

An Introduction to the Book of Order

BOOK OF ORDER 2015–2017
The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
Part II



What three
books guide
the
Presbyterian
Church?

BOOK OF ORDER 2015-2017
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Part II

OF CONFESSIONS
of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
Part I

INSTITUTES of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION



*Plus One
More???*

by JOHN CALVIN

If You Were to Write a Book about Church Order...

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THINK FOR A MOMENT: IF YOU WERE TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT CHURCH ORDER...

- How would you begin?
 - What's first—most important?
- What would it contain?
 - What topics would it cover?

Here is 'What's First' in importance

1. God's Mission

- Everything starts with God.
- God is sovereign over all.
- God is at work in this world.
- God's mission
 - ‘gives shape to the life and work of the Church.’

What's First?

1. God's Mission

- *“It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church, creating the Church as it goes along its way.”*

- Moltmann

What's First?

1. God's Mission

- It is not the Church that sends others in mission; we are ourselves sent by God to give witness to the mission of God in all contexts of life.

2. THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Jesus is Lord of all life

Christ is Head of the Church

Christ calls the Church into being, equips
Her, gives Her life, hope, foundation

In Christ 'the Church receives
its...appeal'

3. The Church as the Body of Christ

- We live differently
- We live together in unity
- We live with power
- We live with purpose

4. The Guidance of the Holy Spirit

- Not conformed to this world, but transformed to discern the will of God
- Reflection of a rich diversity united by God in baptism
- Creating a new openness to the sovereign activity of God in the Church and world

SUMMARY--IF YOU WERE TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT CHURCH ORDER...

- What's first-most important?

The Mission of God

under the authority of Christ

guided by the Holy Spirit

gives life, power and purpose to

the Church and its ongoing work in the world.

...IF YOU WERE TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT CHURCH ORDER

- What would it contain?
 - What topics would it cover?

4 Main Topics

1. Basic Beliefs
2. How we Organize and Operate
3. How we Worship
4. How we Deal with Problems and Conflict



4 Main Sections cover the 4 Main Topics

1. **F**—Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
2. **G**—Form of Government
3. **W**—Directory for Worship
4. **D**—Rules of Discipline



Which is the most important section of the Book of Order?

--by length?

1. Worship
2. Discipline
3. Government
4. Foundations

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Which is the most important section of the Book of Order?

--by content?

Foundations

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Why is the Book of Order Important at all?

Why do we need it?

It outlines how we move
from an *individual*
spirituality to a *Christian*
community of faith.

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THE BOOK OF ORDER WILL NOT EFFECT EVERYTHING IN CHURCH LIFE!



"I don't think we're devoted to the Lord.
I think we're devoted to dessert."

Exploring the Four Sections within the Book of Order

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Table of Contents and Index— Important Tools!

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Christ Calls and Equips the Church.....	F-1.0202
Christ Gives the Church Its Life.....	F-1.0203
Christ Is the Church's Hope.....	F-1.0204
Christ Is the Foundation of the Church.....	F-1.0205
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The Marks of the Church.....	F-1.0302
The Notes of the Reformed Church.....	F-1.0303
The Great Ends of the Church.....	F-1.0304
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Chapter Two: The Church and Its Confessions

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The references in this index are to the section numbers.

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4 Main Topics

1. F–Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

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ANSWERS AND DIRECTION

Question

- ▶ There are many sources of truth. What is the good news the Church shares?
- ▶ What distinguishes Church from other community service groups?
- ▶ Many churches are popping up offering different messages. What distinguishes the true Church?
- ▶ How does a Church know it's fulfilling it's calling? What is our purpose?

References

▶ F-1.01

▶ F 1.03

▶ F-1.0303

▶ F-1.0304

ANSWERS AND DIRECTION

Question

References

- ▶ Many are saying today the Church should be about 'Deeds, Not Creeds'. Are the Confessions important today?
- ▶ Doctrines and beliefs are so fluid now. Can the Church tell me what to believe or how to act?
- ▶ Session often votes on major issues without polling the members. Shouldn't they find out what members want?

▶ F-2.01

▶ F 3.01-5

▶ F-3.0204

Foundations (F) Chapter 1

Marks of the Whole Church – F-1.0302a-d

- Unity Holiness
- Catholicity Apostolicity

Openness to the Holy Spirit– F-1.0404

Seeking a new openness to God's mission
in the world.

Foundations (F) Chapter 2

- The marks of the Reformed Church-- F-2.05
 - **God's sovereignty**
 - **Election for service** as well as for **salvation**;
 - **Covenant life**
 - Disciplined concern for **order in the church according to the Word of God**;
 - **A faithful stewardship** that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of God's gifts:
 - **Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny,**
 - **Working for the transformation** of society
 - **Seeking justice and living in obedience** to the Word of God.

FOUNDATIONS (F) CHAPTER 3

- One Church – F-3.0201
- Governed by Presbyters – F-3.0202
 - Teaching Elders Ruling Elders
- Gathered in Councils – F-3.0203
- Representative-but not like U.S. gov't – F-3.0204
- Majority vote – F-3.0205
- Review and Control – F-3.0206

4 Main Topics

2. **G**–Form of **G**overnment

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Section 2--The Form of Government (G)

Six Chapters

- **One:** The Congregation and Its Members
- **Two:** Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification
- **Three:** The Councils of the Church
- **Four:** The Church and Civil Authority
- **Five:** Ecumenicity and Church Union
- **Six:** Interpreting/Amending the Constitution

ANSWERS AND DIRECTION

- ▶ What type of examination should there be for elders and deacons?
- ▶ What membership roles does a session keep?
- ▶ At a congregational meeting, who can serve as moderator?
- ▶ In electing elders and deacons, what role does the pastor play? The session? The congregation?

