia said I should stop gossiping and mind my own business. Pastor, what is the difference between gossip and legitimate Christian concern for Virginia?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing *Christian ethical issues related to the way we talk with and about other people*. Include reflection on both the verse from Ephesians and the situation. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology. Ephesians 4:29 cannot be the only resource used.
2. Building on Required Response 1, describe how you would respond to Elder Lydia.

**- OR -**

**AUGUST 2011  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

While you are on a retreat with fellow pastors, you are part of a conversation about a national news story: a certain pastor has been taking sermons from the Internet and preaching them as if the sermons were this pastor's own work. Several additional issues about preaching come up in the conversation, including the need for prayer, study of the text, and attention to the context in which you are preaching. You and some of your colleagues realize how important it is to honor the proclamation of the Word of God and make a commitment together to encourage one another in the practice of faithful preaching.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay on the *work of preaching* from a Reformed perspective. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Describe and discuss the practices that you and your colleagues will engage in to encourage one another in the practice of faithful preaching.

JANUARY 2012

**EXAMINATION OF THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE  
(OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK)**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or "in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve, in ordered ministry" (G-2.0105).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS** (continued)

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\*\*\*\*\*

**IMPORTANT:            READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE  
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay articulating both the continuities and the changes in the concept of *obedience to Christ* throughout the centuries as evidenced in *The Book of Confessions*.

Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000), from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, including:

- at least one (1) from the Reformation-era documents, and
- at least one (1) from the twentieth-century documents.

2. Building on Required Response 1, provide a brief theological reflection on the ordination question: “Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ...?” (W-4.4003d)

**NOTE: You must use a clean, unmarked, printed copy and/or a PDF version of *The Book of Confessions* (copyright 2002 or later) for Section I of the examination. These resources may not be used on other sections of the exam. For the purposes of this examination, *The Shorter Catechism* and *The Larger Catechism* of the Westminster Standards will be considered one document. Turn in your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor by the end of the first hour of the examination. The proctor will then give you Sections II and III (pp. 5-7) of the examination.**

**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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OF THE EXAMINATION.**

**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 5 of 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

It is Communion Sunday at the church where you serve as pastor. As you say, “This is the joyful feast of the people of God,” you notice the somber faces of the congregation. In fact, many members of the congregation don’t seem to take much joy in the Christian life.

You and the session decide to focus on Christian joy for a new adult education series. In your preparation, you reflect on the following quote:

What is Christ's joy in us, but that He deigns to rejoice on our account? And what is our joy, which He says shall be full, but to have fellowship with Him? ... And this joy we rightly call our own, this joy wherewith we shall be blessed; which is begun in the faith of them who are born again, and shall be fulfilled in the reward of them who rise again. (St. Augustine, Tractate 83 on John 15.11-12)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write a talk on *Christian joy* to be used during the first class of the series, which will occur on a Communion Sunday. Base your talk on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 6 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

The communications committee invites you as pastor to attend its meeting to discuss the use of social media (e.g., email lists, Facebook, Twitter) in the congregation's ministry. The committee members believe that you can provide important theological reflection, and they offer three quotations that can focus the discussion.

The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission in the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity. (Confession of 1967, 9.37)

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.... (John 1:14, English Standard Version)

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matthew 18:20, New Revised Standard Version)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write a presentation for the committee reflecting theologically on *community and incarnation in relation to social media* from a Reformed perspective. Refer to each of the quotations provided by the committee and use at least one (1) additional resource from: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**— OR —**

**JANUARY 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**Page 7 of 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**ONE HOUR CLOSED BOOK REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

After a presbytery meeting, you, a pastor, carpool home with a group of teaching elders and ruling elders. Your colleagues make the following comments:

Ben: I can't believe the presbytery even considered that overture to General Assembly. Just bringing it up seems divisive and threatens the unity of the church.

Esau: Oh, disagreeing is part of being church—always has been, always will be. I revel in the diversity God created. No one can expect us to agree on much of anything.

Naomi: Diversity is overemphasized. Singing the closing hymn in languages that we don't understand was pointless.

Marta: I enjoyed that hymn. It reminded me that the church is not just here but all over the world. I wish our local ecumenical agency would remember that. All it ever does is deal with the city's civil rights issues.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *church unity*. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, respond theologically to two (2) issues the carpoolers raised.

**AUGUST 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION I. CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**

Julia, a member of the congregation you serve, has been trying to deepen her prayer life. She comes to you excited and says, “Pastor, I just came across this quotation in my reading:

‘... the whole threefold life of the three-personal being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary Christian is saying his prayers.’ (*Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis)

I’m so eager to see how all three persons of the Trinity are involved in my prayer life.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

In light of the C. S. Lewis quotation, write an essay reflecting a Reformed understanding of *the relationship of the Trinity and prayer*. In the essay, discuss at least three (3) citations from *The Book of Confessions* (e.g., 0.000), drawing from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1943), 143.

**AUGUST 2012**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**

As pastor, you are planning an adult Sunday school class about the meaning of church membership. You base your preparation on the following section of The Westminster Confession:

All saints being united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. (6.146)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of what *communion with Christ teaches us about living in Christian community*. In addition to the quotation above, use at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Based on your work in Required Response 1, write an outline of the topics to be covered during the class (approximately 150-200 words).

**AUGUST 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

Lydia and Brad, a couple in the congregation you serve, make an appointment to see you about some personal financial difficulties they are experiencing. As pastor, you know that Brad lost his job last month.

The couple tells you, “We are getting by on one income, but we wanted you to know that we won’t be able to meet our pledge for this year. In fact, given the circumstances, we are struggling with whether we can afford to give to the church at all.

“We have friends who told us they don’t give money to the church because they volunteer so much of their time. We started wondering, with our financial difficulties and all the time we give to the church, is it really okay if we stop giving money, too?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Offer a Reformed theological response to the couple, discussing the *significance of different types of giving to the church*. Base your response on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**-- OR --**

**AUGUST 2012  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

A local ministry group has asked you to speak about the soup kitchen run by the church you serve as pastor. The soup kitchen is named Strength for the Journey, based on 1 Kings 19:4-8:

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. (New Revised Standard Version)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write the portion of your speech that addresses a Reformed understanding of *the need for and gift of food*. In addition to 1 Kings 19:4-8, use and discuss at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**JANUARY 2013**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION I. CONFSSIONAL HERITAGE**

**OPEN BOOK** (*The Book of Confessions* only)

**REQUIRED**

One of the adult classes at the church you serve is discussing eternal life as part of an Easter season study. You are asked, “Does an understanding of eternal life speak to our lives in the here and now, or is it all about life after death? What does the Church think about eternal life?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay articulating *the concept of eternal life in Christ* as evidenced in *The Book of Confessions*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000), from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, including:

- at least one (1) from the Reformation-era documents, and
- at least one (1) from the twentieth-century documents.

**JANUARY 2013**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**OPEN BOOK** (*The Book of Confessions only*)

**REQUIRED**

As pastor, you are leading a Bible study. One week you teach from Acts 2:1–4:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (New Revised Standard Version)

The following discussion takes place in the class:

Mary: My friend told me the most important benefit of receiving the Holy Spirit is the power to speak in tongues. Do we believe that?

Greg: And, I thought that when I became a member of the church the Holy Spirit would come over me, my life would be better, and I would be happy every day. Why hasn't that happened?

Darnell: The Holy Spirit is a gift to the Church, not us personally.

Tracy: Does the Holy Spirit do anything any more? I thought Pentecost was just a one time thing. We're the ones who make the church work.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of the *Holy Spirit's work in the life of the Church*. As part of the essay, identify and discuss at least two (2) theological issues raised by the class. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

If you use Acts 2:1-4 for the essay, you must use at least two (2) additional resources.

**JANUARY 2013  
THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**OPEN BOOK (*The Book of Confessions* only)**

**REQUIRED (CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

As pastor, you have invited the youth group to help plan and lead a Sunday morning worship service. As part of their preparation, they worshiped at several different churches. They offer these ideas:

Lina: When it's time for the Gospel reading, let's ask everyone to stand while I carry the Bible to the middle of the sanctuary and read it there. We saw that at two different churches. It shows special respect for the Gospels, which contain Jesus' words.

Pam: At one church we sang songs that really made me think about asking Jesus into my life. It was so inspiring!

Dave: And worship should be inspiring. That's why we should skip the confession of sin. God forgives us anyway.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Choose two (2) of the youth group's comments. For each comment, identify one (1) theological issue it raises and discuss a Reformed understanding of that issue. Base your discussion on at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Based on Required Response 1, explain to the group how Reformed theology informs our worship practices.

**-- OR --**

**JANUARY 2013**  
**THEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY (continued)**

**OPEN BOOK (*The Book of Confessions* only)**

**REQUIRED (CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

A teenager in your community was the target of a hate crime at school. The community is in an uproar. Some members of the session of the church you serve as pastor would like to find ways to minister to the community.

The following discussion ensues.

