Section I

Reformed Liturgical Heritage

Two years ago Joe, a very active member of the congregation you serve, was convicted of a felony. You, as pastor, have maintained a pastoral relationship with him throughout his imprisonment. Joe has demonstrated repentance and expressed a sense of having received God’s forgiveness and acceptance. He is about to be released from prison and has expressed his desire to return to the congregation and become involved again.

REQUIRED RESPONSES (Total responses for this Section not to exceed 1,200 wcrds.)

1. Using The Book of Confessions, articulate a Reformed understanding of the place of repentance and forgiveness in the community of faith. Support your discussion with at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from at least three (3) different documents from The Book of Confessions.

2. Based on your answer in Required Response 1 and using the Directory for Worship, write an essay that describes possibilities for reflecting God’s grace through worship on the first Sunday Joe returns. All references to the Directory for Worship must cite the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

Answer

Response 1 - As members of the church in the body of Christ, we are a community of faith made visible to others and have been chosen as God’s elect to be gathered into one body under the authority of Christ who is its head (Westminster Conf. 6.140; Col. 1:18). As the visible church, we are to confess the true message of the gospel throughout the world as a family in the community of faith in the kingdom of God. It is essential that all humanity are saved and unified in Christ so we may grow as a community in service to God and one another (Westminster, 6.141).
As members of Christ's body, we are called to repent of our sins. When we repent, our minds are transformed and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit so that the way we view the world, our goals, and ethical ideals are changed and we start to live a new life in Christ. In our repentance, we turn away from sin, turn to God in faith, and receive forgiveness from God who has removed our sins (Larger Cat. 7.186; Acts 3:19; 11:18). The outcomes of our repentance are the good works to which God has called us to perform in love to one another within our community of faith.

Response 2 - As a community of faith in Christ, we are called in ministry to nurture and provide pastoral care to one another (W-6.31003). By doing so, we support to those in need as well celebrate the victories of life as we walk alongside one another in faith. Joe's declaration of repentance, forgiveness, and acceptance by God is truly a victory worthy of celebration. Since I have been providing him with pastoral care during his incarceration, I would ask him about the possibility of becoming a baptized believer in Christ. Nurturing guidance and support of one another is important to someone who is new to the Christian faith; especially when Joe is no longer incarcerated and is able to experience a new sense of freedom for the first time in a long time (W-6.2004).

We are forgiven and granted pardon in justification for all time. Our guilt and prior penalties are removed because as justified in the eyes of Christ, we are assured that no one can lay any charge on the person who has been justified in Christ who has been exempt from condemnation and heir to eternal life (Heidelberg, 4.060). Our justification is grounded in the lifelong obedience in Christ, where he satisfied the law of God for us and bore the consequence of God's judgment on our behalf. Now, believers share in the same righteousness as our risen Lord and are united forever with him. Unfortunately, believers still continue to sin after they have been justified. But, but as a community of faith, Christ teaches his disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:12).

As sinners, we need forgiveness from our sins each day. If we as members of Christ's body in the community of faith do not forgive each other, we are not able to receive forgiveness ourselves (Shorter Catechism 7.105; Luke 11:14). All life is a precious gift from God and we are duty bound by the 6th commandment to preserve the life of one another. We are obligated as Christians to take care of the other and focus on opportunities for service to God within our relationships (Larger Catechism 7.245).

Response 2 - As a community of faith in Christ, we are called in ministry to nurture and provide pastoral care to one another (W-6.31003). By doing so, we support to those in need as well celebrate the victories of life as we walk alongside one another in faith. Joe's declaration of repentance, forgiveness, and acceptance by God is truly a victory worthy of celebration. Since I have been providing him with pastoral care during his incarceration, I would ask him about the possibility of becoming a baptized believer in Christ. Nurturing guidance and support of one another is important to someone who is new to the Christian faith; especially when Joe is no longer incarcerated and is able to experience a new sense of freedom for the first time in a long time (W-6.2004).

The church has been granted this responsibility by the Holy Spirit (W-6.2005; W-2.3013). Pryor to Joe's decision to be baptized, I would speak with the session of ruling elders and deacons to keep them abreast of his intended release from prison and discuss the ways we could support, equip and encourage Joe in his new found living situation. For example, with session approval, I would introduce Joe to a few deacons and ruling elders who are gifted with discipleship ministry and join start a joint time of fellowship where they could get to know Joe better and encourage him in his new found faith. Before Joe begins attending our church, I would begin a series
of informal discussions with our faith community about how we respond to the changes of life, especially when God has called us to forgive those who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Our discussions would center on the Lord’s Prayer and focus on repentance, forgiveness, and acceptance.

