

## The Directory for Worship: A Study Guide for the Proposed Revision

*This study guide is designed to facilitate understanding and discussion of the proposed revision to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Directory for Worship, as approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016). Sessions, presbyteries, and other groups are encouraged to use and adapt these materials as needed.*

Dear friends in Christ,

**What is the Directory for Worship and why does it matter to us as Presbyterians?** The Directory for Worship is the middle section of the *Book of Order*, Part II of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Some might assume that the directory is only of interest to pastors, or only useful for settling arguments about what is or isn't allowed in Presbyterian worship. In fact, this part of our *Book of Order* helps us to see how God makes all time, space, and matter holy; how living, praying, and believing are interrelated; how worship is connected with evangelism, peacemaking, and the environment; how all of Christian life can be experienced as prayer and praise. In this sense, the Directory for Worship pushes us “**from the sanctuary to the street,**” expanding our understanding of the worship and service of God.

In keeping with the General Assembly action that inspired this revision, the proposed document is **shorter, streamlined,** and—we believe—**better organized, more accessible, and user friendly.** It is roughly two-thirds the length of the current Directory for Worship (about 9,000 words shorter), and is now organized into a preface and five chapters instead of the current seven.

More importantly, the proposed revision emphasizes **classic Reformed convictions** while encouraging **diverse cultural expressions** and **contemporary approaches to worship.** It begins and ends by giving glory to God, focuses on the crucified and risen Christ, and highlights the work of the Holy Spirit, insisting on the centrality of Scripture, the unity of Word and Sacrament, and the theological themes of grace and gratitude.

The most recent text of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship is available at [pcusa.org/dfw](http://pcusa.org/dfw), along with other resources for study, including Word files in English, Korean, and Spanish; a chart illustrating the reorganization of the proposed revision (also found as an appendix to this document); a thirty-minute webinar on the Directory for Worship; information on the principles and processes for revision; and links to educational resources, historical documents, and news stories.

This **six-session study guide**—which contains a set of questions for reflection or discussion for the directory's preface and each of its five chapters—is designed not only to illuminate your understanding of the proposed revision, but also to stimulate conversation about the ongoing reform of worship in your own ministry context.

As the PC(USA) considers this proposed revision for inclusion in the *Book of Order*, we pray that, by the grace of God, it will help us to forge new connections between what we believe and how we live—between our adoration in the sanctuary and our action in society. It is our hope that this study guide—and the document it introduces—will help you to rediscover the heart of Reformed faith, life, and worship in a way that is clear, direct, and engaging.

May you be richly blessed in your study.

Grace and peace,

Joyce Lieberman, Office of the General Assembly  
Charles Wiley, Office of Theology and Worship

## Background for the Study Guide

### **ABOUT THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP**

The PC(USA) Directory for Worship has its origins in the 1645 Westminster Directory for Public Worship, written to address abuses of the *Book of Common Prayer* in the Church of England and to provide another model for ordering the church's worship. Presbyterians in the United States used variations on the Westminster Directory until the 1960s, when new Directories for Worship were drafted by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1961) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (1963). After the reunion of these two denominations in 1983, their Directories for Worship were combined and revised; the resulting 1989 Directory for Worship is the one currently in use in the PC(USA).

The Directory for Worship is the part of our constitution that sets for the theology and practice of worship in this denomination. This document:

- describes the theology underlying our worship;
- establishes standards and norms for worship;
- outlines appropriate forms for worship;
- negotiates the relationship between freedom and form;
- suggests possibilities and invites development; and
- encourages the continuing reform of worship.

The Directory for Worship is something like a liturgical compass, giving us our bearings, orienting us to primary things, and always pointing to the glory of God. It doesn't spell out the texts of prayers or the details of a particular service, but may be effectively used in combination with published resources such as the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship*. It also provides a standard for developing or evaluating other patterns of worship.

### **ABOUT THIS REVISION**

At the direction of the 217th General Assembly (2006), a staff team from the Offices of Theology and Worship and the General Assembly—in consultation with a diverse group of pastors, scholars, and mid-council leaders—worked to draft a revision of the PC(USA) Directory for Worship that would be “authentically Reformed,” “culturally appropriate,” “more accessible and helpful,” and “shorter and better organized.” The 221st General Assembly (2014) sent the first draft of this revision to the church for a year-long period of study and comment. Further revisions were made in response to the feedback received during this period, and a new draft was prepared for presentation at the 222nd General Assembly (2016). After minor revisions, this draft was approved by the General Assembly. If a majority of presbyteries also approve, the proposed revision would replace the current Directory for Worship in the PC(USA) *Book of Order* in June of 2017.