April: Isn't the school going to sort it out? I think that's something the school's social worker should do, not the church.

Rochelle: Hate crimes are not a secular issue. Jesus talked about hate, so the church should take the lead.

Conan: Maybe we should have a prayer service, because there is nothing else we can do. God has to take care of it.

DeAndre: We are God's hands and feet in the world. There's no reconciliation without us.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of the *Church's role in Christ's reconciling work*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, discuss three (3) ways that the church could minister to the community.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Standard Ordination Exam  
Theological Competence  
August 2013

Section I

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**

As pastor, you build the annual training for new session members around the great themes of the Reformed tradition as listed in F-2.05 in the *Book of Order*. The first theme is “the election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation.” You decide to begin the discussion of election by reading Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God--not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (New Revised Standard Version)

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay based on *The Book of Confessions* articulating a Reformed understanding of the *doctrine of election*. Identify and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents. Include discussion of the Ephesians passage cited above.

Section II

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**

The session and the mission committee of the congregation you serve as pastor have discerned that the congregation is called to prison ministry at the local juvenile correctional facility. Several members of session express nervousness about how the congregation will react when the ministry begins. They wonder out loud:

“Will some members think they're better than the kids who are behind bars?”

“Will we be gracious in conversation with the kids if they decide to tell us that they did something wrong?”

“Shouldn't we focus more on our kids? They deserve it.”

The session takes you up on your offer to write a newsletter article to go with the session's announcement of the new ministry. You decide to focus on how awareness of our own sin leads us to humility and compassion.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write a newsletter article in which you discuss ways in which a Reformed understanding of the *doctrine of sin* can lead to humility and compassion. Draw on at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You facilitate a sermon reflection group at the congregation you serve as pastor. The group is comprised of adults of different ages. After preaching a sermon on “The Spiritual Life,” you hear this discussion.

Jewel:	Spirituality is so personal, so individual. No one can tell me what my spirituality is, and it doesn't matter, as long as it feels right. Being spiritual is so much more important than being religious.
Ron:	I agree with the personal part. No one has any business in my faith, but don't we need traditions for learning about spirituality in the first place?
Gina:	If we didn't have the institution of the church, we would never learn about what it means to be a community. There's no spirituality without the institution.
Nathan:	I don't care about the institution. Isn't it the moment that's sacred whether I'm by myself or at church?

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of the *importance of Christian community for the spiritual life of Christians*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least one (1) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on Required Response 1, respond theologically to at least three (3) of the people above.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

Ralph and Ed are neighbors and members of the congregation you serve as pastor. They have always been friends, but recently they have had a falling out over a property line dispute. Ralph explained it to you this way:

“Pastor, it all started when Ed built that new garage. It seemed like it was a bit too close to my house. I mentioned it to him a couple of times, and he brushed it off. Well, I finally had a property survey done, and it turns out he built that thing on my property! I told him this is a matter for the civil courts, and he said if I sue him he will sue me because our daughter keeps a couple of chickens in the back yard. Now I can't even stand to see him in church.”

### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed theological understanding of *how disputes are resolved between Christians*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on Required Response 1, respond theologically to Ralph.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

Theology  
January 2014

Section I

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**

During a retreat with the session of the congregation you serve as pastor, you are leading an orientation to the *Book of Order*. In the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, you come to a list of great themes of the Reformed tradition, including:

The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God. (F-2.05)

The following conversation ensues:

Sarah:	I think it is a sin the way we worship sports figures as though they are gods. I hate the way sports teams hold cities hostage, demanding money for a new stadium.
Phoebe:	I think idolatry has more to do with where we put our trust. It seems to me we put our trust in money instead of God. I know I often let money instead of God control my decisions about things.
David:	I wonder if we have allowed idolatry to creep into our politics. We put ourselves at the mercy of our politicians and expect them to save us.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Write an essay from a Reformed perspective in which you discuss *the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny*. Use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

## Section II

### **OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED** **THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**

Young adults in the congregation you serve as pastor are struggling to understand their lives as service to God. Some are doubtful about their jobs, and some can't find work. They are eager to respond to God's call, whatever it may be, whether it's their job or other service. Some of them come to you for advice on how they might discern the life to which God is calling them.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of *the doctrine of vocation*, particularly as it places emphasis on a life of gratitude. Use at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Drawing on Required Response 1, identify and briefly discuss two (2) spiritual practices the young adults could use to help them discern the life to which God is calling them.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

In the past, the congregational care committee of the congregation you serve as pastor has received mixed reactions when they have tried to console members with statements like:

It's God's will.

She's in a better place.

God won't give you more than you can handle.

This may be a blessing in disguise.

The committee invites you to its next meeting. They want help in thinking through their ministry with members of the congregation facing hard times, disaster, tragedy, or grief.

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

In response to the committee's request, write a presentation discussing a Reformed understanding of *God's providence and presence in the midst of human suffering*. Base your presentation on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

Jim, a member of the congregation you serve, comes to you for pastoral counseling. He confesses that he harbors some doubts when he joins in the corporate confession of faith during Sunday worship. He says, “I don’t know if anyone else feels this way, but there are some things we say that I’m not sure I believe. I feel like I’m lying when I say them. Do you think I’m a hypocrite?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay discussing *faith and doubt in the Christian life*. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on Required Response 1, describe how you would respond theologically to Jim’s concerns.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

## Theology, Summer 2014

### Section I

The Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01) begin with the importance of the freedom of conscience:

That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.” (F-3.0101a)

In contrast, the Apostle Paul emphasizes unity of spirit among Christians in Philippians 1:27:

Most important, live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s gospel. Do this, whether I come and see you or I’m absent and hear about you. Do this so that you stand firm, **united in one spirit** and mind **as you struggle together to remain faithful to the gospel**. (Common English Bible, emphasis added)

### REQUIRED RESPONSE:

Write an essay from a Reformed perspective on the **relationship between freedom of conscience and Christian unity**. In the essay, use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.

## Section II

Julie, a member of the youth group at the congregation you are serving as pastor, is hospitalized with life-threatening injuries received in a traffic accident. The youth have been asked to offer their personal prayers, and requests for additional prayers are circulating through the various social media.

Three of Julie's friends come to you with questions:

Aaron: Pastor, what difference does it make to God if one person or a hundred people offer a prayer for Julie?

Rebecca: I thought that God was unchangeable. Can prayer change God's mind?

Joseph: Doesn't God already know what we want? Why do we need to pray at all?

### REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of **the efficacy of prayer**, taking into account the above scenario. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on the essay, respond theologically to two (2) of Julie's friends.

### Section III

This year the theme for Vacation Bible School (VBS) is “The Fruit of the Spirit,” based on Galatians 5:22-26:

By contrast the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another. (New Revised Standard Version)

As pastor, you are leading a study of the passage as part of the training for the VBS staff. The following discussion ensues:

Faye: That’s quite a list. How do we teach the children to act like this?

Jim: No human being can possibly be that good. I’m not very patient. Does that mean I don’t have the Spirit?

Alberta: My neighbor isn’t Christian, but he sure has a lot of those qualities. How can that be?

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **the work of the Holy Spirit in human life**. In the essay, use at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology. Any biblical references must be in addition to Galatians 5:22-26.
2. Building on your essay, describe how you would respond theologically to two (2) members of the VBS staff.

**Theological Competence**  
**Fall 2014**

Section I: Confessional Heritage

Ellie, a member of the congregation where you serve as pastor, comes into your office. She is troubled, saying, "Since I became a Christian, I have tried to be a good person. In fact, every day I try to be a better person than I was the day before. But no matter how much better I become I never feel like I am good enough."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay expressing a Reformed understanding of **the relationship between justification and sanctification**. In the essay, use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Building on the essay, describe how you would respond theologically to Ellie's concern.

## **Theological Competence**

### **Fall 2014**

#### Section II: Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine

As pastor, you are teaching the youth Sunday School class. The class has been learning about the parts of the worship service, and you are now discussing the sermon. The following comments and questions are voiced:

Alex: My uncle is a preacher in another denomination. He doesn't write his sermons. He just gets up and lets the Holy Spirit take over. Why do you write your sermons? Don't you want the Holy Spirit to speak through you?

Beth: I just love the stories you tell in your sermons, Pastor! Sometimes they make me laugh; sometimes they make me cry, but they always touch my heart, which is what a sermon should do.

Greg: I really like it when you teach us about what it was like in Bible times. I get a better understanding of the Bible when you explain what things were like back then.

Hannah: Do you ever wonder if your sermons really make a difference in people's lives? To be honest, even though I enjoy your preaching, sometimes I can't remember on Monday what you said on Sunday.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of **the efficacy of preaching**. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your essay in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond theologically to at least two (2) of the students in the youth Sunday School class.