Since all of this would take place before Joe’s arrival into worship for the first time, his first service that he attends on the Lord’s Day will be one of great welcome since by now he will have met members of the family of the community of faith with whom he has begun to develop relationships with hopefully his first experience in worship will be comfortable for him.

Once session has approved Joe’s baptism, on the day of the service, he will be presented for baptism with the support of his sponsor who was appointed by session for his spiritual nurture. After the reading and proclamation of the Word, I would call Joe forward to declare his intention to be baptized. (W-3.3602). I would declare that baptism in an act of the sealing promise of faith in God within the community of faith as we worship together. God’s grace is sealed in the act and our response to be baptized signifies our commitment to live in the faith and love of Christ.

After Joe has declared his intention to be baptized, I would ask the congregation to support Joe’s decision by asking them to recite the Apostle’s Creed and declare their willingness to support his decision taking responsibility for his Christian nurture. Next, I would offer a prayer of thankfulness and praise to God for Joe’s life and his decision to be reconciled to his Creator and call on the Holy Spirit to equip Joe and the church with the redeeming power of Christ (W-3.3606).

The baptismal service would conclude with me as Joe’s pastor declaring the Joe is now a baptized believer within our community of faith and is a member in the Church of Christ. I would ask them to show him a sign of welcome with their applause. In addition, I would ask those in charge of our fellowship ministry to offer a special celebration in Joe’s honor after the service so more members of the congregation could meet him.

We are forgiven and granted pardon in justification for all time. Our guilt and prior penalties are removed because as justified in the eyes of Christ, we are assured that no one can lay any charge on the person who has been justified in Christ who has been exempt from condemnation and heir to eternal life (Heidelberg, 4.060). Our justification is grounded in the lifelong obedience in Christ, where he satisfied the law of God for us and bore the consequence of God’s judgment on our behalf. Now, believers share in the same righteousness as our risen Lord and are united forever with him. Unfortunately, believers still continue to sin after they have been justified. But, but as a community of faith, Christ teaches his disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:12).

As sinners, we need forgiveness from our sins each day. If we as members of Christ’s body in the community of faith do not forgive each other, we are not able to receive forgiveness ourselves (Shorter Catechism 7.105; Luke 11:14). All life is a precious gift from God and we are duty bound by the 6th commandment to preserve the life of one another. We are obligated as Christians to take care of the other and focus on opportunities for service to God within our relationships (Larger Catechism 7.245).

Reader Responses
Section II
Constructive Theological Reflection on Worship

The members of the confirmation class at the church you serve as pastor have prepared individual statements of faith. Some of the youth have made banners that display their understanding of God. Some of the images presented on their banners are of lightning bolts, a hen, a roaring lion, and a pregnant woman.

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

1. Guided by the provisions of the Directory for Worship, write an essay demonstrating a Reformed theological understanding of symbols in Christian worship. All references to the Directory for Worship must cite the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

2. Informed by Required Response 1 write a blog that will help the congregation understand the use of symbols in worship, including the symbols they will see on the banners.

Answer

Response 1: We are all called into being by the grace of God. In response to our faith and belief in the saving power of Jesus Christ, we want to respond to this divine gift of grace through the language of worship using signs and symbols that represent our praise and thankfulness for the presence of God in our lives. Christians use of symbolic language used in liturgical worship such as dancing, singing, and lifting our hands up in praise

https://exams.pcusa.org/tests/6088/results/
strengthen our faith and bind us together in the community of faith as one voice praising our Lord and Savior (W-1.2001; Psalm 98; 149:3). Christians use these symbols in thankfulness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Christians also use symbolic acts within liturgical worship such as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is a sign and seal of our death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ (W-2.3004-2.4007). It is a ceremonial form of washing as an outward sign of grace from God. It signifies inward cleansing and remission of sins shaped by the Holy Spirit as regeneration and new life. It is the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s assurance affirming and guaranteeing that we will be kept safe in Christ forever. It can be described as an emblem or seal unifying us with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Union with Christ is the source of every aspect in our salvation (1 John 5:11-12). By receiving the sign of baptism in faith, we are assured that God’s gift of new life in Christ is freely given while at the same time we commit ourselves to live in new life as Disciples of Christ.

Baptism is a constant reminder of our faithful commitment to Christ and his commitment to us. We are reminded: 1.) of the symbolic act of the water cleansing us from sin yet sustaining us in new life in him, 2.) We are all baptized by the one Spirit into one body of faith (1Cor. 12:13), 3.) our anointing is a seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, (2 Cor. 1:21-22), and 4.)of the promise that Christ lives in our hearts forever and will never leave us (John 14:18). In summary, baptism in the power of the Holy Spirit reminds us that by choosing Christ, we go with him to the cross, his death, his tomb, and his resurrection to new life.

