Section I
Constitutional Heritage

F-3.0204 says,

Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ. (emphasis added)

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

1. From parts of the Book of Order other than part F, The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, list four (4) citations (e.g., X-0.0000) that demonstrate how presbyters “seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.” Briefly discuss how each of these four (4) citations reflects the intention of F-3.0204.

2. Building upon the work from Required Response 1, prepare a handout for newly elected ruling elders about how F-3.0204 informs elders as they govern and lead.

Answer

"...the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in the discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit... Ruling elders, together with ministers of the Word and Sacrament, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline..." (Book of Order, G-2.0301).

In regards to section G-2.0301, ruling elders are elected by the congregation to lead the congregation in seeking
the will of Christ. They do this by serving “faithfully as members of the session” (Book of Order, G-2.0301). By serving on session, the presbyters work together to seek Christ's will and assist the congregation in fulfilling and representing Christ and Christ's will.

"The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness" (Book of Order, G-3.0201).

In regards to section G-3.0201, the session works together in order to lead the congregation in ways that represent the will of Christ, witnessing in the world to the hope and love which Christ represents and gives to the world, seeking to fulfill Christ's will in the world.

"Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils" (Book of Order, G-3.0202).

In regards to section G-3.0202, it is apparent that the ruling elders, or presbyters, elected to the session are to participate in the fullness of Christ's body. This means that not only are they responsible to their particular congregation to "seek together to find and represent the will of Christ" (Book of Order, F-3.0204), but also to the rest of the church, working together to be faithful to Christ through their interactions and participation on additional councils.

"In a particular congregation, ruling elders shall provide for the church's worship and encourage the people's participation. Specifically, when serving together on the session, ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament: make provision for the regular preaching of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments, corporate prayer, and the offering of praise to God in song; oversee and approve all public worship in the congregation, with the exception of responsibilities reserved for the minister of the Word and Sacrament..." (Book of Order, W-2.0303).

In regards to section W-2.0303, ruling elders seek guidance from the Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the Book of Order to guide the congregation in worshipful practices. The opportunities include time for corporate prayer and the preaching of the word. The elders do not work separately in their work to worship Christ, but rather together to ensure that worship in nurturing to the congregation as they discern how best to worship Christ. This connects to F-3.0204 through the searching for the will of Christ. Each week, the elders and minister of Word and Sacrament are to work together to ensure that the worship space and worship itself aids in the discernment of the whole congregation to seek and better understand how to represent the will of Christ.

How to Lead: Newly Elected Ruling Elders
Welcome friends into ordained leadership of That Particular Presbyterian Church! I, as your pastor, am very excited to work with you as you each serve your terms. This worksheet is to help you understand the expectations of the congregation and the Book of Order regarding how we work to lead the congregation. Each of the quotes come from the Book of Order. We will talk about the quotes and your responses to them at our next meeting for ordination preparation! Blessings to you as you seek to understand your new roles. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

Also, know that Ruling Elders are also known as Presbyters.
1. “Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ” (Book of Order, F-3.0204).
- With this quote in mind, how do you now in your own life, seek to find and represent the will of Christ?
- Knowing your own tendencies in seeking the will of Christ, how might you seek to join those tendencies with fellow leaders in the church?

- Keep F-3.0204 in mind as you continue through the rest of the worksheet.

2. Next, find G-2.0301 in your Book of Order. Take a minute to read it.
   - You have been elected by a congregation who believes you to be a person capable of leadership. How will you seek “to discern and measure [the congregations] fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life” (Book of Order, G-2.0301)?

   - In other words, are there any particular ways that God may already be leading you to improve, encourage, or nurture our congregation on our journey?

3. “The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness” (Book of Order, G-3.0201).
   - How is the congregation already “a community of faith, hope, love, and witness” (Book of Order, G-3.0201)?

   - How could we do better? How might you and the rest of session help us to discern this?

Let's think about this for a moment: as a ruling elder, you and the rest of session “have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils” (Book of Order, G-3.0202). There are a lot of different opportunities to serve on councils in our presbytery.
   - Jot down some of your interests and passions here. At our next meeting, I will provide a list of the current councils with descriptions. Perhaps we will find one that you have a particular interest in.