## **Theological Competence**

### **Fall 2014**

#### Section III: Application to Ministry

The worship committee of the congregation you serve as pastor has received permission from the session to put together a new worship service that will be more contemporary than the traditional service on Sunday morning. As the committee begins its work, questions arise about what will be included in the order of service. Members of the committee are concerned that this service should be more upbeat and positive. Therefore, they believe the new service should not include a corporate prayer of confession of sin.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Write an essay giving a Reformed understanding of **corporate confession of sin**. Base your discussion on at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on Required Response 1, describe how you would address theologically the worship committee's concern about including a corporate confession of sin.

## Theology, Winter 2015

### Section I, Confessional Heritage

As you prepare for your ordination as a teaching elder, you have been reviewing the ordination questions. You read the second question:

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? (W-4.4003b)

#### REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of **the Scriptures as the Word of God** as evidenced in *The Book of Confessions*. In the essay, use and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, including:

- at least one (1) from the Reformation-era documents, and
- at least one (1) from the twentieth-century documents.

2. Building on Required Response 1, provide a brief theological reflection on this ordination question.

## **Section II, Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine**

As associate pastor for youth at the congregation you serve, you are leading a confirmation class. You introduce the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers using 1 Peter 2:9-10 as your biblical text:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.  
(Common English Bible)

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of the **doctrine of the priesthood of all believers**. Base your essay on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology. Any biblical references must be in addition to 1 Peter 2:9-10.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a lesson outline for your class concerning the priesthood of all believers.

### **Section III, Application to Ministry**

As pastor, you walk into the Current Events Sunday School class and find yourself in the midst of a heated discussion provoked by recent events:

Bill: I cannot believe all the horrible stuff in the news this week—people killing each other, corrupt politicians, callous business people, hypocritical religious leaders. It's depressing.

Jim: What do you expect? It's human nature. Human beings are born in sin. They are evil to their core.

Sandy: I cannot believe that! I think people are basically good and decent. They want to do the right thing. They just make mistakes sometimes.

Tom: Help us out here, Pastor. What does Christianity teach us about human nature? Are we basically good or bad?

You agree to come back the next week to lead a class on the topic.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **human nature**. Base your discussion on your knowledge of Reformed theology, using at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology.
2. Building on your essay in Required Response 1, provide an outline of the lesson you would offer the class the following week.

**AUGUST 2007**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The *Book of Order* states:

“*Worship and Sacraments*. This examination shall assess the candidate’s understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.” G-14.0310d(4)

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**AUGUST 2007**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**Page 2 of 7**

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**AUGUST 2007  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(*THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY*)**

During an officers' training class you quote W-2.2001:

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 confession 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 of the particular church.

The following comments are raised:

Gail: I know the Bible has always been an important part of worship, but I have trouble relating Scripture to my everyday life.

Isaiah: I don't have any trouble relating the Bible to my life when I read it at home, but I use a paraphrase. Why can't we use a paraphrase in worship?

Sally: I always wondered how you decide which passage to read and preach from each week. That's really when we hear the Word of God.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss a Reformed understanding of the centrality of the Word of God in worship, citing by number (*e.g.*, 0.000) at least one (1) citation from at least three (3) different documents from *The Book of Confessions*. The answer should be based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship* as well as *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least three (3) issues raised in the comments above.

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**AUGUST 2007**  
**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

You are discussing baptism at a class for prospective new members. A member of the class asks what it means to provide Christian nurture to those who are baptized.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

- 1) Write an essay on the relationship between baptism and Christian nurture. You're your answer on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
- 2) Guided by your answer in Required Response 1:
  - a. Identify and discuss at least three (3) ways the church provides Christian Nurture throughout a person's life, and
  - b. Suggest how this new member might benefit from and contribute to the church's ministry of nurture.

**AUGUST 2007  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE: A or B)**

**A.**

Luisa, a member of the church you serve as pastor, comments on the worship services she attended while spending the winter at her daughter's home. She said, "One thing I noticed was that the congregation seldom prayed the Lord's Prayer. I thought it was supposed to be included in every Presbyterian worship service."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

- 1) Write an essay on the significance of prayer in Reformed worship, guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
- 2) Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Luisa by identifying and briefly discussing when the Lord's Prayer might be prayed in the Service for the Lord's Day.

**- OR -**

**AUGUST 2007  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

You are the new pastor of a church. During your first meeting with the Worship Committee the following conversation occurs:

Chang Li: We are so glad you are here. We have been waiting for you to change our communion service.

Carlos: I hope we don't start doing communion by intinction. I'd much rather have the elements delivered to me in the pew.

Lucille: I don't care how it's done just as long as it's not more than four times a year.

William: Does that include Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding and practice of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to each member of the Worship Committee.

**JANUARY 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

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**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**JANUARY 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

The moderator of the Youth Ministry Committee of the church you serve as pastor sends you an e-mail. In the e-mail she informs you that the committee intends to ask the session for permission to serve potato chips and soda for communion at the next youth retreat. She is requesting your guidance and support.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

- 1) Write an essay on the Reformed understanding of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, paying particular attention to the elements used and citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) citation from each of three (3) different documents from *The Book of Confessions*. Your essay should also be informed by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
- 2) Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, reply to the e-mail from the moderator of the Youth Ministry Committee explaining why you will or will not support the committee's request.

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**JANUARY 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

The church you serve as pastor is considering conducting a service for wholeness once a month. The service would include enacted prayer in the form of the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. The following conversation takes place among some of the members:

Kate:        I am not sure that I feel comfortable with this. Do I have to come?

Fred:        I like the idea of the service, but I wouldn't want anyone to put oil on me or lay hands on me. That seems too much like faith healing.

Ricardo:    But this service is simply an expression of our faith in God's ability to heal.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on the Reformed understanding of enacted prayer as it relates to services for wholeness. Base your answer on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to at least one (1) comment from each of the members.

**JANUARY 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR      CLOSED BOOK      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE: A or B)**

**A.**

The *Directory for Worship* says,

*The order offered here is a logical progression, is rooted in the Old and New Testaments, and reflects the tradition of the universal Church and our Reformed heritage... The order that follows is presented in terms of five major actions centered in the Word of God:*

- 1) *gathering around the Word;*
- 2) *proclaiming the Word;*
- 3) *responding to the Word;*
- 4) *the sealing of the Word;*
- 5) *bearing and following the Word into the world.”*      (W-3.3202)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Briefly discuss the importance of each of these actions for Reformed worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, outline a Service for the Lord’s Day, including at least one (1) liturgical element for each action.

**- OR -**

**JANUARY 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

Samantha, a member of the church you serve as pastor, says, “I need advice about how to be more disciplined in my personal worship. What are some of the ways I can develop a devotional life that would be meaningful to me and acceptable to God?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on personal worship as it relates to life in the community of faith. Base your answer on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, briefly discuss with Samantha at least three (3) spiritual practices that she might incorporate into her devotional life.

**AUGUST 2008**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

The *Directory for Worship* says:

Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God present in the world and in their lives. As they respond to God's claim and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, believers are transformed and renewed. In worship the faithful offer themselves to God and are equipped for God's service in the world. (W-1.1001)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on the relationship between worship and service in the Reformed tradition, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. The essay should be based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship* as well as *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, write a newsletter article to encourage members of a particular congregation to engage in worship and in service as part of their Christian faith.

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

As pastor, you are leading a class for new officers. You read this passage concerning the Lord's Supper from the *Directory for Worship*.

The one presiding is to lead the people in the prayer,

- (a) thanking God for creation and providence, for covenant history, and for seasonal blessings, with an acclamation of praise;
- (b) remembering God's acts of salvation in Jesus Christ: his birth, life, death, resurrection, and promise of coming, and institution of the Supper (if not otherwise spoken), together with an acclamation of faith;
- (c) calling upon the Holy Spirit to draw the people into the presence of the risen Christ so that they
  - (1) may be fed,
  - (2) may be joined in the communion of saints to all God's people and to the risen Christ, and
  - (3) may be sent to serve as faithful disciples; followed by an ascription of praise to the triune God, and
- (d) the Lord's Prayer.

(W-3.3613)

Several members respond:

Paul: Why do we pray at the Table? Why don't we skip the prayer and get on with distributing the bread and the cup?

Susan: Our former minister prayed at the Table, but it was mainly about Jesus. I don't remember any mention of the Holy Spirit.

Young-Tak: That's a lot to listen to. Why does every part of the prayer need to be included every time?

Lupe: I don't understand why the prayer includes thanksgiving for covenant history when Jesus talks about a "new" covenant.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of the function of prayer in celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each of the four (4) members of the class.

**AUGUST 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE: A or B)**

**A.**

Pat, a long time elder of the church you serve as pastor, recently attended a conference that was very meaningful to her. At the conference she privately rededicated her life to Christ. She wants to publicly recommit herself and asks you to baptize her as an example to others.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the significance of renewing one's baptismal identity and vows. Base your response on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, explore with Pat ways in which her recommitment might take public form.