Response 2 – Wherever we go, we are inevitably faced with a symbol. Whether it is a company logo on a billboard, a piece of software, or a picture on a door, symbols are everywhere. A symbol makes us think about someone or something else. It is an intimate reminder and a sign to others of an explicit identity.

Symbols have been used for over two thousand years by Christians to express their faith and belief in God. Since the infancy of the church, symbols were used as a secret sign of a person’s faith during times of torment and suffering. They were a teaching tool of truths spoken in the bible for those who were unable to read. Most importantly, they were a reminder to believers in the divinity and sovereign rule of God over all creation.

As we worship together as members in the body of Christ throughout the year, we are able to see, hear, and perform symbolic acts of worship as a way of teaching their meaning and proclaiming the sovereignty of the Lord for all time. Symbols empower us to demonstrate our spirituality in the saving love of Christ outside the church walls and into our daily lives.

As we move through this wild and crazy secular world, we must not lose sight of our call from God to worship. Let us not lose the precious language of symbolism that accompanies our Christian faith.

For centuries, people have responded in praise and thankfulness to God. While there is no way any type of symbol created by humanity can adequately describe or comprehend the fullness of the love of God, Christians have tried their hardest to communicate it to the world (W-1.2002). However even though there is no symbol equal to the reality of God, we can use them to share in our understanding of that love and respond to the gracious activity of God in our world of praise and worship.

You may have noticed today’s blog shows pictures created by our youth during their confirmation class. We learned about how people worshiped God in the Old Testament by using symbols of their one experience. They used depictions such as a hen or a lion to describe the sovereignty of God in nature (W-1.2003). In the New Testament, Jesus added a personal touch to symbols to which others could relate from the Old Testament, but he gave them a new meaning for God, such as referring to God as “Abba, Father.” He gave new meaning to the
sacrament of baptism and eating together by celebrating the Lord's Supper with those who believed in him (W-1.2004a). The symbolic act of Baptism symbolizes a washing and cleansing of sin and our rise to new life in Christ. The Lord's Supper commemorates the Lord's death and is a ceremonial meal celebrating our covenant relationship with God in Christ.

Christ himself became the focus of new symbolic terms that were used to describe the good news of his arrival such as the firstborn of all creation (symbolized in our photo of the pregnant woman). As the Word of Christ is proclaimed through scripture in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, God in Christ is present everywhere by the Holy Spirit to transform and empower (lightning bolt) all of humanity as we worship together.

Come to worship and you will see and experience the symbols of our faith as we proclaim the Word of God, receive God's love enacted in the sacraments, discover Christ in the world, and are sent out into the world too proclaim it (W-1.1004).

Reader Responses

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<td>S</td>
<td>There are sufficient citations from the Directory for Worship to support an historic and scriptural use of symbolism in the church and in the work of Christ. Although the case did not explicitly call for a discussion of the sacraments in worship, a thoughtful case was made for the sacraments as central symbols expressing the ministry of Christ, and as a significant part of our Reformed worship instituted by Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Response 1 deals adequately with the concept of symbols in worship and focuses specifically on the symbolism of baptism. There are numerous and appropriate references in this answer. Response 2: There are four citations from the Directory for Worship. The inclusion of the discussion of symbols in the modern world is a good reminder that symbols are still important today. This is followed by the discussion of Jesus' use of symbols. In the sixth paragraph the reference to Jesus' use of symbols might have been a separate paragraph since it strays from the discussion of the symbols used by the confirmands.</td>
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Section III

Application to Ministry

The congregation you serve as pastor has a tradition of withholding communion from children until they are in second grade and have completed a four-week “Communion Preparation Class.” They then receive communion for the first time on World Communion Sunday. One of the new families in the congregation has come to you wanting to understand why their first grade son cannot receive communion since he was allowed to do so at their previous congregation. They are requesting that the current practice be changed in this regard since it is “not Presbyterian.”

REQUIRED RESPONSES (Total responses for this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)
1. Guided by the provisions in the Directory for Worship, articulate a Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper, giving special attention to who may participate in the sacrament. All references to the Directory for Worship must cite the paragraph number (e.g., W-0.0000).

2. Informed by your answer in Required Response 1, write a detailed outline of an educational module for the session regarding the Lord’s Supper, which addresses the concern raised by the family.

**Answer**

Response 1: The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of worship celebrated in the service of the Lord's Day as a ceremonial meal, in which we as a servants of Christ share bread and wine to commemorate the Lord's death and celebrate our new covenantal relationship we enjoy with God (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; 1 Cor. 10:16-21). Although the Passover meal was used as a celebration commemorating Israel’s old covenant and their deliverance from Egypt, Jesus used the Lord’s Supper to show his steady focus on the redemptive power throughout the revelation of God. The sacrament demonstrates crucial continuity between the old and new covenants by illuminating the true meaning of the Passover feast expressed in the act of deliverance accomplished in the death of Jesus. Christ’s teaching using himself as the bread of life and our need to feed on him through the act of eating his flesh and drinking his blood is understood as being the symbolic use of the Supper as our communion with Christ by our faith. While the Reformation caused questions to be asked about the nature of Christ’s presence in the Supper itself, the Reformed tradition recognizes that as we partake at the Table, we give thanks to Christ for his atoning work.

