Section I
Reformed Liturgical Heritage

You are the new pastor of a small rural congregation located near a lake. Savannah, who has been attending worship regularly with her family for several years, tells you that she has never been baptized. During the conversation she states, “Pastor, I want to be baptized in the lake, but my husband said that Presbyterians don’t ‘dunk.’ I want to be dunked in the lake.”

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

1. Using The Book of Confessions and guided by the provisions of the Directory for Worship, discuss a Reformed understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian baptism. In your response include a discussion of the modes of baptism. Support your discussion with citations (e.g., 0.000) from at least three (3) different documents from The Book of Confessions. 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, describe how you would respond to Savannah.

Answer

1. The reformed tradition of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) understands the Sacraments to be outward signs of an inward change or commitment to God. According to the Book of Order, “[t]he Reformed tradition understands Baptism to be a sign of God's covenant. Baptism thus connects us with God's creative purpose, cleansing power, and redemptive promise from generation to generation. Like circumcision, a sign of God's gracious covenant with Israel, Baptism is a sign of God's gracious covenant with the Church. In this new covenant of grace God washes us
clean and makes us holy and whole. Baptism also represents God's call to justice and righteousness, rolling down like a mighty stream, and the river of the water of life that flows from God's throne” (Book of Order, W-3.0402). Baptism is one of two Sacraments celebrated in our tradition, recognizing that along with the Lord's Supper, these two sacraments “alone were instituted by the Lord Jesus and commanded to be used by all who will be counted members of his body” (Scots Confession, 3.21).

Baptism is not simply the proper thing to do, but baptism is also meant to remind us of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. According to the Heidelberg Catechism baptism reminds and assures us of his sacrifice “in this way: Christ instituted this outward washing and with it promised that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, that is, all my sins” (Heidelberg Catechism, 4.069). Indeed, Paul even tells us scripturally that in baptism we are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11). Baptism is an outward sign of our incorporation into the body of Christ, reminding and assuring us of Christ's sacrifice so that we might be restored to a right relationship with God.

There are two things that must occur for the Sacraments to be properly administered. “The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers” and “the second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus” (Scots Confession, 3.22).

Lawful ministers are those ordained as minsters of the Word and Sacrament, who have been deemed called by God. Each individual is only to be baptized one time, “for baptism once received continues for all of life, and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption” (Helvetic Confession, 5.186). Baptism is to be performed as Christ was baptized, and by which the apostles baptized, with water.

As the Helvetic Confession explains, “Baptism was instituted and consecrated by God. First John baptized, who dipped Christ in the water Jordan. From him it came to the apostles, who also baptized with water” (Helvetic Confession, 5.185). Therefore, we baptize with water. As for the manner in which we use the water, this does not matter so greatly. “We are baptized with water. And therefore we are baptized, that is, washed or sprinkled with visible water. For the water washes dirt away, and cools and refreshes hot and tired bodies. And the grace of God performs these things for souls, and does so invisibly or spiritually” (Helvetic Confession, 5.188). How the generous and visible water is used may occur in many ways. Water “used for Baptism should be from a local source, and may be applied with the hand, by pouring, or through immersion” (Book of Order, W-3.0407). This does mean that the water could come from the local lake, or could be from the tap in the church's kitchen. As for who may be baptized, anyone, of any age, who has not been previously baptized, may be baptized. “We hold that baptism applies as much to the children of the faithful as to those who are of age and discretion” (Scots Confession, 3.23).

Indeed, according to our Book of Order, the key elements are that baptism be a public event, visibly using water, with a minister of the Word and Sacrament presiding in the Triune name of God. “Accompanied by a visible and generous use of water, the minister of the Word and Sacrament shall address each person by their Christian or given name and say: “[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19)” (Book of Order, W-3.0407). The baptism may occur with the often traditional sprinkling of water, or with immersion.

2. Savannah, I am so very glad you are excited about being baptized. It is indeed common practice among Presbyterians to use the “sprinkler” method for baptism, but our theology and polity actually do not rule out baptism by immersion. Nor does it rule out the possibility of baptism in the lake. Now, we will need to do a little extra work to see if we are permitted to use the lake as the location of your baptism. As our session approves all occurrences of the Sacraments, that is Communion and Baptism, we will need to ask for their permission to perform the baptism. If they approve, we will additionally ask if we might have the baptism in a non-traditional setting (Book of Order, W-3.0403). Now, baptism is meant to be a public witness to both our faith and understanding and God's covenant promise to us (Book of Order, W-3.0402). Perhaps we could have a worship
service at the lake. Or, if you prefer, we can have a smaller, more brief service, where we read scripture and the baptism takes place, with a few elders and perhaps your family present so that your commitment is public. I am excited to explore the opportunity to baptize in a way that so closely echoes Christ’s baptism in the Jordan.