**- OR -**

**AUGUST 2008  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR      CLOSED BOOK      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

In the church you serve as pastor, you meet with a family to plan a wedding. The mother of the bride sees the church sanctuary for the first time and says, “This is a beautiful place for a wedding, but I do have a request. My daughter tells me that the colors on the stage change from time to time, and I would like to have purple up that week so it will match the flowers that will hide the cross.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the marriage service, giving particular attention to the space for the service and the appointments and decorations. Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least two (2) issues raised by the mother of the bride, and respond to her, demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity.

**JANUARY 2009**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

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Be advised that illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers that cannot be understood by readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar will be graded accordingly. Papers written in pencil will be returned ungraded.

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**JANUARY 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

A member of the congregation you serve as pastor has been unemployed for a prolonged length of time. One day he arrives at your office looking both excited and anxious. He says, "I have been offered a great job working for a big non-denominational church across town. They want me for the job, but there's a catch. They will not hire anyone who has not been baptized by immersion. I was baptized as a baby, but not by immersion. That makes me feel like something was missing from my baptism."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Discuss a Reformed understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism, including the form and frequency of the Sacrament. In your discussion, incorporate at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents from *The Book of Confessions*. The answer should be based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship* as well as *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least two (2) issues raised by the member.

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**JANUARY 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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**THE PROCTOR WILL GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III.**

**JANUARY 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON  
REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

An adult class in your congregation is engaged in a study of the Christian understanding of death. One of the classes is “Planning for the Christian Funeral.” During a question and answer time the following comments are made:

Eunjin:        When my brother’s wife died, the funeral took place in the church sanctuary. Now my brother doesn’t attend worship here any more because the sanctuary is a place of painful memories.

Carlos:        How am I supposed to worship with a corpse in full view while everyone talks about how life-like the body looks?

Ben:            I just take so much comfort in the pastor’s eulogy, telling me what a saint the person was.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the meaning, purpose, and ordering of Services on the Occasion of Death, demonstrating your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to at least one (1) issue raised by each of the three (3) class participants.

**JANUARY 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR    CLOSED BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE: A or B)**

**A.**

Returning from your vacation, you discover that your email inbox is full. It seems that the visiting pastor showed a DVD segment from *The Greatest Story Ever Told* during the offering. The emails included these comments:

Jessica:        The video was so inspirational. We should use videos more often, especially during stewardship season.

Helen:         I've never seen a video used in worship before. Showing it during the offering spoiled my time for reflecting on the sermon.

Rafael:        I thought it worked out great. Our choir got a break. I know they must get tired of having to sing every Sunday.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss three (3) issues concerning the meaning of offering that are raised by the members' discussion. Your answer should be informed by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to each of the three (3) members.

**- OR -**

**JANUARY 2009**  
**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR      CLOSED BOOK      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A or B)**

**B.**

Entering the church you serve as pastor one Sunday morning, you discover that the sanctuary has been decorated for the Vacation Bible School that will begin the next morning. You encounter three members discussing the decorations:

Elma:            Look at all those decorations! You can't see the chancel area at all.

Keisha:        Well, we got permission from the Worship and Music Committee to set up the decorations prior to worship. Besides, we couldn't wait until after worship and still have gotten it all done.

Roberto:      Kids really respond to bright colors, streamers, and balloons. This is a great way to help generate some excitement and keep them entertained.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of worship space, guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Based on your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Elma, Keisha, and Roberto, addressing at least one (1) issue raised by each.

**AUGUST 2009**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the *Directory for Worship* and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshiping communities.

---

Questions on this examination deal with both **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**. You will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the *Directory for Worship* and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in *The Book of Confessions*.
- An ability to articulate a Reformed theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry.
- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry.
- An ability to discuss provisions of the *Directory for Worship* and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
- An ability to reflect theologically and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments.
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

In writing your answers, bear in mind that presbyteries elect elders as well as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to serve as readers. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language should be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

The examination is divided into three sections:

Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed Liturgical Heritage. When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor, who then will give you Sections II and III of the examination.

Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship. No books or resources shall be used.

Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with Application for Ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

**Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., 1.1. or III.A.I.).**

**AUGUST 2009**  
**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 7**

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- You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam.
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**AUGUST 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

The Directory of Worship says:

Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. Children of believers are to be baptized without undue delay, but without undue haste. Baptism, whether administered to those who profess their faith or to those presented for Baptism as children, is one and the same Sacrament. (W-2.3008a)

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. 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 governing body of the other congregation and shall notify them when the Sacrament has been administered. (W-2.3014)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of baptism, paying particular attention to the baptism of infants and children, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. Your answer should be based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship* as well as *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, write a statement for the session that reflects your understanding of the relationship between the faith and practice of parents, and their request to have their children baptized.

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**AUGUST 2009**  
**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION  
ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

You are the pastor of a local church. After worship one Sunday a visit comments, “I’m confused. It seems as though a lot of different people helped lead worship this morning, but in my culture only ministers can do that.” Before you can respond, several members chime in:

Reese: Presbyterians believe in “the priesthood of all believers.” That means a layperson can preach or give a blessing or do anything else a pastor can do.

Yvonne: I know that’s true, but no one’s prayers get to God’s ears like the pastor’s prayers. When I am sick or in trouble, I want the pastor, not some elder, to pray with me.

Ernesto: I understand, because I want a minister presiding at the table. It bothers me that elders can officiate at the Lord’s Supper.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the complementary roles that members, ordained officers, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament play in leading worship. Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue related to shared leadership in worship raised by each of the three (3) members.

**AUGUST 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE: A OR B)**

**A.**

The session is reviewing the church's order of worship and asks for guidance in identifying and understanding the basic elements of Christian worship. You tell them the *Directory for Worship* lists six (6) "Elements of Christian Worship":

- Prayer
- Scripture Read and Proclaimed
- Baptism
- Lord's Supper
- Self-Offering
- Relating to Each Other and the World

Allen, a member of the session, says, "I understand the first four elements, but what does the *Directory for Worship* mean by 'Self-Offering' and 'Relating to Each Other and the World' when it applies to our Sunday morning worship?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Briefly discuss each of the six (6) "Elements of Christian Worship." Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Allen, addressing at least three (3) ways "Self-Offering" can be demonstrated in worship, AND at least three (3) ways "Relating to Each Other and the World" can be demonstrated in worship.

**OR**

**AUGUST 2009  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

Burgess, a member of the church you serve as pastor, is a police officer. Because of his shift schedule, he is seldom able to attend Sunday worship. He comes to your office one afternoon with the following request:

“Pastor, as you know, my work schedule prevents me from attending Sunday morning worship. I do read the Bible and listen to a CD of the services. I pray for the church and its mission as well as for my family and friends. I set aside money for the offering, which I send to the church. What I really miss is participating in the Lord’s Supper. Could you set aside some of the bread and juice on those Sundays when the congregation celebrates the sacrament? Then I could pick up the elements on Monday and take communion at home.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the meaning and purpose of participation in the Lord’s Supper. Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Burgess, demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity.

**JANUARY 2010**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the Directory for Worship and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.

---

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**JANUARY 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 2 OF 7**

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**JANUARY 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I. REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

At a planning retreat the session is talking about the church being the body of Christ. The following conversation occurs:

- Frieda: Pastor, I have noticed that when you say the prayer during communion you always say something like, “As the bread is Christ’s body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.” What do you mean by that?
- Herb: Being the body of Christ means that we are all in this together. I think that means we need to learn to work and worship well together as a congregation before we worry about anybody else.
- Paul: The problem is we don’t recognize the body of Christ. We tend to think we can do everything by ourselves.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of what it means for the church at worship to be the body of Christ, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. Your answer should also demonstrate your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the comments made by each of the people above.

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**JANUARY 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 5 OF 7**

**SECTION II. CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION  
ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The worship committee of the church you serve as pastor has received a request for the church to pay more attention to the civic and cultural calendar in Sunday worship. During the committee's discussion the following opinions are voiced:

Chris: When Pentecost falls on Memorial Day weekend, everything is about the Holy Spirit and nothing is said about our patriotic heroes. I think we should pay more attention to Memorial Day, and sing patriotic hymns.

Jorge: I say the church should just celebrate Christian holidays and tell people who want to celebrate civic holidays to go to the parades.

Terry: But it's not just civic holidays that we need to celebrate on Sundays. What about Scout Sunday, Rally Day, and Valentine's Day? And let's bring Father's Day back, too.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of "Days and Seasons" in the life of the church as expressed in worship. Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to at least one (1) issue raised by each of the three (3) persons.

**JANUARY 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

After communion one Sunday, Leeann, a new member of the church you serve as pastor, says, “In your invitation to the Lord’s Table, I heard you welcome *all who are baptized* to partake of the meal. In my former church, the pastor welcomed *all who trust in Jesus*, not just those who have been baptized. Are the two of you saying the same thing?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the relationship between Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Your response should demonstrate your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Leeann, making sure you answer her question.

