

JANUARY 2006

EXAMINATION IN CHURCH POLITY

OPEN BOOK

MAXIMUM TIME: 3 HOURS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This examination is intended to “assess the candidate’s working knowledge of the constitutional structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the method by which differences are properly resolved and programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined” [G-14.0310d(5)].

The intent of this examination is to test readiness for ministry, which includes using the *Book of Order* effectively. Candidates will utilize a clean, unmarked, printed copy of the 2005-2006 *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in responding to the questions. No additional books, notes, outlines or other resources may be used. Questions will be from the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

THREE HOURS

OPEN BOOK

The examination consists of three required Sections. Sections III has two options. Select one option. Each Section is designed to be completed in one hour.

The final grade for the examination will be the average of the grades received on all three Sections, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination’s overall merit. However, the paper must receive a grade of 3 or higher on at least two of the three Sections in order to be considered Satisfactory.

Identify every answer by the letter and number assigned to it (e.g., I.1 or III.A.2)

If you prefer you may use a typewriter or word processor. You may bring your own equipment or, at some exam sites, you may use equipment provided by the proctor. You may not consult or copy from personal notes or any other source on the computer or network during the exam. A printed copy of the exam must be turned in before you leave the exam area. Because failure to turn in the exam before leaving will result in failure of the exam, you are strongly urged to make sure that all the necessary equipment (computer, printer, font and printer software, etc.) is properly working and coordinated. Please use double spacing and 12-point font size. Please number the pages, include your candidate number on each page of the exam, and staple the printed copy to the first few pages of the exam booklet.

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Be advised that exams written in pencil and illegible papers will be returned ungraded. Papers will not be graded down for poor syntax or grammar; however, when poor syntax or grammar comprises intelligibility, this could affect the grade.

The readers, in grading the examination, will use the following criteria to assess readiness for ministry:

- Recognition and knowledge of the polity issues applicable to the question, and ability to cite relevant sections of the *Book of Order*;
- Ability to relate the polity issue to the situation, considering both the letter and the spirit of the constitution;
- Ability to express concern for the individual(s) involved in the situation and for the welfare of the church as a whole;
- Knowledge of the process by which programs to fulfill the mission of the church are determined; and
- Ability to be coherent in expressing thoughts.

**IMPORTANT: READ THE ENTIRE QUESTION BEFORE
BEGINNING TO WRITE YOUR ANSWER.**

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SECTION I. CONSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE

ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

The *Book of Order* states in G-2.0500a:

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed tradition. Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. Related to this central affirmation of God's sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:

- (1) The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;
- (2) Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;
- (3) A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation;
- (4) The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

REQUIRED RESPONSE:

God's sovereignty is a central affirmation in the confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Cite and discuss at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000) that gives expression to each of the four (4) numbered themes in G-2.0500a.

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SECTION II. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER FOR THE PARTICULAR CHURCH

ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

You are the pastor of First Presbyterian Church. The Clerk of Session gives you a letter from a deacon alleging that an elder male sexual advances toward her after last Sunday night's service. The deacon also wrote that the elder has been calling and harassing her. The clerk asks, "What are we to do?"

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least four (4) issues in this situation. Cite at least one (1) *Book of Order* reference, (e.g., X-0.0000) for each issue identified.
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to the clerk.

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SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY

ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

CHOOSE ONE: A OR B

A.

You are a member of your presbytery council. At a council meeting, the Committee on Representation makes its annual report and the committee members make the following remarks:

- Jonah: We have finished our work. I recommend that the committee be dismissed with thanks because their work is done.
- Lee: We can't find any more qualified racial ethnic persons in the presbytery since we have so few churches with racial ethnic members.
- Geraldo: Why is diversity such a big deal? It's hard enough to get people to serve on committees, and as long as the work gets done, we should be happy.
- Susan: Aren't we supposed to be responsible for finding women to serve on committees? How can we be dismissed when there are no women chairing presbytery committees?
- Ramona: Can't we just merge with the nominating committee since our work is really part of their work?

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least one (1) issue raised by each committee member. For each issue cite one *Book of Order* reference (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond individually to Jonah, Lee, Geraldo, Susan, and Ramona.

--OR--

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SECTION III. CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER AS A TOOL FOR MINISTRY

ONE HOUR OPEN BOOK REQUIRED

CHOOSE ONE: A OR B

B.

