

Celebrating God's Gift of Servanthood



**Officer Orientation Retreat
Part One—All Officers**

**First Presbyterian Church
West Chester, Pennsylvania**

January 1, 2021

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Why Are We Here?

Theological Reflections on Leadership

Officer Orientation Retreat

Ephesians 4:11-5:2

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Questions to Consider and Discuss

1. What is our purpose as leaders in the church? How does this impact our actions within the church?
2. According to Paul, we are supposed to be different from those outside of the church. What are some of the ways in which we continue to be and act like “Gentiles”?
3. Please brainstorm some ways that we as leaders can lead out as examples within the church.

Office of Ruling Elder as Described in the Bible

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Church Elders are mentioned in 13 different passages or verses in the New Testament.

In addition, there are 125 references to Elders in the Old Testament, as participating in the government of the people of Israel, who were the special people of God up to the coming of Christ. Even in the New Testament, there are 32 references to the Elders of the Jews who participated in the government of the nation during Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginnings of the Church.

Since the Church is a continuation, in a new form, of what the nation of Israel was before Jesus' coming (see, for example, Romans 11:17, Galatians 6:16), then government by Elders in the Church is simply a continuation of the kind of government that existed previously in Israel.

The Greek word for Elder used in the New Testament, is *presbuteros*. Its root meaning is "old person." Because age, in ancient societies, was often considered as a qualification for preeminence and authority, the word acquired a secondary meaning as a title of authority in certain contexts. The name, Presbyterian Church, is derived from this, meaning a Church governed by Elders according to the Biblical pattern. As the name suggests, age and maturity were often counted among the characteristics that qualified Elders to exercise authority.

Elders participated with the apostles in the government of the very first Church, that in Jerusalem, as indicated by Acts 11:30, 15:2-3, 16:4 and 21:18. The apostolic missionaries, such as Paul and Barnabas, appointed Elders to govern the congregations they founded in other cities, as indicated by Acts 1:23 and Titus 1:5. The apostles Peter and John also referred to themselves as Elders (I Peter 5:1, II John 1 and III John 1.).

It is evident from Titus 1:5-9 that Elders were also called Bishops. The Greek word for bishop, *episkopos*, simply means overseer or supervisor, and describes the function of elders in the Church. Later in history, the word "bishop" acquired a new and different meaning, referring to a single individual who served as overseer of all the Christian churches in a large city or a district. In the New Testament Church, however, the words "elder" and "bishop" were used interchangeably to refer to the same office. Elders were also referred to as exercising the function of "shepherds" in the Church, as we see in Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2.

Other qualifications for Elders, in addition to maturity, are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The duties and functions of Church Elders are also mentioned in several places in the New Testament: Acts 20:28-35, 1 Timothy 4:1 and 5:7, James 5:1, and I Peter 5:1-3. You may take some time to copy these on a separate sheet of paper for future discussion and reference.

Reprinted with minor revisions from *Your Job as a Church Officer*, pp. 14-15

Office of Deacon as Described in the Bible

Officer Orientation Retreat

The English word "deacon" comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which literally means "servant." In ancient Greek, it also meant an attendant or official in a pagan temple or religious guild. The meaning of *diakonos* carries with it a dignity and respect which is absent in the other Greek word for "servant," *doulos*, which meant "slave."

In the New Testament, the word *diakonos* is used with other meanings besides that of a type of church officer. For example, in Matthew 20:26, Jesus says, "The greatest among you shall be your *diakonos*" (here translated as "servant.") The same word is used for the servants who drew the water which Jesus changed into wine at the wedding feast in John 2:5-9, and for government officials in Romans 13:4. In some places, it is often translated as "minister." For example, Paul describes himself in Ephesians 3:7 as a *diakonos* (minister in the R.S.V.) of the Gospel.

Deacons as Church Officers are mentioned in at least four passages or verses in the New Testament:

In **Acts 6:1-6**, the origin of the office of Deacon is described. On this occasion, they were elected specifically for the duty of taking care of the distribution of food and other necessities to poor and needy members of the Church. However, at least one of their number, Stephen, distinguished himself in other forms of ministry, including miraculous "wonders and signs" and speaking with "wisdom and the Spirit" (Acts 6:8-10), and became the first disciple to be killed because of his witness to Christ (Acts 7:5-60). (It is noteworthy that the word *diakonos* does not occur in this passage; however, a related word, *diakonia*--in English letters *diakonia* -- meaning service, is used in Acts 6:1 to describe the type of work they would do.)

In **Romans 16:1**, Paul mentions a woman named Phoebe who is identified as a "deaconess of the Church at Cenchreae" (a city in Greece).

In **Philippians 1:1**, Paul saluted the officers of the Church in Philippi as "the bishops [elders] and deacons."

Finally, in **I Timothy 3:8-13**, Paul mentions the qualifications for Deacons, their need of being tested, and the reward for their service. Please turn to this passage now in your Bible, and in the space below, or on separate paper, list these qualifications, for future reference and discussion.