**OR**

**JANUARY 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 7 OF 7**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

While interviewing with a Pastor Nominating Committee, you enter the sanctuary of the church and notice there is no baptismal font or communion table visible. When you ask why they are not present, a member responds, “We keep the altar in the hallway and only bring it out when we need it. We lock the little silver bowl in the closet so no one will steal it. We haven't had a baptism in years so we don't need it in the sanctuary.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify and discuss at least three (3) issues raised by the member's comment. Your answer should demonstrate your knowledge of the Directory for Worship.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, describe your vision of what Reformed worship space should look like.

AUGUST 2010

EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the *Directory for Worship* and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshiping communities.

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Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with Application for Ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

**Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., 1.1 or III.A.I.).**

AUGUST 2010  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION

PAGE 2 OF 7

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You may write your answers in ink in your own handwriting, type them, or use a computer. Do not use a pencil to write your responses; **papers written in pencil will be returned without being evaluated.** If you handwrite your examination, do not skip lines in the examination book. You may make corrections, deletions, or additions without rewriting or erasing. Identify every answer by the number and letter assigned to it (e.g., III. B). **Illegible papers shall be returned without being evaluated.**

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- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
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Syntax or grammar will not be evaluated. However, the evaluation of papers may be affected if they cannot be understood because of poor syntax or grammar.

**Maintaining the candidate's anonymity is of fundamental importance to assure fair evaluation of examination papers. Failure to comply with any of the following instructions will result in the paper being found as unsatisfactory:**

- **Do not include your name**
- **Do not include the name of your congregation or presbytery**
- **Do not identify the seminary you attend or have attended**
- **Do not identify professors with whom you have studied**
- **Do not indicate whether you have taken this or other senior ordination exams before**

All three sections must be answered. The paper must receive a "Satisfactory" evaluation on at least two of the three sections to be considered "Satisfactory."

**AUGUST 2010**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

Different branches of the Christian faith have come to significantly different understandings of what the word “is” signifies when Jesus says, “This is my body” at the Last Supper. The meaning of “is” determines the understanding of what Jesus tells us about himself and about the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper when the one presiding repeats those words at the Lord’s Table.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of what it means when the one presiding at the Lord’s Supper says, “This *is* my body.” Support your essay by at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Based on your answer in Required Response 1, briefly discuss whether or not your understanding of how the bread is the body of Christ affects the handling of the communion bread.

**You must use a clean, unmarked, printed copy of *The Book of Confessions*, copyright 2002 or later, for Section I. For the purpose of this examination, the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms will be considered one document. Turn in your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor by the end of the first hour of the examination. The proctor will then give you Sections II and III (pp. 5-7) of the examination.**

**AUGUST 2010**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**UPON COMPLETION OF SECTION I**

**TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSSIONS*.**

**THE PROCTOR WILL THEN GIVE YOU SECTIONS II AND III  
OF THE EXAMINATION.**

**AUGUST 2010**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

**ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

As part of the monthly session meeting, you have designated a time for sharing information about the *Directory for Worship* with the session. You want them to know that, as Presbyterians, we use this document to guide our understanding and practices when planning and ordering worship services within the church. Following the session meeting, Paul, one of the session members, asks you these questions:

“I know that we have lots of rules that we have to follow as Presbyterians when we plan our worship services, but can you explain to me why they put this into the *Book of Order* in the first place? What were their reasons for writing up these rules? It sounds as if they don’t trust us to do the right things in our own worship services here at First Church.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Drawing on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of why the *Directory for Worship* is included within the *Book of Order* and how the Presbyterian Church (USA) articulates the purpose of the *Directory for Worship* within its polity.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a handout for the next session meeting responding to Paul.

**AUGUST 2010**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

At the church you serve as pastor, you have just officiated at a funeral for one of the members of the congregation. At the service there was a pall covering the casket. After the funeral, you overhear the young grandchildren talking.

Jason: I don't know why there was a blanket over Grandpa's box when it was in the church. Do you think he's cold in there?

Emily: My mommy said that Grandpa was in that box. Why couldn't I see him?

Laura: Why is everybody crying? I heard the pastor say Grandpa is in heaven now.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Using your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*, identify and briefly discuss, from a Reformed perspective, at least three (3) issues raised in the above scenario.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to at least one (1) concern of each child in terms that young children can understand.

**- OR -**

**AUGUST 2010**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR                      CLOSED BOOK                      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

You are pastor of Forest Glen Presbyterian Church. One of the members comes into your office and shows you this article from the local newspaper.

*Easter Sunday Extravaganza*

Make your Easter holiday extra special by attending the Easter Sunday Extravaganza at University United Church. Worship begins with the Sunrise Service on the outdoor fields of the church at the corner of Elm Street and Maple. The service includes a clown Easter story, followed by an Easter egg hunt for three age groups, an Easter basket silent auction, bunny hop relays and parent-child team relays. Children of all ages will have a blast with the ride-along train, cakewalk, dart balloon toss, dunk tank, bounce house and pirate ship obstacle course. "Although the event is put on by University United, we are hoping to have a large turnout with nonmembers around the city area as well," said the director of children's ministries at the church. The director is a member of the staff at University United that is encouraging new families to check out the church across the street from the State University. "This is just an opportunity for those in our community to gather for a common purpose - to have a good time and celebrate a wonderful holiday," the director said.

"This is a great idea to get people to come to our church," says the member. "It will draw in the kids and their parents will have to come too. We should get right to work on this for next year. What do you think, Pastor?"

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. How does the Easter Extravaganza fit with a Reformed understanding of the meaning, purpose, and content of Christian worship, especially Easter worship?
2. How do Presbyterians understand the connection between worship and the ministry of the church in the world?
3. Based on your answers in Required Responses 1 and 2 and your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, respond pastorally to the member making sure to address his/her suggestion.

**JANUARY 2011**

**EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK**

**MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS**

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the Sacraments, familiarity with the *Directory for Worship* and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshiping communities.

Questions on this examination deal with both **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**. You will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the *Directory for Worship* and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in *The Book of Confessions*.
- An ability to articulate a Reformed theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry.
- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry.
- An ability to discuss provisions of the *Directory for Worship* and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry.
- An ability to reflect theologically and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments.
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards.

In writing your answers, bear in mind that presbyteries elect elders as well as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to serve as readers. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language should be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

The examination is divided into three sections: Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a Constructive Theological Reflection on Reformed Worship. No books or resources shall be used.

Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed Liturgical Heritage. When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor who then will give you Sections II and III of the examination.

Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with Application for Ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

**Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., 1.1 or III.A.I).**

**JANUARY 2011  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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A CLEAN, UNMARKED, PRINTED COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS* MAY BE USED AS A RESOURCE ONLY DURING SECTION I OF THE EXAMINATION. NO OTHER BOOKS ARE ALLOWED.

All answers must be submitted by the use of a computer. You must bring your own computer.

When using your computer:

- You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or a network during the exam.
- Since a printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam and failure to do so will result in failure, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated.
- Number the pages.
- Include your candidate number on each page of the exam.
- Print responses using double spacing and 12-point font size.
- When finished, staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam book.

Be advised that illegible papers will be returned unevaluated. Papers that cannot be understood by readers because of poor syntax and/or grammar will be evaluated accordingly. Papers written in pencil will be returned unevaluated.

The final evaluation for this examination will be determined by the readers on the basis of the examination's overall merit. You must complete all three sections of the examination. Even if two sections are evaluated satisfactory and one section is omitted, the examination will be considered unsatisfactory. The examination must receive an evaluation of satisfactory on at least TWO questions to be considered satisfactory.

**JANUARY 2011  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 3 OF 7**

**SECTION I: REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR      OPEN BOOK      REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

At Main Street Presbyterian's annual planning retreat, a deacon says the church down the street is having great success with Saturday evening worship and suggests the session consider a similar service. You hear the following responses:

Grace: Pastor, it's up to you. If you don't start a Saturday service right away we'll lose our teenagers. Some of them are already attending Saturday services over there because the sports teams have mandatory Sunday practices.

Henry: All my life I've been taught that the Ten Commandments and the *Westminster Catechisms* require Sunday worship. I think Saturday worship tempts people to ignore the Sabbath.

Millie: I was raised to believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath. Part of me still thinks Saturday is a more appropriate day for worship than Sunday.

Alfredo: What difference does it make *when* you attend worship as long as you worship regularly?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Write an essay on a Reformed understanding of the Lord's Day. Your answer must include at least one (1) citation from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, citing by number (e.g., 0.000). Base your answer on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship* as well as *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, briefly respond to one (1) issue raised by each of the four (4) persons at the retreat.

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 4 OF 7**

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UNPON COMPLETING SECTION I

TURN IN YOUR COPY OF *THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS*.

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WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II: CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION  
ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

Jan, an elder, is given time at a session meeting to report on a worship event at an ecumenical women's retreat. The following conversation ensues:

Jan:          I have never been more profoundly moved than when the evening prayer was led by a liturgical dancer. I think our congregation might benefit from a similar experience. How could we incorporate dance into our worship?

Lynne:      The Apostle Paul instructs us that "all things should be done decently and in order." Maybe what you saw was prayerful, but dance would be as meaningless to me as if someone were praying in tongues. Session shouldn't allow such disorderly so-called prayer in worship.