The proposed revision seeks to preserve the spirit, strength, and essential content of our current Directory for Worship, but in a way that is more user-friendly, clear, and concise (around 9,000 words shorter). It emphasizes the classic Reformed theme of grace and gratitude, offers new sections on worship and culture and the work of the Holy Spirit, is responsive to changes in the church and diverse approaches to worship, and is designed to facilitate teaching and worship planning in the local congregation. The latest draft of the document follows the action of the 221st General Assembly (2014) on marriage (see W-4.06), and reflects the guidance of the 219th General Assembly (2010) on eucharistic hospitality towards persons who are not yet baptized (see W-3.0409).

## **SESSION 1/PREFACE**

The preface to the Directory for Worship describes the purpose of this document, establishes its biblical and confessional foundations, and discusses its authority in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- Why is it important for Presbyterian worship to be grounded in Scripture and the *Confessions* of the church?
- What value is there in having a broad description of the theology and practice of worship, rather than a prescribed set of liturgies?
- When and where have you encountered the Directory for Worship in your ministry or membership in the church? How has it been useful or not useful?

## **SESSION 2/CHAPTER ONE: THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

The first chapter of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship centers around what we can affirm about Christian worship in a broad, ecumenical sense: the story of God’s gracious, saving work in history that we proclaim; the presence of the Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament; and our reliance on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the worship, ministry, and mission of the church. This chapter includes insight on Time, Space, and Matter—the “when, where, and what” of how we worship God. It also contains a section on Language, Symbols, and Culture, which describes how we experience Jesus Christ—God’s Word made flesh—through the words of Scripture, images and actions from everyday life, and patterns of human life in community.

This chapter of the revision is primarily composed from elements of the first chapter in the current Directory, “The Dynamics of Christian Worship,” but in language that is simpler and more concise, accessible to a wider range of readers. The revision introduces distinct sections on the Holy Spirit and Culture, a change from the current Directory for Worship.

### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- How would you summarize the story of salvation—especially as it relates to worship? What theological themes would you emphasize? Why are Word and Sacrament so important?
- How do we “keep time” in worship—through the day, the week, and the year? What makes a particular place appropriate for worship? Why do material things matter in worship?
- Why are words, symbols, and actions so important in Christian worship? How are words, symbols, and actions used differently in different congregations or cultural contexts?

## **SESSION 3/CHAPTER TWO: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE REFORMED TRADITION**

The second chapter of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship gets more specific about the structure and planning of worship in a Presbyterian/Reformed context. This chapter explains: the sources from which we derive our theology and practice of worship; the gifts of form and freedom that we value in our tradition; the communal nature of the worshiping assembly, in which all are called to participate; and the varieties of ways in which we share in acts of prayer and praise.

This chapter of the revision is made up of materials from chapters one and two of the current Directory, “The Dynamics of Christian Worship” and “The Elements of Christian Worship” (respectively), but in a simplified and streamlined way. The revision features more specific information about the roles of deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders in planning and leading worship, and emphasizes the value of consultation and collaboration.

#### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- What does it mean for worship to be “faithful to the Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture”? What are some examples of the tension between form and freedom in your congregation?
- Why is it important for the whole people of God to participate actively in worship? What forms of prayer are emphasized or neglected in your community of faith?
- Who is involved with the planning and leadership worship in your congregation? How are roles designated? How is work distributed?

### **SESSION 4/CHAPTER THREE: THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD’S DAY**

The third chapter of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship is devoted to the church’s weekly encounter with the crucified and risen Lord, in Word and Sacrament, through the Service for the Lord’s Day. This chapter is the centerpiece of the revision, as this meeting of the body of Christ is the heart of our life together. The chapter is organized around a simple, four-fold order of worship—Gathering, Word, Sacrament, and Sending—consistent with Reformed theology and ecumenical tradition; however, as the introduction to the chapter suggests, the insights here may readily be applied to other faithful orders of worship.

This chapter of the revision seeks to address a frequent criticism of the current Directory: that the theology and practice of worship—and in particular, information on the Sacraments—is divided between chapters two (“The Elements of Christian Worship”) and three (“The Ordering of Christian Worship”), respectively. The revision combines the essential elements of both chapters, providing a theological account of the order of worship alongside practical instruction, in a single, more concise chapter that follows the order of worship.

#### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- How does the outline for worship in this chapter compare with a typical order of worship in your congregation? What is the same or similar? What is different?
- What does it mean to proclaim the Word of God in worship? Why is it important to pray for illumination? How do we respond to God’s Word—both in worship and in daily life?
- What are the primary biblical stories and theological themes that inform your understanding of the Sacraments? How are they reflected in your congregation’s sacramental practice?

### **SESSION 5/CHAPTER FOUR: PASTORAL AND OCCASIONAL SERVICES**

The fourth chapter of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship attends to special events and pastoral occasions in the lives of individual believers and in the community of faith: reaffirmation of baptism (including confirmation), commissioning for service, ordination and installation, transitions in ministry, the covenant of marriage, and the funeral service. All of these events and occasions in Christian life are related to and flow from the Sacrament of Baptism—our

covenant relationship with God and one another in the body of Christ. Accordingly, a key phrase, beginning every section in this chapter, is: “In Baptism each Christian ...”

This chapter of the revision is very similar in structure and substance to the fourth chapter of the current Directory, “Ordering Worship for Special Purposes.” The text for proposed revision now follows the action on marriage taken at the 221st General Assembly (2014) and subsequently approved by a majority of presbyteries.

#### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- What does the Sacrament of Baptism have to do with service in the world, ordination and installation, Christian marriage, and the funeral service?
- Why do we ordain and install certain persons to special forms of ministry in Christ’s name? How do our services of ordination reflect our theology of leadership and service?
- How does the Directory for Worship’s description of the marriage and funeral services compare with recent weddings and funerals you have attended?

### **SESSION 6/CHAPTER FIVE: WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN LIFE**

The fifth chapter of the proposed revision to the Directory for Worship relates the way in which our worship and service of God moves from the sanctuary to the streets—how we glorify God in daily life, congregational ministry, and mission to the world. Three key phrases help to frame this movement: (1) “We respond to God’s grace ...” in daily life; (2) “God calls the church ...” in congregational ministry; and (3) “God sends the church ...” in mission to the world. This chapter ends with a vision of worship and the reign of God, describing how we worship and serve the living God in faithful anticipation of Christ’s glorious return and the dawning of a new creation.

This chapter of the revision brings together the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the current Directory (“Worship and Personal Discipleship,” “Worship and Ministry within the Community of Faith,” and “Worship and the Ministry of the Church in the World”) under a single heading: “Worship and Christian Life.” It also picks up some materials from chapter three of the current Directory (“The Ordering of Christian Worship”) related to daily prayer, worship in councils of the church, and other gatherings in the life of a congregation. While significant streamlining was required in order to combine these materials in one chapter, the basic components of the previous chapters are preserved, more or less in the same order.

#### Questions for Reflection or Discussion

*Read this section of the proposed revision, ideally alongside relevant sections in the current Directory for Worship.*

- What does Christian worship have to do with daily life and personal discipleship? How do you worship and serve God in your everyday life? What disciplines shape and sustain you?
- How are the ministries of Christian education and pastoral care related to what happens in worship? How are they expressions of the church’s prayer and praise?
- How is worship related to evangelism, ministries of compassion, peacemaking and justice, and the care of creation? What do these things have to do with the coming reign of God?

# Appendix: A Side-by-Side Comparison of Outlines and Guide to Reorganization

## Current Directory for Worship

(parenthetical italics = location in revision)

### Preface

#### 1. The Dynamics of Christian Worship

- 1.1000 Christian Worship: An Introduction (1.01)
- 1.2000 The Language of Worship (1.03)
- 1.3000 Time, Space, and Matter (1.02)
- 1.4000 Responsibility and Accountability for Worship (2.03)

#### 2. The Elements of Christian Worship

- 2.1000 Prayer (2.02)
- 2.2000 Scripture Read and Proclaimed (3.03)
- 2.3000 Baptism (3.04)
- 2.4000 The Lord's Supper (3.04)
- 2.5000 Self-Offering (3.04)
- 2.6000 Relating to each Other and to the World (3.02, 3.03, 3.05)

#### 3. The Ordering of Christian Worship

- 3.1000 Principles and Sources of Ordering (2.01)
- 3.2000 Days and Seasons (1.02)
- 3.3000 Service for the Lord's Day (chapter 3)
  - 3.3100 Appropriate Actions (3.01)
  - 3.3200 Ordering the Actions (3.01)
  - 3.3300 Gathering around the Word (3.02)
  - 3.3400 Proclaiming the Word (3.03)
  - 3.3500 Responding to the Word (3.03, 3.04)
  - 3.3600 The Sealing of the Word: Sacraments (3.04)
  - 3.3700 Bearing and Following the Word into the World (3.05)
- 3.4000 Service of Daily Prayer (5.0202)
- 3.5000 Other Regularly Scheduled Services of Worship (5.02, 5.03)
- 3.6000 Special Gatherings (5.0204, 5.0205)

