

**“What Would YOU Do?”**  
[and “What does the Book of Order say?”]

**Scenario #1: on Worship**

The Worship Committee has presented to the Session some changes for the summer months. They report these plans:

- a. That the services of worship be shortened to 40-45 minutes during this month because people would be more likely to come in the summer...In order to do this, they recommend that the prayers of confession and intercession be eliminated and that only the Lord’s Prayer be used. They also recommend that the offering be eliminated and instead a plate be placed near the door for those who want to give.
- b. They recommend that in lieu of a sermon each week they have the following: the first week the high school jazz band will play. The second Sunday there will be a hymn sing with favorite selections by the congregation. To allow more time for the songs the scripture reading will be eliminated. The third Sunday they will have the youth report on the summer church camping program. The fourth Sunday they will have Elder Thomas speak briefly on his trip to Guatemala.
- c. Since the congregation always has Holy Communion served the first Sunday of the month, they recommend that for those wanting the sacrament and willing to stay, they serve the elements after the benediction and postlude. Two elders will be in charge of serving, and since there will be no minister present, one of these elders will read the “Words of Institution” from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, and then the two will distribute the elements.

The floor is open for discussion. According to the *Directory for Worship*, what are the issues involved in each of these changes? Evaluate each of the recommendations as to their appropriateness or inappropriateness and give the reasons for your judgment.

**Scenario #2: on Baptism**

Janice is a 25-year-old member of St. Andrews. She grew up in the church, and joined the church with her 7<sup>th</sup> grade class, as was the custom in the church. Janice was baptized as an infant by one of the beloved ministers of the church.

In college, Janice experienced the drop-out effect that many college folk experience. She quit going except for special occasions. Shortly after her graduation she married George who grew up in the Baptist church.

Jennifer, their first child, is now 6 months old, and her parents are split over whether or not to baptize the child. They have not come back to church, and George believes in “believer’s baptism,\*” whereas Janice things it would be neat to have a “christening.”

Since they know you are an elder, Janice approached you and asks why we baptize infants, and wants to know if the church will “do” the baby.

What do you say? [NOTE: “Talk to the pastor” is not an acceptable response.]

### **Scenario #3: on Communion**

Your friends John and Judy visiting from out of town. They would like to go to worship with your family on Sunday morning. Judy joined the Methodist Church a few years back and John has never regularly worshipped in any Christian church, but admits to being curious about what Presbyterians do. They are wondering if there is anything they should know about worship. Your spouse remembers that this is communion Sunday and suddenly you are wondering can people who are not members of our church take communion?

### **Scenario #4: on Remodeling the Sanctuary**

The session of First Presbyterian Church received a memorial gift to replace the carpet in the sanctuary. Old Bill's family knew that was ashamed of the tattered green carpet and would love to see something new and fabulous. As the property committee began looking into their options they were quickly overwhelmed with options. In an effort to help them out of their uncomfortable position, an elder stated, "We need to ask the congregation to decide the color for our new carpet." Is that ok?

### **Scenario #5: on Financial**

Money is tight at Faith Presbyterian Church. People don't leave money to the church like they used to. The younger families aren't able to give a lot. More of the older folks really have to watch their pennies because their investments have never recovered from drops in the market. In an effort to practice good stewardship the session looked for areas to cut their expenses. One of their bigger expenses that don't involve programs or personnel is their insurance costs. It was suggested that the session cut the policy to the bone and only maintain coverage for building if it was burned or destroyed. They cut the annual audit out of the budget because they really trust their current staff. Some day if they get the money they will start reviewing their books annually, but not for the foreseeable future. They chose to offer the secretary a less expensive health insurance plan than the one they previously had through the Board of Pensions. They cut every expense they could find. But because this budget was going to be really tight the session decided that they would ask the congregation to approve the budget at the annual meeting.

Which decisions are in violation of the Book of Order?

### **Scenario #6: on Misconduct**

“Pastor, is that you,” said a very agitated woman on the phone. “Yes, this is Pastor Smith. How can I help you? “Well your church hosted vacation Bible school, right and my little girl, she was one of the helpers and one of those Presbyterian boys was not a gentleman with my little girl and I want something done. I can’t believe that God fearing people would not have more morals. This is outrageous...”

“Excuse me ma’am, excuse me ma’am; I don’t believe I got your name,” said the Pastor.

“My name is Mrs. Miller and my husband is very upset. It’s all I can do to keep him from coming after whoever is in charge.....”

“Excuse me ma’am, but if I am going to help you I need some more information. I would like to suggest a meeting face to face so we can discuss this. Can you tell me your daughter’s name and the young man involved? I would also like the name of the adult your daughter was working with. Let’s meet this afternoon afterschool at 3:30 pm. Please bring your daughter and I will get in touch with the rest of the folks,” said the pastor.

Mrs. Smith interrupted. “Well, I just don’t know if we can make it. My daughter is so busy and my husband works.”

“Mrs Smith you are making very serious accusations and I am taking your concerns seriously and feel it is extremely important that we meet today.”

*The afternoon meeting revealed that the young man and girl snuck away for some necking behind the church resulting in an obvious mark on her neck. What is the responsibility of the pastor, session, VBS team and adult teachers? What should the pastor do? What should the session do and or what should they have done prior to the event to make sure something like this did not happen.*

*Does the Book of Order or Confessions have anything to contribute to this incident?*

### **Scenario #7: on Buying and Selling Property**

Which of the following require a vote of the congregation?

Which of the following require approval of the Presbytery?

- A. The property next door is for sale and the church wants to put a parking lot on that property. It will cost \$20,000 for the lot and the house on it, \$10,000 to tear down the house and \$25,000 to put in a parking lot. \$20,000 has been raised for the project, there is \$15,000 in memorial funds, and a loan will be secured from the bank for \$20,000.
- B. The manse needs a new garage and a member has donated the funds to build the garage.
- C. In an effort to raise funds for future ministries, the vacant manse will be rented. There is a renter who wants to move in, but they want a lease that guarantees that they can rent the house for the next 10 years.
- D. Peace Presbyterian Church was gifted with property 25 years ago. The land has sat vacant and unused all this time. However, there are new developers who are interested in buying the property to put in new houses. The session thinks that now might be the perfect time to sell.

## Relevant Book of Order Citations for Scenarios

1. Multiple citations including W-2.4012, W-3.3401, W-3.3507, W-3.5102, W-3.6204
2. W-3.3603, G-1.0301, W-2.3008
3. W-2.4011 “The invitation to the Lord’s Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the Table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love.
4. G-3.02 – Session Responsibilities – “managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission.
5. Includes G-3.0112, G-3.0113
6. G-3.0106, D-1.0101, D- 1.0103, possibly D-2.
7. G-3.0303f, G-4.0101, all of G-4.02