George:     Aren't we supposed to be participating in prayer when prayers are offered in worship? I feel more comfortable kneeling with my eyes closed than watching a young woman prancing around the chancel.

Harold:     I love the stories of how joyfully Miriam and David danced to give praise to God. I think that's the way we should use dance in worship.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. From a Reformed perspective, and based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, discuss how dance might be used appropriately in worship.
2. Informed by your answer to Required Response 1, respond to at least three (3) of the elders, being sure to address at least one (1) issue concerning the use of dance in worship raised in each of the elder's statements.

**JANUARY 2011  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**PAGE 6 OF 7**

**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR                  CLOSED BOOK                  REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

Zach, an elder on session of the church you serve as pastor has just returned from a trip to the Holy Land, with an enthusiastic account of visiting the Jordan River.

Zach:                  It was so powerfully meaningful that I brought a jar of water from the Jordan River back home with me. Here it is. You can use some of it for my granddaughter's baptism next month. It's my way of sharing my experience.

Marie:                  You've just given me a great idea. My husband and I are taking our family to the Holy Land this fall. Our children were planning to be baptized at their confirmation next spring, but wouldn't it be nice if we were baptized together with them in the Jordan River?

Joe:                    But don't we, as the session, have to be sure the baptism is done "decently and in order?" You can't just dunk yourselves in the river and call yourselves baptized, can you?

Anna:                  When we wanted to have our baby baptized at our family's camp on the lake, we were told it had to be done in church with the congregation present.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least four (4) issues related to the Sacrament of Baptism from the above conversation. Base this discussion on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to each of the four (4) members of the session.

**- OR -**

**JANUARY 2011  
WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III: APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR          CLOSED BOOK          REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

Several teenagers at the church you serve as youth pastor run up to you excitedly one Sunday. One of them says,

“Learning about communion in confirmation class with you was really cool. We think it would be a great idea for our youth group to set up a *Facebook* page that offers communion whenever we want it. We’re not sure what all we might need though, so we thought we’d ask you to help us set it up. How do you think we could make the juice and bread work?”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, articulate a Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper, paying particular attention to the requirements in the *Directory for Worship* for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
2. Identify and briefly discuss three (3) issues in the above scenario.
3. Informed by your answers in Required Responses 1 and 2, respond to the teenagers and their request for your assistance in setting up virtual communion.

AUGUST 2011

EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the sacraments, familiarity with the *Directory for Worship* and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.

Questions on this examination deal with both **WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**. You will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to illustrate the connection between the contemporary understandings and practices of worship set forth in the *Directory for Worship* and the theological heritage of the Reformed tradition as it is expressed in *The Book of Confessions*
- An ability to articulate a Reformed theological framework for addressing issues and practices related to worship and sacraments that arise from contemporary contexts for ministry
- An ability to discern theological components in liturgical situations that may arise in ministry
- An ability to discuss provisions of the *Directory for Worship* and to apply them in concrete contexts for ministry
- An ability to reflect theologically and pastorally on the many different relationships between the ways the church understands and carries out its ministry and mission in the world and its worship and celebration of the sacraments
- An ability to respond to individuals or groups in given situations with sensitivity to their needs, while also expressing the spirit of the constitutional standards

In writing your answers, bear in mind that presbyteries elect ruling elders and teaching elders to serve as readers. Examinations should be written in jargon-free language. Technical language should be used only where the task requires it or where it is appropriate.

The examination is divided into three sections:

Section I is a required one-hour question about Reformed liturgical heritage. When you complete Section I, give your copy of *The Book of Confessions* to the proctor who then will give you Sections II and III of the examination.

Section II is a required one-hour question calling for a constructive theological reflection on Reformed worship. No books or resources shall be used.

Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with application for ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

**Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., 1.1. or III.A.1).**



**AUGUST 2011**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**PAGE 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

***(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)***

A group of Presbyterian students has approached you, a Presbyterian campus minister, to help them plan weekly worship on campus. “We want to move around, not just sit in pews. We don’t want a preacher or an offering or a choir. We want to spend more time with God and with each other. Do there have to be so many words, words, words?”

You reply that you are eager to work with them on weekly worship but there are some essential elements of worship that, for you as a Presbyterian, would have to be included. You suggest a meeting for the following week where the group can begin planning.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the elements of worship, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*. Your answer should demonstrate knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1 and informed by the students’ comments, briefly discuss your plan for leading the upcoming meeting.

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UNPON COMPLETING SECTION I

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**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II**

**CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

A young man who is a college professor has frequently been a liturgist in the church you serve as pastor. One day he says to you, "Pastor, several people have said to me that they really appreciated the prayers that I offered last Sunday and the way I read scripture. They have said that they think I should become a pastor. Although it is important to me to be involved in the church, I think that my gifts are better used in the classroom. I've never felt a particular call to be a pastor. I hope you can give me some guidance."

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

Guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, write an essay on a Reformed understanding of Christian vocation in which you discuss at least the following:

1. What is the theology of Christian vocation?
2. In what ways does the worship and life of the congregation reflect this understanding of vocation?

**AUGUST 2011**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

As pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, you are leading the new members' class. Susan, a young woman in your class, wants to become a member of the church but has not been baptized. She says to you, "Pastor, it's important to me to be baptized by immersion. That's the way my mom was baptized when she was my age. She died just a year ago, you know."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*:

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism as it pertains to the young woman's request.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond pastorally to Susan as to whether or not you would support her request.
  - a. If no, why not?  
—OR—
  - b. If yes, why? What details will have to be worked out?

— OR —

**AUGUST 2011**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

The session of the church you serve has authorized a midnight Christmas Eve service. The worship committee brings a recommendation back to the session to include the celebration of the Lord's Supper at that service, something this church has never done before. During the session meeting the committee's recommendation meets with the following responses:

Margot: Communion on Christmas Eve? Do Presbyterians even do that? I've never heard of such a thing.

Spencer: Well, I can tell you I'd much rather sing Christmas carols than have communion. That just makes the service run way too long!

Ellie: It seems really strange to be thinking about Jesus' death on the night of his birth.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*:

1. Discuss a Reformed understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, especially as it pertains to the celebration of the festival season of Christmas.
2. Building on your answer in Required Response 1, write an essay explaining how you would respond to three (3) issues, one (1) issue raised by each session member.

JANUARY 2012

EXAMINATION IN WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS

OPEN AND CLOSED BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This examination shall assess the candidate's understanding of the meaning and purpose of corporate worship and the sacraments, familiarity with the *Directory for Worship* and *The Book of Confessions*, and their application to the life of worshipping communities.

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Section III is a required one-hour question dealing with application for ministry. There are two options. Select only one option. No books or resources shall be used.

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**JANUARY 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**PAGE 3 of 7**

**SECTION I. REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR    OPEN BOOK    REQUIRED**

**(THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS ONLY)**

The first paragraph in the *Directory for Worship* begins:

“Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God present in the world and in their lives.” (W-1.1001)

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Articulate a Reformed understanding of the relationship between the sovereignty of God and Christian worship, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*. Your answer should demonstrate knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an essay that answers the following question: What is so important about W-1.1001 that led the framers of the *Directory for Worship* to place it at the beginning of the *Directory*?

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UNPON COMPLETING SECTION I

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**JANUARY 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION II.**

**CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

As the new pastor of First Presbyterian Church, you are planning services for Holy Week. The chair of the Worship Committee is explaining the traditions of the congregation to you.

“On Maundy Thursday, we don’t have a formal service. Instead, we have the communion elements available on the altar and people can stop in when they have the time. That way they can serve themselves and then sit and meditate if they want to. More people have been able to observe Maundy Thursday if communion is available whenever they want it.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, articulate a Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper in relation to a Christian worship service.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and discuss at least three (3) issues raised by the committee chair’s comments about communion on Maundy Thursday.

**JANUARY 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

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**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**CLOSED BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

Some of the members of the church you serve as pastor approach you during the coffee hour after Sunday morning worship. They have a number of concerns about disruption by children during worship.

José: I think it's a good idea that the children are in worship until after the "Children's Sermon." They are learning about worship and singing some of the hymns when they are there for part of the service.

Daniel: My ties to the church started when I was very young. My sister and I were in worship every Sunday. I think children should be there for the whole service.

Jayne: When I was a child, it was frowned on to have children in formal worship. We had Sunday School classes and a nursery for them. I can't worship with all that distraction. They're too noisy. I think the session needs to discuss this problem.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of scripture and the *Directory for Worship*, write an essay about children in worship.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, prepare a discussion guide for the next session meeting that identifies and addresses at least one (1) concern from each of the three (3) church members.

**— OR —**

**JANUARY 2012**

## WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION

PAGE 7 of 7

### SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY

ONE HOUR

CLOSED BOOK

REQUIRED

(CHOOSE A OR B)

#### B.

One afternoon, you receive an urgent phone call from a couple who are members of your congregation asking to meet with you. When they arrive, they are both quite distraught. The wife is obviously pregnant. Amid sobs, they say to you:

Amy: I just found out that I'm carrying triplets and that this pregnancy will be very difficult.