You are the pastor of Sweet Meadows Presbyterian Church. Although not a member of your church, Elizabeth, one of the regular participants in the youth fellowship, is a young woman with a physical disability. Elizabeth asks to talk with you.

“I’m frustrated in choosing a career. Many of the options in which I am interested seems to be ruled out because of my physical limitations. Do you think I could be a pastor? What would I have to do to become a Presbyterian pastor?”

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. Identify and briefly discuss at least four (4) issues raised by Elizabeth’s situation. For each issue raised, cite at least one (1) reference from the *Book of Order* (e.g., X-0.0000).
2. Guided by your answer in Required Response 1, respond to Elizabeth, including her concerns about physical limitations.

Church Polity Examination, January 2006

Section I

The sovereignty of God, as G – 20500a suggests, is like the hub of a wheel from which themes of service, discipline stewardship, and “doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God” radiate out. These themes find expression in the following places:

- I. (1) “The election of the people of God for service as well as salvation” is given expression in the sections describing what membership in the church mean. G – 5.0102 d, e and g are particularly relevant here, as they describe the responsibilities accepted by faithful members of the church. G – 5.0102d speaks of service to the church through the offering of time and talents, as well as money. 5.0102e describes service through participation in church government, and 5.0102g talks about service in the world.
- I. (2) “Disciplined concern for order in the church” is expressed in W – 3.1002, which speaks of the order of worship, which should be in accordance with God’s Word while at the same time open to the work of the Holy Spirit. The constitutional questions asked of church officers at ordination also express the nature of our “covenant life marked by disciplined concern for order. Both G – 14.0207e (question for elders and deacons) and G-14.0405b (5) (for ministers of the Word and Sacrament) ask the person to be ordained to affirm that they will follow the polity of the church, as well as its discipline.
- I. (3) The theme of faithful stewardship is expressed in G – 10.0102h, which describes the responsibility of the session to encourage and call the congregation to responsible stewardship. W – 5.5005 describes Christian stewardship as that which leads to simple and honest living (e.g. “shunning ostentation”) and care and concern for all God’s

creation. W – 7.5003 also addresses God’s call to use the gifts of God responsibly and in service.

I. (4) The call to work for “the transformation of society” is expressed in G – 3.0300, especially in G – 3.0300c (3) (c), which calls for active participation in the cause of justice (working against “oppression, hunger and injustice”). W – 7.4002 (including sections a – h) also speaks of the call to work against oppression, unjust laws, economic disparity, etc, in accord with the scriptural vision of seeking justice

Section II

II, 1. Four of several issues that arise in this situation are: care and concern for those involved; what kind of “offense” the elder’s actions constitute; what kind of action may the deacon take; and, what is the role of the session *(as governing body)*

First, I will address the issue of care and concern for the involved parties. The deacon will most likely be quite upset by the occurrences she describes. The pastor’s responsibilities include the ministry of sympathy and pastoral care (G – 6.0202 b.) and session members are also called to engage in personal and pastoral care of the members (G – 10.0102 e.) Even if the allegation should turn out to be untrue, or exaggerated (not that we should assume this), that may be an indication of some great need or unhappiness in the deacon. Either way, the deacon must be treated with respect and pastoral concern. Concern should also be shown for the accused elder. Included in this concern is the obligation not to rush into judgment or into judicial , in light of D – 1.0103, and the call to seek mediation and reconciliation.

Another issue is the nature of the problem. If the allegations are true, the elder would have violated his ordination vows, particularly G – 14 – 0207 i – clearly sexual

harassment is in opposition of showing the “love and justice of Christ” and of the call to care for and nurture the people of the church. The elder’s actions seem to fall under the definition of sexual abuse in D – 10.0401 c (2). D – 2.0202 a & b make it clear that this would be a disciplinary case, as it involves a church officer’s “offense” in that is an action contrary to both the church’s polity and the Scriptures.

The deacon has already written to the clerk of session. It is unclear whether her letter contains only the allegation, or also, in accord with D – 10.0101, a clear narrative and any supporting information, if available. The deacon may initiate a disciplinary case by submitting such a statement to the clerk of session.

Once the clerk as received this written statement, the clerk of session should follow the procedure in the Rules of Discipline, beginning with D – 10.0103, so that the matter can be referred to an investigating committee.