▶ G-2.402

▶ G-
3.0204a

▶ G-
1.0504

▶ G-
2.0401

ANSWERS AND DIRECTION

- ▶ What are responsibilities of the elders on Session? ▶ G-3.0201
- ▶ What are responsibilities of deacons? ▶ G-2.02
- ▶ What are responsibilities of church members? ▶ G-1.0304
- ▶ Are trustees necessary in a Church? Who serves as trustees of the church? ▶ G-4.01

Chapter 1– The Congregation and Its Members

- G-1.0101 - Mission of the Congregation
- G-1.0301 - The Meaning of Membership
 - Requirements of membership? (03)
- G-1.04 - Categories of Membership
- G-1.05 - Congregational Meetings

Chapter 2-- Ordered Ministry

- Requirements:
 - G-2.0104a – Strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus
 - G-2.0104b – Submit to Lordship of Christ in all of life.
- 3 Ordered Ministries
 - **Deacons:** Ministry of Compassion/Service G-2.0201
 - **Ruling Elder:** Ministry of Discernment/Governance
G-2.0301
 - **Teaching Elder:** Ministry of the Word and Sacrament
G-2.0501

Chapter 3--Councils of the Church

- G-3.0101 Built around Marks of the church

What are the four Councils?

- G-3.02 SESSION -Responsibilities
- G-3.03 PRESBYTERY – Responsibilities
- G-3.04 SYNOD
- G-3.05 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

What is not a council?

- Board of Deacons... G-2.0202

NOTE: Decisions left up to Congregations

- Determine the quorum for congregational meetings. (G-1.0501)
- Determine the period of minimum notice for a congregational meeting (G-1.0502)
- Determine whether to use *Robert's Rules* as parliamentary authority (councils do, but not stated for congregational meetings)
- Determine the size and composition of the congregational nominating committee (G-2.0401)

Decisions Left up to Sessions

- Keep a list of inactive members? (G-1.04)
- How to prepare people for membership? (G-1.0402)
- How to examine deacons and elders? (G-2.0104b)
- What term the session clerk serves (G-3.0104)
- Develop a manual of operations, sexual misconduct and child protection policy and a process for financial review. (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205)
- Obtain property/liability coverage (G-3.0112)
- Determine the quorum for session meetings. (G-3.0203)

The Mindset offered by the Form of Government

- Moving from Prescriptive to Permissive
- Allowing the broad principles of our polity to be applied with creativity and flexibility
- An openness to revitalization and transformation through new models of church life

4 Main Topics

3. **W**–Directory for **Worship**

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SECTION 3-DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP (W)

Seven Chapters--Beautiful, almost devotional

W-1.1- 1.3 – Primer in Christian Worship

- W-1.4000 – Responsibility and Accountability in worship
 - Who picks when/where worship is held?
 - Who picks the color of the carpet?
 - Who picks the music?

- W-2.100--Elements of Worship
- W-3.100--Ordering/Seasons of Worship
- W-4.100--Ordination & Installation,
Marriages, Funerals
- W-5.100--Personal Discipleship and
Family Worship
- W-6.100--Nurture and Pastoral Care
- W-7.100--Evangelism, Compassion,
Justice, Care of the Earth

ANSWERS AND DIRECTION

- ▶ What is the meaning of Baptism? ▶ W-2.3005
- ▶ Who may receive the Lord's Supper and who may not? ▶ W-2.4011
- ▶ In our Vocation as Christians, what is God's calling and our response? ▶ W-5.6002
- ▶ To what transitions of life does the Church respond? ▶ W-6.3010
- ▶ In what ways does the Church help people do justice in everyday life? ▶ W-7.4002

4 Main Topics

4. D—The Rules of Discipline

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SECTION 4—RULES OF DISCIPLINE

Fourteen Chapters

- Preamble – D-1.0101 Goal of Discipline
- Two types of cases – D-2.0200
 - Remedial—Irregularity or delinquency of lower court
 - Disciplinary—Censure for an offense

RULES OF DISCIPLINE

Help us ‘do all things decently and in order’, especially in moments of disagreement or conflict.

- The church’s liaison from the Presbytery Commission on Ministry, or the Stated Clerk of Presbytery, are often helpful resources

WHAT MAY BE MISSING IN THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE?

The Rules of Discipline focus more on ‘Corrective’ discipline and less on “Formative” discipline.

Remember the 3 marks of the Reformed Church as listed in F-1.0303.

Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true church wherever...

Ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered

ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE IS THEN DEFINED AS A CHURCH THAT:

Nurtures a covenant community of disciples in Christ,

- Living in the strength of God's promise and
- Giving itself in service to God's mission.

Church discipline includes Formative discipline:

*Nurturing and encouraging people toward faithful
discipleship and service*

How are we doing offering Formative Discipline?

Now You
Know
Everything!

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