Reprinted with minor revisions from *Your Job as a Church Officer*, pp. 17-18

The Book of Order on Officers

Officer Orientation Retreat

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in 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 are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office.

G-2.0201 Deacon Defined

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry.

G-4.0101 Trustee Defined

Where permitted by civil law, each congregation shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained. If incorporation is not permitted, individual trustees shall be elected by the congregation. Any such individual trustees shall be elected from the congregation's members in the same manner as those elected to the ordered ministries of deacon and ruling elder. Terms of service shall be governed by the provisions of G-2.0404. The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the congregation, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted in a duly constituted meeting; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons. Where permitted by civil law, each presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained and shall determine a method to constitute the board of trustees by its own rule. The corporation so formed, or individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for and at the direction of the council.

G-4.0102 Members of the Corporation

Only persons eligible for membership in the congregation or council shall be eligible to be members of the corporation and to be elected as trustees. The ruling elders on the session of a congregation, who are eligible under the civil law, shall be the trustees of the corporation, unless the corporation shall determine another method for electing its trustees. Presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly shall provide by rule for the election of trustees from among persons eligible for membership in the council.

The Job of Session in Our Church Constitution

Officer Orientation Retreat

In 2011, *The Book of Order*, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), was abbreviated to allow more flexibility for congregations. For decades, the BOO spelled out in detail the provisions regarding the office of Ruling Elder, and the job of the Session. In this new era, we are given more general principles, affording the congregation to apply the principles to their particular situation. For our purposes of orientation, we will present the traditional responsibilities of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

You have been given a link an electronic copy of [*The Book of Order*](#) and [*The Book of Confessions*](#) so that you will be able to re-read, study, and refer to it in the future, as you grow more familiar with your office and may need to answer new questions that arise. If you would prefer paper copies of these books, please contact the church office.

The following checklist presents a brief summary of the traditional responsibilities and functions of the Session as were detailed in previous editions of *The Book of Order*.

1. **GOVERNMENT, ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE CONGREGATION**
(including the maintenance of required records and rolls)
2. **CONGREGATIONAL CARE**—including:
 - a. Admission of persons to membership
 - b. Dismissal of persons from membership
 - c. Nurture and care of members
 - d. Discipline of members in cases of necessity
3. **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**—to equip Christ's disciples of all ages with the full gamut of knowledge, skills and experience that they need in order to fulfill their ministry, and God's purpose in their lives
4. **WORSHIP**—including administration of the Sacraments
5. **STEWARDSHIP**—time, talents and treasure—totality of life
6. **OUTREACH**—including Evangelism, the going out and making new disciples for Christ, and Mission endeavors that support the mission of Christ beyond the local congregation
7. **LIAISON WITH OTHER COUNCILS**—especially the Presbytery

Questions to Think About and Answer

1. What do the Ruling Elders do in our congregation?
2. For which of these types of activities do you feel best qualified or most called?
3. In which of the above areas do you think your congregation has the greatest need or is challenged to do a more effective job? Why?

The Job of the Deacons in Our Church Constitution

Officer Orientation Retreat

In 2011, *The Book of Order*, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), was abbreviated to allow more flexibility for congregations. For decades, the BOO spelled out in detail the provisions regarding the office of Deacon, and the job of the Board of Deacons. In this new era, we are given more general principles, affording the congregation to apply the principles to their particular situation. For our purposes of orientation, we will present the traditional responsibilities of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

You have been given a link an electronic copy of [*The Book of Order*](#) and [*The Book of Confessions*](#) so that you will be able to re-read, study, and refer to it in the future, as you grow more familiar with your office and may need to answer new questions that arise. If you would prefer paper copies of these books, please contact the church office.

You will notice that the Board of Deacons is subordinate to the Session (as are all other boards, officers and organizations of the congregation with the exception of the Pastor). Remember that this does not detract from the dignity, value and respect of the Deacons, any more than being subordinate to a general detracts from the dignity of a colonel. Within this framework, the office of Deacon is also one of dignity, importance, and respect. The Book of Order provides that the Session and the Deacons shall meet together at least once a year to consider matters of common interest.

The function of Deacons, then, is to perform various types of service that are essential to the ministry of the Church. According to our Church Constitution, the job of the Board of Deacons may be summarized in the following major points:

Ministry to the Needy (those who are ill, elderly, living in poverty, or lonely)

From the Bible, this is the original and primary duty of Deacons. It is proper, therefore, for them to undertake the pursuit of this ministry on their own initiative, as thoroughly as possible: to discover who are the needy (not necessarily limited to members of the congregation), whose needs are not being adequately met by other agencies, and to help them in appropriate ways. Most Sessions allocate money for the work of the Deacons, either from the church budget, through special collections, or in some other way, so that they can provide practical material and financial assistance to those in distress. Deacons should carry on a regular ministry of visitation, telephone calls, and other activities related to ministering to those who are suffering due to illness or circumstance.