The symbolic act of the Lord’s Supper has several citations within the our journey in faith: 1.) It has a past reference to the death of Christ, 2.) It presently refers to our corporate participation in Christ through our faith, and 3.) it has a future reference to the promise of his return. The Lord’s Supper encourages all of us in our daily faith walk as we gratefully expect the return of our risen Lord.

All baptized believers in Christ are welcome at the Table and no one is to be excluded (W-2.4006; Gal. 3:28). We are all one in Christ because the wall that separates us between Jew and Gentile has been eradicated and we are united with Christ.

Those who participate in the Lord’s Supper must be acknowledge their sin before God and admit that they are lost. They must have faith in Jesus so that they can trust in the redemptive power and atoning work of God. Moreover, they must possess a proper understanding and appreciation of the sacrament with the ability to discern the differences between it and a regular meal and recognize that the elements of bread and wine are tokens of the body and blood of Jesus (W-2.4011).

Children may partake in the sacrament if they are baptized and being nurtured and taught in its significance when being invited to the Table (W-2.4011b). The apostle Peter taught that salvation through the Messiah is promised to all people, including children and their future generations (Acts 2:39). Everyone whom God calls to salvation is invited to the Table of grace.
Response 2:

1. Call the meeting to order with a reading from the Westminster Confession 7.278 regarding the definition of the Lord's Supper followed by a word of prayer (10 mins.).
2. Next we would discuss Jesus as the bread of life and our need to feed on him as symbolized in the bread and wine. (Matt. 25:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17; 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:17-34. (15 mins.)
1. Break into discussion 3 groups discussing the following topics: the significance of the Supper, communion with Christ by our faith, and the Supper itself. (30 mins.)
2. Calling the group back to the common table, I would ask them to share in points and/or questions that were raised in the discussion paying particular attention to their expression of the Supper in relation to Christ's atoning death.
3. Discuss the session's responsibility to authorize the observance of the Lord's Supper (W-2.4012a), but we are all charged with equipping baptized believers in Christ and the Lord's Supper is no exception.
4. This may be done through instruction of parents as well as children we they enter our community of faith and are welcomed at the Table (W-6.2001). Review scripture (Rom. 12:15; Gal 6:2).
5. Invite elders with Christian Education and Worship Committee responsibilities to discuss opportunities the church can involve new baptized believers to partake of the Table (W-6.2000).
6. End the meet in prayer.

Reader Responses

| S | Key citations are made indicating that baptized children receiving instruction are welcome and included; that it is the session's responsibility to teach parents and children; and a thoughtful process of study, prayer, and sharing among the session was outlined so they might be equipped to teach others about the Lord's Supper. A key citation W.2.4011 b is made but no mention about the provision within the Directory for Worship recognizing that the child's understanding of participation will vary according to their maturity, which is a relevant part of the presenting case with the session. Another reference to Westminster Confession 7.278 is made but offers no interpretation why the citation is central to the study plan for session. It sounds like the weight of the response still rests on proper discernment in order to participate in the supper. Yet for example, W. 24011 a states that access is not a right conferred upon the worthy but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith. |
Response 1: The answer is complete with many appropriate references. The meaning and symbolism of the Lord’s Supper is fully discussed. The issue of whether children may receive the sacrament is also fully discussed.

Response 2: The outline of the educational module is good in that it contains time for learning about the sacrament and also for discussing its meaning to individual believers. Scriptural and other references are more than adequate. Points 3-5 are somewhat unclear. The Session does authorize the observance of the sacrament. The second part of Point 3 indicates that all have a responsibility to “equip other believer,” but the connection to the Lord’s Supper is then unclear. Point number 5 is unclear: are the elders talking specifically about the Lord’s Supper or are they talking about other activities in the church these families might participate in?

There are some issues with syntax in the Response 2.

Overall Evaluation

General Comments for Examinee and/or Presbytery

Please include here any comments about the examination as a whole or notes for the presbytery committee/commission overseeing the examinee’s preparation for ministry.

Reader Responses

Sufficient resources were cited throughout the body of work, but a closer investigation of the source materials being cited would have brought clearer focus to the discussions at hand.

With some hesitation this exam has been evaluated as satisfactory for all three questions. It definitely is not unsatisfactory. Sections 1 and 3 both have answers or parts of answers that seem marginal. Each question has sufficient references.