**Reader Responses**

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<th>S</th>
<th>In part one, the response satisfactorily discusses the Reformed tradition's understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian baptism and provides appropriate confessional/constitutional citations. The response could be strengthened by providing fewer citations and more room for original thought. In part two, the response to Savannah deals pastorally and satisfactorily with her request for immersion baptism. It is particularly nice to see the inclusion of the session as a necessary third party in the conversation.</th>
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| S | Section I

This is an excellent discussion of baptism: its nature, purpose, and modes of administration. Appropriate references are cited from the Book of Order and the Book of Confessions. This answer is well-organized and logically presented in enough detail to more than adequately meet the task given,

Section II

This response is enthusiastic, pastoral, and direct in dealing with the salient points of concern: role of Session, participation by the ‘public’ (i.e. members of the congregation), theology, and logistics. It shows that Savannah’s request is taken seriously, and yet informs her of the challenges in carrying it out. Clear, well-organized, brief but to the point.

**Section II**

**Constructive Theological Reflection on Worship**

The session of Salt Flats Presbyterian Church where you serve as pastor has declared a fast to recognize this year’s Good Friday remembrance. Danica, a youth member of the church, approaches you and says, “Pastor, I don’t understand. Presbyterians don’t fast, do they? I’ve never heard of that. Why should we fast, what good does it do?”

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

1. Using the Directory for Worship, write an essay about fasting and other practices of discipleship as a part of the worshiping community. All references to the Directory for Worship must include the citation (e.g., W-0.0000).
2. Based on your answer in Required Response 1, create an annotated outline for a four-week youth study dealing with practices of discipleship. For the purpose of this exam, an annotated outline is one with explanatory notes.

**Answer**

1. There are many opportunities in Christian life to worship God. “We respond to God's grace both in public worship and service and in personal acts of devotion and discipleship. Personal life and public worship are deeply connected” (Book of Order, W-3.0101). As Christians, our lives are those that should worship God in all ways, using practices shared in the Old and New Testament as opportunities to connect deeper with Christ, discovering our
own calling as disciples of Christ. There are many practices of discipleship mentioned in Scripture, and we should not hesitate to take part in these practices, whether individually or corporately. One such way that we connect as disciples of Christ is through daily prayer. Whether praying corporately in worship, or alone in silence, listening for God’s voice, praying aloud, using one of the many confessions or creeds of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), dancing, singing, or some other form of prayer, we take it as “an opportunity to draw inspiration and strength from one’s relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of continually seeking the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit for daily living” (Book of Order, W-5.0102). In addition to these acts of prayer, there are practices of discipleship that may be incorporated with daily prayer.

Daily prayer is just one part of Christian worship. A contextual practice, worship emerges “from a particular community and incorporates the words, images, symbols, and actions that best convey the good news of Jesus Christ in that gathering of God’s people” (Book of Order, W-1.0304). These images, symbols, and actions help Christians to grow in understanding of God’s Word by proclaiming and enacting God’s Word in Worship (adapted from Book of Order, W-1.0303). There are many opportunities for incorporation of worshipful practices outlined in the Old and New Testaments. Some of these symbolic actions are “fasting and feasting, rejoicing and lamenting, dancing and singing, marking and anointing, cleansing and offering, doing justice and showing mercy” (Book of Order, W-1.0303). In the Gospels Christ brings new meaning to these Old Testament practices of faith, including ones such as “baptism and breaking bread—and transformed ordinary acts of compassion—healing the sick, giving alms to the poor, feeding the hungry and washing feet—into new ways of serving God” (Book of Order, W-1.0303). Fasting and feasting serve as “ancient expressions of lament and celebration” (Book of Order, W-5.0103). These practices help us to connect to God in new ways, attending “to the presence and action of God in our lives” (Book of Order, W-5.0103). Within the context of the mentioned scenario, fasting as a congregation, led by the session, will allow the opportunity to experience lamentation of the death of Christ in a new way that may open the fasting members to new understandings about Christ’s work in and call upon their lives.

