

## Spring 2024 Polity Exam

### Section I: Constitutional Heritage

One of the Historic Principles of Church Order addresses mutual forbearance. In F-3.0105, 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.

(A footnote to F-3.0101a, which also applies to this quotation from the *Book of Order*, states: "The words 'men' and 'man's' throughout this quotation from the eighteenth century should be understood as applying to all persons.")

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:** (*Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.*)

1. Provide and discuss briefly three (3) citations from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000), excluding F-3.0105, that inform how the principle of mutual forbearance could apply to the use of social media by church officers and staff.
2. Drawing on the work of Required Response 1 and focusing on the polity, write a policy statement for inclusion in a session's manual of administrative operations that applies the principle of mutual forbearance to the use of social media by church officers and staff.

## Section II: Constitutional Order for the Particular Church

You are the pastor at Memorial Presbyterian Church. One of the items on the agenda for tonight's session meeting is discussion about the Lord's Supper. The following comments arise:

Lois, clerk of session: Do we need to approve celebrating the Lord's Supper when the presbytery holds its meeting here next month?

Jun, seminary intern: I meet with our homeless neighbors once a month for worship, and I've been administering communion for them.

Laszlo, deacon to session: The deacons would like to bring communion to those they visit at home or the representative hospital.

Tom, a ruling elder: I think we should not have young children joining us in the service for communion. They are so noisy when they come back to the sanctuary.

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:** *(Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)*

1. Identify at least four (4) points of polity raised in the conversation, citing one (1) reference (e.g., X-0.0000) from the *Book of Order* for each point of polity identified. Quote the most relevant portion(s) of each citation used. Citations must be drawn from at least two (2) different parts (F, G, W, or D) of the *Book of Order*. Discuss briefly the citations and link them to their corresponding points of polity.
2. Drawing on your work in Required Response 1, respond directly during the meeting to each of the speakers, addressing their comments. The response **must not** be a description of how you would respond.

### Section III: Application to Ministry

You are the Associate Pastor of Angeles Presbyterian Church. Six weeks after the new pastor was installed, they sent a letter to the session resigning for medical reasons. Members of the congregation come to you with the following comments:

- Anna: Does the presbytery need to accept the resignation? Doesn't the congregation have a say?
- Maria: The session should immediately reconvene the Pastor Nominating Committee to begin a search for a new pastor.
- Pierre: What are we going to do in the immediate future? Who is responsible for finding someone to preach on Sundays?
- Chad: You're the Associate Pastor. Why can't you just become our pastor?

**REQUIRED RESPONSES:** *(Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)*

1. Identify at least four (4) points of polity, one (1) for each member's comment. Provide a citation from the Form of Government (e.g., G-0.0000) for each point of polity. Quote and discuss briefly the relevant portion of each citation.
2. In your position as Associate Pastor, describe how you would respond to the members. The response must address the relationships among the congregation, the session, installed pastors, and the presbytery. These **must not** be direct (word-for-word) responses.