#### 4. Ordering Worship for Special Purposes

- 4.1000 Special Occasions and Recognitions (4.01)
- 4.2000 Services of Welcome and Reception (4.02)
- 4.3000 Commissioning for Specific Acts of Discipleship (4.03)
- 4.4000 Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning (4.04)
- 4.5000 Transitions in Ministry (4.05)
- 4.6000 Censure and Restoration (4.05)
- 4.7000 Recognition of Service to the Community (4.05)
- 4.8000 Services of Acceptance and Reconciliation (5.0203)
- 4.9000 Marriage (4.06)
- 4.10000 Services on the Occasion of Death (4.07)

#### 5. Worship and Personal Discipleship

- 5.1000 Personal Worship, Discipleship, and the Community of Faith (5.0101)
- 5.2000 The Discipline of Daily Personal Worship (5.0102, 5.0103)
- 5.3000 Scripture in Personal Worship (5.0102, 5.0103)
- 5.4000 Prayer in Personal Worship (5.0102)
- 5.5000 Other Disciplines in Personal Worship and Discipleship (5.0103)
- 5.6000 Christian Vocation (5.0105)
- 5.7000 Worship in Families and Households (5.0104)

#### 6. Worship and Ministry within the Community of Faith

- 6.1000 Mutual Ministries in the Church (5.0201)
- 6.2000 Christian Nurture (5.0203)
- 6.3000 Pastoral Care (5.0204)
- 6.4000 Worship and Ministry (5.0201)

#### 7. Worship and the Ministry of the Church in the World

- 7.1000 Worship and Mission (5.0301)
- 7.2000 Proclamation and Evangelism (5.0302)
- 7.3000 Compassion (5.0303)
- 7.4000 Reconciliation: Justice and Peace (5.0304)
- 7.5000 Caring for Creation and Life (5.0305)
- 7.6000 Worship and the Reign of God (5.04)
- 7.7000 Worship as Praise (5.04)

## Proposed Revision

### Preface

#### 1. The Theology of Christian Worship

- 1.01 Christian Worship: An Introduction
- 1.02 Time, Space, and Matter
- 1.03 Language, Symbols, and Culture

#### 2. Christian Worship in the Reformed Tradition

- 2.01 Sources and Principles
- 2.02 The Worshiping Assembly
- 2.03 Leadership in Worship and Ordered Ministries
  - 2.0301 Gifts for Service
  - 2.0302 Deacons
  - 2.0303 Ruling Elders
  - 2.0304 Teaching Elders
  - 2.0305 Shared Responsibility and Accountability

#### 3. The Service for the Lord's Day

- 3.01 Worship on the Lord's Day
- 3.02 Gathering
- 3.03 Word
  - 3.0301 Theology of Proclamation
  - 3.0302 – 3.0308 Practice of Proclamation
- 3.04 Sacrament
  - 3.0401 Theology of the Sacraments
  - 3.0402 Theology of Baptism
  - 3.0403 – 3.0408 Practice of Baptism
  - 3.0409 Theology of the Lord's Supper
  - 3.0410 – 3.0415 Practice of the Lord's Supper
- 3.05 Sending

#### 4. Pastoral and Occasional Services

- 4.01 Services Claiming and Completing Baptism
- 4.02 Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant
- 4.03 Commissioning for Service
- 4.04 Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning
- 4.05 Marking Transitions
- 4.06 The Covenant of Marriage
- 4.07 Death and Resurrection

#### 5. Worship and Christian Life

- 5.01 Worship and Personal Life
  - 5.0101 Personal Life
  - 5.0102 Prayer in Daily Life
  - 5.0103 Other Practices of Discipleship
  - 5.0104 Household Worship
  - 5.0105 Christian Vocation
- 5.02 Worship and the Church's Ministry within the Community of Faith
  - 5.0201 The Church's Ministry within the Community of Faith
  - 5.0202 Services of Daily Prayer
  - 5.0203 Christian Education
  - 5.0204 Pastoral Care
  - 5.0205 Councils of the Church
  - 5.0206 Other Gatherings
- 5.03 Worship and the Church's Mission in the World
  - 5.0301 The Church's Mission in the World
  - 5.0302 Evangelism
  - 5.0303 Compassion
  - 5.0304 Justice and Peace
  - 5.0305 Care of Creation
- 5.04 Worship and the Reign of God