II, 2. Response to the clerk of session:

“Well, this is a very serious allegation, and one which we must treat seriously. I suggest that you and I begin by offering [the deacon] the chance to meet with us, either separately or together, to give her a chance to express her feelings about this, and to let her know that the church takes such allegations very seriously indeed. At that meeting, we could also explain to her the disciplinary process, and what that entails.

“I also would like to let [the deacon] know that I think we also have a responsibility to speak with [the elder], remembering that, as the rules of discipline say, church discipline is for the building up of the body of Christ, not to tear it apart. We’re called to seek reconciliation, after all, and who knows – perhaps the elder is already repenting his

actions, or perhaps, somehow, he really did not understand the impact of his behavior. Maybe he was unwise, but not intentionally offensive.

“However, if [the elder] does not understand, or denies any wrong-doing, we must help [the deacon] proceed with her complaint, and support her in any way that we can – being mindful also of our responsibility to [the elder]. Meanwhile, I know that you will keep this matter in confidence. Perhaps you would lead us in a prayer, now, for guidance from God’s Spirit, and compassion for both these people, as we begin what is bound to be a difficult time in the life of our church. Would you? Thanks.”

Section III, Question B.

III, B., 1.

One issue raised by Elizabeth’s situation is that of physical disability and pastoral call. As G – 14.0502 b makes clear that when seeking a pastor, a nominating committee of a church must consider all candidates without regard to any number of physical and social attributes, including that of physical disability.

Another issue is that of *call* to ministry, as opposed to “career choice”. G – 6. 0105 notes the roles of God’s providence, the gifts one has been given, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit, as well as the support and prayer of the church, in discerning one’s call.

Knowing the duties of a pastor is important in helping people discern their call. These duties are in part defined in G – 6.0202.

Finally, the issue of how one becomes a Presbyterian pastor is addressed in several places, beginning in G – 14.0303 and its description of the process and requirements of

the inquiry phase (G – 14.0303b notes that a person must be an active member of a church).

III, B, 2.

“Elizabeth, I really appreciate your coming to me with your questions. I also appreciate your sharing your frustrations with the process of choosing a career. Can I just be an old fogey and begin by saying, ‘You have plenty of time; you’re only in high school – you don’t have to decide your whole life right now!’ Thanks! Now, let me assure you that position of pastor in the Presbyterian Church is open to all people, regardless of their physical limitations. But, in fairness I should also tell you that *many* careers are ~~also~~ open to people with physical disabilities, ^{including those like} ~~including~~ yours. So yes, you would be welcome to consider being a pastor in the Presbyterian Church – but we should talk about other careers you might want to consider, too.

“ I have to say I’m delighted that you would even think about the pastorate! On the other hand, I have to caution you that the decision to become a pastor is not something to rush into. It’s really important that you understand exactly what being a pastor entails – it’s not all wearing robes and leading worship services! It’s a very rewarding job – but also a humbling one, and a lot of us pastors think you have to be a little crazy to want to be a pastor – *unless* you feel that it is what God has called you to. Then it’s the best thing in the world! I am not trying to discourage you – I just want to make sure you understand this “call” thing!

Once a person decides to pursue becoming a pastor, there are very specific guideline listed in our constitution, that tell you the process step by step – you start by

becoming something called an “Inquirer,” which lets you and the church really think about your call and gifts.

But before you worry about any of that, can we talk about what the church means to you now? We have been delighted to have you participating in the youth group, but I know you are not a member of our church. Do you have any questions about what it means to become member? [Discussion] I’d love to talk with you further about this question of call – the call to be a member of a church, and the call to being a pastor. And I will keep you in my prayers, Elizabeth. I want you to remember that, called to be a pastor or not, I know you have a great deal to offer the church, and the world.

READER'S GRADING SHEET IN CHURCH POLITY

I. OVERALL EVALUATION FOR THIS EXAMINATION. A single overall grade must be assigned by the reader to this examination. The overall grade for the examination will be the average of grades received on all three questions, with rounding up or down to be determined by the reader on the basis of the examination's overall merit. **However, the examination must receive a grade of "3" or higher on at least two out of the three questions in order to be considered "SATISFACTORY."** The examination will be unsatisfactory if any one of the sections is omitted.