Through these practices mentioned above, the Scripture is further illumined for us. “Through Scriptures we hear the voice of God and find meaning, direction, comfort, and challenge for our lives.” (Book of Order, W-5.0103). By responding to God’s grace through the various practice of discipleship outlined in the Scriptures, we open our lives to further opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives, and to do so corporately enhances our connection together as the body of Christ as we seek and discern the will of God.

2. Annotated Outline: What is Worship?

I. Week 1: Corporate Worship
A. Worship on the Lord’s Day
   1. What do we typically do? Why do we do these things?
   Here we will outline some things together that we do on a weekly basis. We will talk about particular parts of corporate worship. This will include the Passing of the Peace, various corporate prayers like the Prayer of Confession, as well as hymns, the offertory, the sermon, and Children's Sermon.
   2. What about Baptism and Communion?
   We will highlight the Sacraments as well as any other Pastoral or Occasional Services that might be brought up and talk through how they are worshipful practices and what they mean.
   3. What is the purpose of this corporate worship?
   To seek God's will for us. To engage more fully with the Scripture. Among other things that the youth will help make connections to.

II. Week 2: Private Worship
A. Worship and Private Life
   1. Does worship only happen at church? NO! With the students we will seek out the ways that they currently
worship God in their day to day lives.

2. Prayer
Prayer is key to any practice that is performed as an element of worship. “Prayer may take a variety of forms, such as: conscious conversation with God; attentive and expectant silence; meditation on Scripture; the use of service books, devotional aids, and visual arts; and singing, dancing, labor, or physical exercise” (Book of Order, W-5.0102).

3. Other Practices of discipleship include “Keeping sabbath, studying Scripture, contemplation and action, fasting and feasting, stewardship and self offering. All of these practices are meant to help us attend to the presence and action of God in our lives” (Book of Order, W-5.0103).

For the sake of time, for this week we will explore the first four of these other practices mentioned in part 1. If four are not mentioned, I will have prepared questions on each of these and will focus on the familiar ones – studying Scripture, Sabbath, Stewardship, and Self offering. Next week will be reserved for those that are not discussed this week, contemplation and action, and fasting and feasting.

III. Week 3: Practices of discipleship as Worship.

A. Contemplation and Action
What could this mean? We will take the opportunity to practice lectio divina, pairing studying Scripture with the practice of contemplation. We will examine Micah 6:8 as part of this practice.

1. If we contemplate and are called to action, what do we do? How do we do this?
We will look through Jesus' examples, washing the feet of others, caring for the ill, feeding the hungry, etc.

B. Fasting and Feasting
Why the opposite ends of the spectrum? Fasting connects us with lamenting. Connecting this with practice of prayer for the world, and nation may help form the connection. When we pray and fast in connection with earnest prayers for big things happening in the world such as tumultuous elections, major decisions, and other such opportunities, we connect in a different way.
In feasting we connect with Christ in celebration for events that were advantageous or to remind us of God's great blessings bestowed on us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
Both practices provide opportunities to respond to “events in the life of the world, nation, community, or individuals” that “may call for acts of thanksgiving, sorrow, penitence, or protest” (Book of Order, W-5.0103).

C. So what is worship?
It is a way to connect with God on a deeper level, giving thanks, sorrow, penitence, celebration, and even protest on personal and corporate levels that draw us nearer to God.

Reader Responses

In part one, the response presents a nice discussion of fasting and other practices of discipleship as a part of the worshiping community. The response also successfully cites from the Directory for Worship.
In part two, the annotated outline of a 4-week study on fasting and other practices of discipleship is brief. It would benefit greatly from the addition of scriptural, constitutional, and confessional sources upon which the study is based. In its current form it is sometimes difficult to understand the intended content of the study.
Section I

This response lists several practices of discipleship and puts them in corporate and personal, contexts. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the performance and purpose of several of these practices. Highlighting fasting as a way to deepen our faith through corporate lamentation addresses (and hopefully broadens) Danica's understanding of what's permissible. The answer includes more than the requisite number of references (with citations). This response would benefit from some reorganization (paragraphs) to align like issues. However, it is clear enough and certainly meets expectations.

Section II

This response is an excellent plan for discussing 'worship'; however, the assignment is to develop a plan for a youth study of the practices of discipleship. Much of what is presented in Week 2 and part of Week 3 is directly related to practices of discipleship and does show an understanding of their nature and purpose. The response emphasizes both prayer and fasting/feasting, which addresses Danica's concern. The response lacks a separate Week 4 (although there is plenty of material here for the entire month allotted.) The response usually begins each topic with questions for the youth to consider, which is an age-appropriate pedagogy. The response would benefit from a reorganization of information to more directly answer the task given. However, it is clear from this answer that the salient issues are understood and addressed.