4. One of those interests may be in planning worship! Excellent! Check out section W-20303 in the Book of Order. Worship is indeed part of the session’s responsibility.
   - Are there any particular areas of worship that interest you?

   - Are there any particular areas you wish were better or different? How would you change or fix them?

Reader Responses
The response provides appropriate citations that illustrate the points of polity called for by the question.

Part 2 engages the new elders by both citing what they're supposed to do and asking them how they want to follow Christ by doing them so that the whole congregation will understand how presbyters work together to seek Christ's will.

The response in part 1 clearly linked citations concerning ruling elders and sessions to F-3.0204. The writing was organized. The handout for new ruling elders was a worksheet for them to complete and bring to the next training session. It was a good way to encourage familiarity with the Book of Order.

**Section II**

**Constitutional Order for the Particular Church**

You are the pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church. You are moderating your first annual congregational meeting. On behalf of the Congregational Nominating Committee the chair nominates Sarah Smith to fill a two-year unexpired session term. The chair also places two additional names in nomination for full three-year terms. You then ask for nominations from the floor.

A church member is acknowledged and says, “I nominate my daughter, Joy, for the unexpired term. She has been regularly attending for four years and is known by all of you even though she has not yet officially become a member of Hope.”

Before you are able to respond, Tom, a former clerk of session and respected member of the congregation, says, “Here at Hope Church we just elect our elders and session assigns their terms.”

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

1. Identify three (3) points of polity raised by this scenario. Cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000) for each point of polity. Briefly discuss each citation and link it to its relevant point of polity.

2. Building on your work in Required Response 1, how would you, as the moderator, respond in the setting of the congregational meeting?

**Answer**

1. “Ruling elders and deacons shall be nominated by a committee elected by the congregation, drawn from and representative of its membership” (*Book of Order*, G-2.0401).

   a. Ruling elders shall be selected from among the membership of the congregation, while Joy has been active for four years, she is not a member, and therefore cannot be nominated at this time to fulfill the role.

2. “An active member is a person who... has voluntarily submitted to the government of this church...” (*Book of Order*, G-1.0402).

   a. Joy is not a member of the church. While she has been active for four years, she has not yet made the commitment to the government of the Presbyterian Church (USA). While her primary commitment must be to seek and following the will of Christ, as a member of a PC(USA) church, she would then submit to the government of the
In Ho, a pastor of an urban congregation:

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### Reader Responses

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<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>This is an appropriate response to the polity questions raised in this scenario. The responses to Tom and Joy are appropriately pastoral. The response would be strengthened by reference to Tom’s inappropriate interruption of the moderator.</th>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>The discussion in part 1 was very well-organized and clearly written. Applicable citations were chosen. The pastor in the scenario in part 2 was efficient, yet pastoral to Joy’s parent and Tom (and Joy, if she was present). The pastor stated appreciation for Mary and affirmed that Tom had one correct point. The pastor never mentioned Tom’s speaking without being recognized.</td>
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### Section III

#### Application to Ministry

You are part of a group of church professionals from the presbytery planning for their annual study retreat to be held at a local conference center. They discuss concluding the retreat with a celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

| In Ho, a pastor of an urban congregation: | I’ll ask our session to give permission for us to have communion. |
Maria, a ruling elder and educator:
Since any gathering of God’s people constitutes a congregation and this celebration would be open to all of us, it’ll be fine.

Bob, a presbytery staff member:
I have been given permission by presbytery to serve communion at any presbytery sanctioned event.

Constance, a ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service:
I have just been commissioned to administer the Sacraments and would love to be the person to preside at the table with my friends.

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

1. From the comments of each of the four (4) speakers, identify one (1) point of polity and cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000). Choose citations from at least two (2) parts (i.e., F, G, W, or D) of the *Book of Order* quoting the most relevant portion(s) of the citation used. A citation may be used more than once as long as a different relevant portion of the citation is quoted.

2. Building on your work in Required Response 1, write an essay that discusses the orderly authorization and administration of the Lord’s Supper in this scenario.