Each examination will be read independently by two persons. If both grades are 3, 4, or 5, the final grade is **SATISFACTORY**. If both grades are 1 or 2, the final grade is **UNSATISFACTORY**. If one final grade is 1 or 2, and the other final grade is 3, 4, 5, the paper will be given a third reading, to determine the final grade.

II. THIS GRADING SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. The reader's comments on this grading sheet should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper, which will be read by the candidate and the candidate's committee on preparation for ministry. Use the back of this sheet for comments explaining why the grade was assigned to this paper.

III. GRADING EACH SECTION. Indicate on the spaces below the grade for each section of this examination, using the following scale:

- 5 - Excellent
 - 4 - Good
 - 3 - Acceptable
 - 2 - Less than Acceptable
 - 1 - Poor
 - 0 - Question Omitted
- Satisfactory
Unsatisfactory

GRADES:

			Grade
Section I (Required)	-	Great Themes	<u>4</u>
Section II (Required)	-	Elder Misbehavior	<u>4</u>
Section III A	-	Committee on Representation	_____
-OR-			
Section III B	-	Physical Disabilities	<u>4</u>
FINAL GRADE			<u>4</u>

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable)

George W. Beran
Print Reader's Name

George W. Beran
Reader's Signature

(OVER FOR COMMENTS)

- I. 1. The paper focused on responsibilities of the faithful: 4 references from Book of Orders
2. The paper focused on order of worship and polity of the church: 3 references cited
3. The paper focused on Christian stewardship: care and concern for all creation: 3 references
4. The paper focused on transformation of society: 3 references cited.

II. 1. Issue #1. The paper focused on care and concern for involved parties: G-6.0202b; G-10.0102e; D-1.0103. All are appropriate.

Issue #2. The paper focused on the nature of the problem: G-14.0207i; D-10.0400c; D-10.0102e; D-10.0103.

Issue #3. The paper focused on initiating action by the informing deacons: D-10.0101

Issue #4. The paper focused on the role of the session: D-1.0103

2. The response by the pastor to the clerk of session is written to provide guidance. It provides guidance to seek out information from persons involved and to appropriately proceed. It emphasizes reconciliation, confidentiality and compassion in the disciplinary process.

III. A. 1. Issue #1. The paper provides assurance that in seeking a pastor, the nominating committee of the church shall consider all candidates equally: G-4.0502b cited.

Issue #2. The paper discusses the personal call to ministry: G-6.0105

Issue #3. The paper discusses the duties and responsibilities of pastor: G-6.0202

Issue #4. The paper identifies steps to becoming a pastor: several references are cited, beginning in G-4.0303.

2. The letter of response advises on the issues above in a very counseling and informative way; advising on the pastor's tasks, call, responsibilities and gifts.

READER'S GRADING SHEET IN CHURCH POLITY

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III. GRADING EACH SECTION. Indicate on the spaces below the grade for each section of this examination, using the following scale:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| | 5 - Excellent |
| | 4 - Good |
| <u>Satisfactory</u> | <u>3 - Acceptable</u> |
| Unsatisfactory | 2 - Less than Acceptable |
| | 1 - Poor |
| | 0 - Question Omitted |

GRADES:

			Grade
Section I (Required)	-	Great Themes	<u>3</u>
Section II (Required)	-	Elder Misbehavior	<u>3</u>
Section III A	-	Committee on Representation	_____
-OR-			
Section III B	-	Physical Disabilities	<u>3</u>
FINAL GRADE			<u>3</u>

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY. (Please check if applicable)

Kathleen Stear
Print Reader's Name

Kathleen Stear
Reader's Signature

(OVER FOR COMMENTS)

Section I

Satisfactory answer fulfilling the requirements of the question. Good use of both Form of Government and Directory for Worship.

Section II. The four issues raised are satisfactory and correctly cite appropriate supporting passages from the Book of Order. The response to the clerk may or may not be incorrect. If, after meeting with the deacon, it is determined that the letter is indeed the written statement of alleged offense that is meant to start the disciplinary process, then that process must begin. If that is found in that conversation not to be the deacon's wishes, then conciliation and mediation may be acceptable.

Section III B

A complete and satisfactory brief discussion of 4 issues around disability and call to ministry. The answer to Elizabeth is good and pastoral and addresses the 4 issues already noted.