Section III

Application to Ministry

You are the new pastor at First Presbyterian Church preparing for your first Sunday in worship. In an orientation meeting with session members you ask about the congregation’s worship practices. During the conversation the following comments are made:

| José: | Scripture is only read before the closing song so people will remember the passages for the day. |
| Nicole: | The offering is collected only on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, since most members get paid only twice a month. |
| Adum: | On communion Sundays, there is never a sermon so worship doesn’t last longer than one hour. |

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

1. Using the Directory for Worship, list the fundamental elements of Reformed worship and discuss their appropriate ordering for the Lord’s Day. 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, and demonstrating appropriate cultural and pastoral sensitivity, respond individually to José, Nicole and Adum, making certain to address at least one (1) issue raised by each of them.

Answer

The Reformed Tradition follows the example of the risen Christ for the ordering of worship. “We meet in the presence of the living Lord, who appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week—the day he rose from the dead—to interpret the Scriptures and break bread” (Book of Order, W-3.0102). The primary parts here then, are
gathering with disciples, interpreting scripture, breaking bread, and, as was done in Matthew, sending Christ's followers to the world. The Book of Order has kept this format for the order of worship for the Lord's Day. It has been separated into four particular categories, to be followed in order.

First, the disciples were gathered. For the Service of the Lord's Day, there is a time of gathering, in which several different elements of worship may occur. The Book of Order, in section W-3.02, has outlined the opportunity for gathering. "Worship begins as the people gather—greeting one another, praying in silence, sharing announcements, or offering music to the glory of God. The act of assembling in Jesus' name bears witness to the Church's identity and mission as Christ's body in the world" (Book of Order, W-3.0201). This time of gathering may elements such as time to prepare for worship, opening sentences drawn from scripture, a hymn to sing the glory of God, prayer, and a time of corporate and individual confession and forgiveness. Though not required, these elements are often encouraged as an opportunity to prepare the worshipper to hear without distraction the reading and interpretation of scripture.

The next segment, outlined in section W-3.03 of the Book of Order is the Word. “The Scriptures bear witness to the Word of God, revealed most fully in Jesus Christ, the Word who “became flesh and lived among us” (John1:14)” (Book of Order, W-3.0301). A minister of the Word and Sacrament is responsible for choosing the Scripture that is to be read, “to be drawn from both Old and New Testaments, and over a period of time should reflect the breadth content and full message of Scripture” (Book of Order, W-3.0301). Other elements, such as the prayer for illumination, in which God is asked to illumine the chosen Scripture, and a musical response to the Scripture, may take place. The sermon that is then proclaimed should be based on the Scripture read. “Through the sermon, we encounter Jesus Christ in God's Word, are equipped to follow him more faithfully, and are inspired to proclaim the gospel to others through our words and deeds” (Book of Order, W-3.0305). Following the sermon, there may be an affirmation of faith, in which the congregation affirms “faith in the holy, triune God” (Book of Order, W-3.0306).

After the proclamation of the word, prayer and sacraments may follow, as both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are outward responses to the recognition and trust in God's provisions for us.

The third section that the Directory for Worship outlines is W-3.04, Sacrament. At this time, after the Word has been read and interpreted, those who profess their faith have the opportunity to respond to God's grace through Baptism or through the Lord's Supper. Before the Lord's Supper, the Offering is to be collected (Book of Order, W-3.0411). Baptism need not happen every week, and must be approved by the session of the church. “The Lord's Supper is integral to the Service for the Lord's Day, a service of Word and Sacrament” (Book of Order, W-3.0415). Though in some instances, a church's session may choose not to have communion each week. In this event, “the service continues after the prayers of the people with the offering and a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication, followed by the Lord's Prayer” (Book of Order, W-3.0415). In this case, the offering is required to be collected each week. “Every service of worship shall include an opportunity to respond to Christ's call to discipleship through self-offering. The gifts we offer express our stewardship of creation, demonstrate our care for one another, support the ministries of the church, and provide for the needs of the poor” (Book of Order, W-3.0411).