Paul: The worst part is that one of the babies has a very serious medical condition. The doctors have said that he'll probably live only a few minutes after he's born. Pastor, we want you to be present when the babies are born so the baby can be baptized before he dies.

Amy: Please help us. We want our baby's life to count for something in our church.

#### REQUIRED RESPONSES

1. Informed by your understanding of the *Directory for Worship*, articulate a Reformed understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, and with appropriate pastoral sensitivity, explain how you would respond to the couple.

**AUGUST 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**SECTION I. REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

Terry, the spouse of one of your members, is from another Christian tradition and though she attends worship at your church regularly, Terry never participates in the Lord's Supper. She comes to see you, and says: "I come here to worship in order to support Pat, but I think my church has a very different understanding of the sacrament. My faith means a lot to me and I don't want to reject that, but I want to be sure that Jesus is with me when I take communion. Tell me what Presbyterians believe about the Lord's Supper, and how Jesus is present in the bread and wine."

**REQUIRED RESPONSE**

1. Write an essay that articulates a Reformed understanding of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, addressing Terry's concerns. The essay should cite by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*. Your answer should demonstrate knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*. When you make reference to the *Directory for Worship*, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

**FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION, THE *WESTMINSTER SHORTER AND LARGER CATECHISMS* WILL BE CONSIDERED ONE DOCUMENT.**

**AUGUST 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION II.**

**CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

The congregation you serve as pastor is preparing to build a new sanctuary. As part of their preparation, the members of the session have many questions for you about how the worship space in a Presbyterian church should be designed and furnished.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*:

1. Explain the theological reasoning for the design and furnishing of worship space in a Presbyterian church. When you make reference to the *Directory for Worship*, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, list and discuss at least four (4) issues important in the arrangement of space in the new sanctuary.

**AUGUST 2012**  
**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

Ryan and Amanda regularly attend the church you serve as pastor. Their three-year-old son, Jason, has been diagnosed with autism. This condition renders the child highly sensitive to outside stimuli and he may respond in unpredictable ways. The parents express their desire to have Jason baptized, but are concerned that the large crowd usually present at the Sunday worship service might be too stressful for him. They ask whether a special baptismal service could be held at a time other than Sunday morning with attendance limited to family and close friends.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*, identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) issues concerning the Sacrament of Baptism raised by the situation. When you make reference to the *Directory for Worship*, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
  
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity:
  - a. State what recommendations you will make to the session regarding Ryan and Amanda's request and the basis for that recommendation;
  - AND**
  - b. Respond to Ryan and Amanda.

— OR —

**AUGUST 2012**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

A group of members from the church you serve as pastor is interested in conducting prayer services for the healing of the sick. You meet with them to hear their ideas and help them plan. During the discussion the following remarks are made:

Jim:                      I think if we prayed hard enough, we could heal some of our members.

Sandy:                  For me, the services would be more meaningful if we invited only those who are ill, their families, and those who want to pray for them.

Raul:                    Would anointing with oil make the prayers more effective?

Holly:                  We know you are busy, pastor, and you're so overworked. We'll just do this ourselves and save you some time.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*:

1. Discuss the meaning and ordering of "Services for Wholeness." When you make reference to the *Directory for Worship*, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Jim, Sandy, Raul and Holly, addressing their specific questions and/or concerns.

**JANUARY 2013**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS**

**SECTION I. REFORMED LITURGICAL HERITAGE**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

*A Brief Statement of Faith* begins this way:

*In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve. (BOC 10.1)*

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Based on your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, articulate a Reformed understanding of the Trinity, citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from, at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*, not including *A Brief Statement of Faith*.
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and informed by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, write a newsletter article describing the ways the Trinity is expressed in Reformed worship.

**FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS EXAMINATION, THE *WESTMINSTER SHORTER AND LARGER CATECHISMS* WILL BE CONSIDERED ONE DOCUMENT.**

**JANUARY 2013**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION II**

**CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON REFORMED WORSHIP**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

Your presbytery is collecting resources to train officers-elect. You have been asked to provide an online resource for the presbytery's web page on the theme: *God has provided a rhythm of seasons which orders life and influences the church's worship* (W-3.2002).

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Guided by your knowledge of the *Directory for Worship*, write an article on "Days and Seasons" in which you discuss at least the following two (2) issues:

1. What is the theological importance of the church year?
2. In what ways does the worship and life of the congregation reflect the understanding of time?

**JANUARY 2013**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**A.**

Cynthia and Jack, members of the congregation you serve as pastor, fell in love and got married in a civil ceremony while stationed at a naval base overseas. They've come to you with several requests.

“We missed the fun of a big wedding with all our families and friends in attendance. Now we want a church wedding here in our home sanctuary. Our friends have a band and have offered to play music from our dating days during the service. Since many of our guests will be military personnel, we would like to display the flags of our service units as part of the sanctuary decorations.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least three (3) worship issues raised by Cynthia's and Jack's requests. Base your discussion on the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*,
2. Demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to their requests.

— OR —

**JANUARY 2013**

**WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS EXAMINATION**

**SECTION III. APPLICATION TO MINISTRY**

**OPEN ONE HOUR**

**OPEN BOOK**

**REQUIRED**

**(CHOOSE A OR B)**

**B.**

You are the pastor of First Presbyterian Church. One Sunday morning, you visit an adult class which is studying the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. During the class discussion the following remarks are made:

- Li: I've learned a lot today because I've always thought that the Lord's Supper was to be received only by those who believe themselves worthy.
- Carlos: Isn't the Lord's Supper to be observed only on Sundays, and isn't it the minister who decides on which Sunday we do communion?
- Donna: But the session has the right to serve communion when the minister is away. When that happens, one of the elders can do it.
- Steve: I was taught that the reason we celebrate communion is because the Apostle Paul said it was important.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the provisions of the *Directory for Worship*, identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper raised by each person.
2. Informed by Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Li, Carlos, Donna, and Steve making certain that you address the issues you have identified from their comments.

Presbyterian Church (USA) Standard Ordination Exam  
Worship and Sacraments  
August 2013

Section I

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

As a seminary student you regularly attend worship services at First Presbyterian Church. At one service, the pastor preached a sermon about reaffirming the commitments made at baptism. Following the sermon, people were invited to come forward to the font and to reaffirm their baptismal vows. After the service, you overheard the comment, "That service of re-baptism was really meaningful to me."

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Citing by number at least one (1) specific passage (e.g., 0.000) from four (4) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, and guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, write an essay articulating a Reformed understanding of the *connection* between the Sacrament of Baptism and the "ongoing need of God's grace" in our lives (W-2.3009). If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, compare and contrast the differences between a theology of reaffirmation of baptismal vows and ideas about re-baptism.

Section II

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

You are the pastor of a congregation where the average age is 75 years old. Nearly half of the members are physically unable to attend worship regularly and many of them are homebound. The congregation celebrates the Lord's Supper at least once each month. Making arrangements for those who are homebound to receive the sacrament takes up a significant portion of each session meeting. As plans for communion are being discussed, some of the ruling elders begin to raise concerns about the whole issue of serving communion to those isolated from the community's worship.

Lamar:	It's too much to ask those of us on the session to take communion to all of these people.
Pablo:	Some of these people have memory problems, and they wouldn't notice if we just stopped coming.
Carol:	Maybe they wouldn't notice, but I would. Don't we still have an obligation to our members?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, discuss a Reformed understanding of the relationship between church membership and access to the means of grace through participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

- Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Lamar, Pablo and Carol, making certain to address at least one (1) issue raised by each of them.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

You are the new pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church. In discussing the order of worship with the session, you hear the following remarks:

Sylvia:	In the past the sermon was always preached right after the first hymn because people are more alert early in the service.
Gabriel:	We haven't always included scripture; instead, sometimes we have watched a <i>YouTube</i> clip.
Mary Kate:	We've stopped collecting the offerings on Sundays because most of our members pay by direct deposit or online.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

- Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, list at least four (4) of the fundamental actions of Christian worship. Discuss their significance and appropriate ordering in "A Service for the Lord's Day." If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
- Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Sylvia, Gabriel and Mary Kate, making certain to address at least one (1) issue raised by each of them.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**B.**

As pastor of First Presbyterian Church, you are meeting with the session. Some members of the congregation have been critical of your choice of scripture passages for worship services. During the discussion of this criticism, the following comments are made:

Jeff:	The session should select the scripture readings to be used in all the worship services of our congregation.
Reynaldo:	The Old Testament is too violent and should not be used at all. Christians should only use the New Testament in their worship.
Priscilla:	Why do we always have to read from the Bible in worship? We could read other inspirational material instead.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, identify and discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each of these comments regarding the role of scripture in Christian worship. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Jeff, Reynaldo and Priscilla, making certain that you address the concern raised by each of them.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

Section I

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

Phil and Sarah are members of the congregation you serve as pastor. They ask to meet with you to plan the baptism of their infant daughter. You review with them the baptismal vows described in the Directory for Worship. You read to them the citation that says, “Those desiring the Sacrament of Baptism for their children or for themselves shall make vows that ... renounce evil and affirm their reliance on God's grace” (W-3.3603(b)). Phil responds by saying, “I am not sure I can make that vow. I don't think evil is something a human being can renounce.”