**Answer**

In Ho – “Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper are to be approved by the council overseeing the event or in whose bounds it takes place” (*Book of Order*, W-5.0206). As this event is a presbytery event, the presbytery will need to approve the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Maria – “[T]he session has responsibility and power to: provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received” (*Book of Order*, G-3.0201a). Maria, I appreciate your enthusiasm. However, you do not have the authority to authorize the Lord’s Supper without the rest of your session members. The session, together, has the responsibility. And, as was explained to In Ho, because this is a Presbytery event, the Presbytery will need to approve the celebration.

Bob – “The Lord’s Supper shall be authorized by the session and administered by a minister of the Word and Sacrament” (*Book of Order*, W-3.0401). The responsibility for celebrating the Lord’s Supper falls to the session and to a Minister of Word and Sacrament. If the presbytery has given Bob permission to serve communion, excellent. After the Presbytery, acting as the session or council in regards to our presbytery wide event, approves the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, perhaps we will indeed have Bob assist in serving communion after it is celebrated by a minister of the Word and Sacrament.

Constance – “Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law” (*Book of Order*, G-2.1001). Thank you Constance, for your willingness to serve. However, as a commissioned ruling elder, you are limited in where, who, and when you may celebrate the
Sacraments. Only ministers of the Word and Sacrament have the freedom to celebrate outside of their congregations, though they may also seek the approval of their congregations before celebrating. While you may not preside, perhaps you might serve the elements as Bob will.

In order to first be authorized to celebrate the Lord's Supper during the retreat at the local conference center, we first must take the request to presbytery. One of the members of our planning committee will write an email to the stated clerk to be placed on the presbytery’s agenda for approval. Without the approval of presbytery, we may not celebrate Communion at this presbytery wide event. Notice of the celebration will occur a minimum of one week before the scheduled event, in accordance with W-3.0409.

For administration of the Sacrament, we will need a minister of the Word and Sacraments to preside at the table. One of the ministers of Word and Sacrament who is on the planning committee will preside, and will select a fellow minister to assist. They will speak the “Great Thanksgiving” and complete the “Breaking of the Bread” in accordance with W-3.0412 and W-3.0413. Because Bob has been granted permission to serve communion at any presbytery sanctioned event, he will assist as a ruling elder or deacon would by serving communion. Constance and Maria may also be among those who serve the elements.

Finally, once the celebration has ended, In Ho will lead those gathered in a prayer of Thanksgiving, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

**Reader Responses**

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<td><strong>U</strong></td>
<td>Most of this response is on target, but it has misidentified the polity issue inherent in Maria's remark. The issue is that the fellowship gathering cannot be considered a congregation. The rest of her Session members have no authority to approve the celebration either. Moreover, this is not a Presbytery event although it falls under the jurisdiction of Presbytery where it concerns celebration of the Lord's Supper.</td>
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<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>In part 1, the response to In Ho was correct. The response to Maria did not mention her incorrect assertion that &quot;Since any gathering of God's people constitutes a congregation...&quot; A congregation is defined in G-1.0101. The responses to Bob and Constance noted the difference between administering the Lord's Supper and serving the Lord's Supper and the polity concerning when and where a commissioned ruling elder can administer the Lord's Supper. In the response to Bob, the phrase &quot;After the Presbytery, acting as the session or council in regards to our presbytery wide event...&quot; was unclear. Is the response stating that the presbytery acts as a session regarding a presbytery-wide event? The part 2 essay that discusses the orderly authorization and administration of the Lord's Supper in this scenario was adequate. It also noted the difference between administering the Lord's Supper and serving the Lord's Supper.</td>
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**Additional Comments**

**For Examinee and/or Presbytery**

You may include here any additional comments about the examination as a whole or notes for the presbytery committee/commission overseeing the examinee's preparation for ministry.

**Reader Responses**
The responses are generally in accordance with Presbyterian polity. The handout in Section 1 is particularly innovative and engaging.

The discussions in this exam were well-organized and utilized appropriate citations. The responses demonstrated a good grasp of polity.