After gathering, reading and proclamation of the Word, the final section is Sending, found in W-3.05. This includes responses to the proclamation of the Word such as closing “hymns, psalms, or spiritual songs that send us out to live the gospel by God's grace; creative or symbolic actions” and several other opportunities to express our Christian commitment (Book of Order, W-3.0501). Then, a blessing and charge is issued to the congregation so that as “we are blessed” we might “be a blessing to others” (Book of Order, W-3.0502). Finally, we go forth and serve in the world, seeking daily to love and serve God.

There are two key elements then in the Service for the Lord's Day: reading and proclamation of the Word, and the Sacraments. Without these two elements, we fail to follow the example of Christ and his disciples. “In whatever form it takes, worship is to be ordered by God's Word and open to the creativity of the Holy Spirit” (Book of Order, W-2.0102).
José – This is an interesting insight. I wonder, when did this tradition start? Has it been effective? My understanding of our Presbyterian Polity suggests that Scripture is to be read earlier in the service, followed by a sermon which is based on the Scriptures that are read. May we try having them read before the sermon and see how well the congregation remembers them? Or perhaps we might be able to create a bulletin insert with the passages for both the Sunday at hand and the following Sunday for people to take home with them so that they might spend time throughout the week reading and contemplating the passages so that they are prepared for Sunday worship. What do you think?

Nicole – I understand this thought process. It can be stressful to ask people to give each week, particularly when we only are paid every other week. I do wonder though, what happens when someone is paid on the opposite weeks? How might we accommodate them? The beautiful thing about Scripture, is that it invites us to give only 10% of our income. This doesn’t mean we have to give each week, and maybe people only give that 10% when they receive their paychecks. Our polity does require us to include in each worship service an opportunity “to respond to Christ’s call to discipleship through self-offering” (Book of Order, W-3.0411). Perhaps we might invite people on the opposite weeks to give gifts of food for the poor, rather than money. That way people feel more at ease with the initial change.

Adum – I greatly admire the church’s attention and care to the congregants! I know my dad always started checking his watch if the service ran too close to kick off during football season. There is a fundamental flaw with this worship format though. Service on the Lord’s Day is to be filled with the Word, both read and proclaimed, and the Sacraments, communion shared as a response to hearing the Word. Unfortunately, though we are permitted to omit Communion each Sunday, the reading and proclamation of the Word is never to be omitted from a worship service. I wonder if on those Sundays I might work to preach a “homily” rather than a “sermon.” Often, homilies are a little shorter. Of course we will always be mindful of the time, but it is an absolute that we must include the reading and proclamation of the Word each Sunday, especially when Communion is to be served.

### Reader Responses

**S** In part one, the response correctly identifies the fundamental elements of Reformed worship and provides a nice discussion of their appropriate ordering for the Lord’s Day. There are also adequate and appropriate citations from the Directory for Worship. In part two, the response to José identifies the issue of placement of scripture within worship and especially as it relates to the proclamation of the word. The response would be strengthened by citing W-3.0301 or W-3.0305. The response to Nicole rightly identifies the essential element of offering to God as a part of weekly worship, and it hints at the idea that offering can be larger than simply financial resources. The response would be strengthened by also focusing more attention on the divine call/human response paradigm of Reformed worship. The response to Adum identifies the essential nature of the word read and proclaimed in the Reformed tradition. The response would be strengthened by also incorporating the Reformed emphasis on the sacraments as the word enacted and sealed (W-3.0409).
Section I
This response is an excellent discussion of worship elements and their ordering for the Lord's Day. It is clear, logically presented, well-organized, and well-referenced (with citation).

Section II
Response to Jose shows pastoral concern, seeks context for the current practice, and offers a more theologically sound approach. It also suggests a 'temporary' fix to try and get congregational feedback. It affirms understanding of the issue, presents a solution, and asks for input from the Elder concerned.

Response to Nicole again shows pastoral concern and asks discerning questions. The suggested 'fix' is more theologically sound than current practice, and is offered as a smoother way to make the change to 'every week offerings' more comfortable for the congregation.

Response to Adum is positive and polite, but non-negotiable. It includes an explanation as to why current practice needs to be changed, and suggests a reasonable 'fix'. Overall, these responses show respect for the Elders and their issues, pastoral care, a possible solution, and openness to feedback once the change has been implemented. An excellent response to the task.

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

Overall the exam was well written and easy to read. It shows a good understanding of Reformed worship and sacramental theology particularly as it pertains to baptism. Keep up the good work.

These responses were, by and large, excellent and well-referenced. They show readiness to begin ministry when called.