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) specific passage from at least three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*, articulate a Reformed understanding of infant baptism.
2. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, discuss the significance of making the vow (W-3.3603(b)) in the church's celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Reformed tradition. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

## Section II

### **OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**

Bob and Anne, members of the congregation you serve, were at a recent public event where a local minister offered a prayer to “the God of our Founding Fathers.” They are divided about the language of that prayer. They have asked you to address the subject of prayer with the congregation. They asked, “Pastor, you wouldn’t pray like that in our church, would you?”

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of Christian prayer. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write a newsletter article about the language used in Christian prayer in response to Bob and Anne’s concern.

Section III, A

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**  
**(CHOOSE ONE: A or B)**

**A.**

The worship committee of the congregation you serve as pastor is considering choosing a new hymnal. At a recent committee meeting the following comments were made:

Shelly:	We need music that will entertain and appeal to younger people.
Moongil:	Let's buy the most popular hymnal rather than the new Presbyterian one.
Harold:	If we don't keep the familiar hymns of the faith we won't keep our long-time members.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, identify and discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each of these comments regarding the role of music in Reformed worship. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to the worship committee, making certain that you address the concerns raised by Shelly, Moongil, and Harold.

**-- OR PROCEED TO NEXT PAGE FOR OPTION B --**

Section III, B

**OPEN BOOK                      REQUIRED**  
**THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS AND**  
**THE BOOK OF ORDER ONLY**  
**CHOOSE ONE: A OR B**

**B.**

You are the solo pastor of a rural congregation and will be gone for a month in the summer. At a recent meeting the worship committee began to make plans for how they will lead Sunday worship during your absence. The discussion focused primarily on the weekly communion service.

John:	I have been coming for the last couple of years, so I will be glad to lead the prayer of thanksgiving.
Betty:	I don't see why we need to celebrate the Lord's Supper so often. The service will be over sooner if we cancel the communion part.
Martin:	Oh, we always have communion. Someone can just say the words of institution and then pass the bread and cup.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, identify and discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each of these comments regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to the worship committee making certain that you address the concerns raised by John, Betty and Martin.

**-- OR RETURN TO PREVIOUS PAGE FOR OPTION A --**

## **Worship and Sacraments, Summer 2014**

### **Section I**

Beth is a young adult who has moved into the community. She has volunteered to teach in the day care center at the Presbyterian church you serve as pastor. She also attends an evening adult Bible study, and she has agreed to coordinate the church's annual food collection. One Saturday afternoon, while sorting canned goods for the food pantry, you comment to Beth that you haven't seen her in Sunday worship for the past couple of months. She replies:

“Although I am not a church member, I am a Christian. I think it is important that we study the Bible, and that God wants us to help one another. But I don't have to go to worship anywhere to do those things. In fact, worship detracts from my spiritual life because I find sermons boring and the rituals irrelevant.”

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Using *The Book of Confessions* and guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of the purpose and role of worship in Christian life. Support your discussion with citations (e.g., 0.000) from at least three (3) different documents from *The Book of Confessions*. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, discuss the issue of intentional absence from worship by Christians and respond to Beth's statement.

## **Section II**

You are the pastor of a congregation located in a diverse neighborhood. Mike, a member of the congregation, has died of cancer after many months of medical treatment and congregational care. Mike had many close friends in both the church and the neighborhood. The whole community is grieving. A group of them have come to you to ask if they might help plan the funeral service. Their concern is to make sure that the service will provide support and comfort for the pain and grief they are feeling.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed theological understanding of the church's services on the occasion of death and how such services demonstrate the church's ministry of pastoral care. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and briefly discuss how at least three (3) elements of such a service manifest the church's ministry of pastoral care.

### **Section III**

A member of the congregation you serve is in the military and will be in town for only a couple of days. He and his wife would like to have their baby baptized on the upcoming Saturday. He mentions that his sister is a member of a neighboring Presbyterian church and she would like her child baptized at your church as well so the baptisms will occur together.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, identify and discuss at least three (3) issues raised in this scenario. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1 and demonstrating pastoral sensitivity, write an essay indicating how you would respond to the member and his wife.

## **Worship and Sacraments**

### **Fall 2014**

#### Section I: Reformed Liturgical Heritage

The session of the church you serve as pastor has gathered for a long-range planning retreat. In a discussion concerning ministry priorities for the future, the ruling elders make the following remarks:

Irving: The church is a group of people who are called to come together to worship and praise God.

Maria: Yes, but the church is God's creation, a place where the Word is rightly preached, the sacraments are rightly administered, and discipline is uprightly ministered.

Kim: Isn't the church a community called to build God's kingdom on earth through its social action?

Justinian: The church is sent to spread the good news and to tell the world about God.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*, and being guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of the church and its mission. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, briefly describe at least four (4) different ways an understanding of the church and its mission could be enacted within the congregation's worship practices, one (1) for each of the statements by Irving, Maria, Kim and Justinian.

## **Worship and Sacraments**

### **Fall 2014**

#### Section II: Constructive Theological Reflection on Worship

The baptismal prayer offered by the teaching elder (W-3.3604) is similar in structure to the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving offered by the teaching elder during the celebration of the Lord's Supper (W-3.3613).

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Using the Directory for Worship, describe the structure of these prayers, and then briefly discuss at least two (2) similarities and at least two (2) differences between the two prayers. When you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write an outline for a training session that develops a rationale for the structure of these prayers to be presented to a church worship committee.

## **Worship and Sacraments**

### **Fall 2014**

#### Section III: Application to Ministry

The worship committee of the congregation you serve as pastor is doing long-range planning for the music program. At a meeting the following comments are made:

Nan: We need new styles of music to appeal to young people if this church is ever going to grow.

Cal: I love the beauty and theological depth of the music we have always played and sung. I don't want the music to change.

Shelly: Pastor, how do we know what direction to go in?

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, discuss the significance and the appropriate use of music in worship. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, respond to Nan, Cal and Shelly making sure to address at least one (1) issue raised by each of them.

## Worship and Sacraments, Winter 2015

### Section I, Reformed Liturgical Heritage

During a new member class at the church where you are pastor, you are leading a discussion about Presbyterian understandings of the Lord's Supper. You ask the class, "What have you heard other people say about the Lord's Supper?" The following comments are made:

Carrie: I've always heard that the bread actually becomes the body of Christ and the wine actually becomes the blood of Christ.

Jose: We aren't cannibals! Jesus is present in the room, not in the elements!

Lee: Isn't it just a way to remember Jesus?

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Citing by number (e.g., 0.000) at least one (1) passage from at least three (3) different documents of *The Book of Confessions*, and guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each person.

## **Section II, Constructive Theological Reflection on Worship**

You are the pastor of Zion Presbyterian Church. While looking at the worship calendar, you notice that during the next four weeks there are baptisms, youth confirmation, and the reception of new members scheduled for inclusion in worship. The Directory for Worship provides guidance for such special worship occasions.

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, write an essay discussing the theological connections among these varied worship events. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g. W-0.0000).
2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, describe how these connections will be embodied in the congregation's worship.

### **Section III, Application to Ministry**

You have been asked by your presbytery to serve as a mentor to Elaine, a ruling elder recently commissioned to particular pastoral service. Part of your responsibility involves preparing her to preside at the Lord's Supper. You ask her to email you a copy of the Prayer of Thanksgiving that she has written and plans to use for a celebration of the sacrament during August. The prayer you receive from her reads as follows:

We give you thanks, O God, for you are great and wonderful.

You made us and the world we live in.

You sent your only child, Jesus, who helped us see your kingdom.

He walked among us, teaching and preaching and healing in your name.

On the night he was betrayed, he had supper with his friends.

He took bread, thanked you, broke the bread and gave it to all who were present, saying, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took a cup of wine and, after giving thanks to you, said, "This is the cup of the new covenant sealed in my blood. Drink from it, all of you, in remembrance of me."

Help us to remember, O God, what a great gift was given on our behalf.

Let our meal of bread and wine bind us to one another and to Jesus.

For we pray this in his name. Amen.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

1. Guided by your knowledge of the Directory for Worship, describe the basic form and thematic order of the Prayer of Thanksgiving. If you make reference to the Directory for Worship, provide the paragraph number (e.g. W-0.0000).
2. In light of your answer in Required Response 1 and demonstrating appropriate pastoral sensitivity, compose an email to Elaine in which you:
  - a. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the prayer she has submitted.
  - b. Offer suggestions for changes she might make to the prayer.