An Introduction to the Book of Order
What three books guide the Presbyterian Church?

Plus One More???
If You Were to Write a Book about Church Order...
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?

Which is the most important section of the Book of Order?--by content?

Foundations
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*. 
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
Table of Contents and Index—Important Tools!
Contents Outline in the Front

INDEX

The references in this index are to the section numbers.

Acceptance and Reconciliation, Services of ................................................. W-4.8000
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4 Main Topics

1. F—Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
### Questions

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<td>There are many sources of truth. What is the good news the Church shares?</td>
<td>F-1.01</td>
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<td>What distinguishes Church from other community service groups?</td>
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<td>Many churches are popping up offering different messages. What distinguishes the true Church?</td>
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<td>How does a Church know it’s fulfilling it’s calling? What is our purpose?</td>
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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?

References

- 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 Government
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
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?
What are responsibilities of the elders on Session?

What are responsibilities of deacons?

What are responsibilities of church members?

Are trustees necessary in a Church? Who serves as trustees of the church?
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
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
What is the meaning of Baptism?

Who may receive the Lord’s Supper and who may not?

In our Vocation as Christians, what is God’s calling and our response?

To what transitions of life does the Church respond?

In what ways does the Church help people do justice in everyday life?
4 Main Topics

4. **D**—The Rules of Discipline
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!