Questions to Think About and Answer

1. What do the Deacons do in our congregation?
2. For which of these types of activities do you feel best qualified?
3. In which of the above areas do you think your congregation has the greatest need or challenge to do a more effective job? Why?

Reprinted with minor revisions from *Your Job as a Church Officer*, pp. 17-18

The Job of the Trustees in our Church Constitution

Officer Orientation Retreat

“The corporation so formed, or the individual trustees, shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer property, real or personal, for the congregation, provided that in buying, selling, and mortgaging real property, the trustees shall act only after the approval of the congregation, granted in a duly constituted meeting; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the congregation, all subject to the authority of the session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The powers and duties of the trustees shall not infringe upon the powers and duties of the session or the board of deacons.” (G-4.101)

While not an ordained office of the Presbyterian Church, Trustees fulfill a vital role in its leadership. Because our church is also a legal corporation, Trustees serve as the legal representatives. As authorized by the congregation, they represent the congregation in legal matters, particularly concerning property.

Facilities Oversight

1. Facilities Care and Maintenance
2. Insurance
3. Special Projects and Improvements
4. Long-Term Maintenance Plans

Where Do Presbyterians Come From?

Officer Orientation Retreat

Presbyterians are Reformers

- Presbyterianism began in Europe as part of the Protestant Reformation, a series of events that happened in the 16th and 17th centuries
- Because of corruption in the medieval church, some people saw need to change the way it worked
- Many efforts in many European countries hosted reform movements
- Presbyterians centered in Switzerland, France, England, the Netherlands, and Scotland
- The Presbyterians differed more than other reforming movements (Lutherans, Episcopalians) from the church governed in Rome in their emphasis on:
 - God's grace as center of gospel—salvation and election are God's acts
 - Empowerment of the laity in polity and ministry, which led to an emphasis on education

American Presbyterians are different than the original reformers

- American Presbyterians owe much of their heritage to the American experience
- They to America to escape religious persecution in Europe
- Immigrants were committed to the Reformed heritage, but with new emphases
- Immigrants valued freedom of the Reformed heritage—it fit American experience like a glove!
- It is difficult to say where and when the first Presbyterian Church in America was formed (one possibility was Long Island in 1672, but no one knows for sure)
- The first presbytery was formed in Philadelphia in 1706

Presbyterians grew up with America

- At least eleven (and as many of fourteen) of original signers of Declaration of Independence were Presbyterian, including the only clergyman, John Witherspoon
- The meeting of first General Assembly was in May of 1789, just three weeks after George Washington was inaugurated as our first president
- Things that you love about American government you will love about Presbyterian church
- Things that drive you crazy about American government will drive you crazy about Presbyterian church!

Presbyterian Distinctives

- Presbyterians have few doctrinal distinctives; we agree with most Protestants on our beliefs in the:
 - Sovereignty of God
 - Sinfulness of humanity
 - Salvation by Grace through Faith in Jesus Christ
 - Authority of Scriptures
 - Call to Witness and Ministry for All Christians
- Our distinctive is in our polity and practice—how we act upon what we believe
- Presbyterians are governed through a Representative Democracy (the same as each level of United States— not a surprise because the same people created both!)
- Presbyterians expect their members to think for themselves, to discuss and debate together, and to find God's will in the midst of that discussion and debate, otherwise called the “Theology of the Group”
- Presbyterians expect their members to be engaged in this world through work, service, and acts of mercy and justice.

What Presbyterian Officers Believe

Officer Orientation Retreat

One Thing We All Believe:

“Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior”

Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior

- The core belief of our faith: Jesus is the ultimate head of our lives and of the church
- This is the only belief required for membership
- Belief in Christ as Lord is the central tenet of every Christian tradition, which is why we accept anyone from any Christian background into membership without rebaptism, and welcome them to the Lord’s Supper.

Process for development of doctrines (teachings):

- Progression toward doctrines: Scripture, creeds/confessions, doctrines/beliefs
- We are a confessional church—over years, statements have been written to describe how we are to live as Christians in the world
- Every confession represents the time it was created
- Every confession is considered subordinate to Scripture

Summary of Major Beliefs: Primary Orientation of Our Faith

- Trinity—the mystery to express the variety of ways we experience God
- Incarnation of Eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ who lived and loved on earth
- Justification by Grace through Faith—we are saved not by work, but by a free action of God
- Scripture as the Final Authority for Salvation and the Life of Faith—we take it seriously, not literally
- God’s Sovereignty—Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
- God’s Election of People for Salvation and Service—God’s positive initiative in human life
- Covenant Orientation in Life of Church—community of faith and service
- Faithful Stewardship for God’s Creation—our response to God’s provision
- Necessity of Obedience to God/Working for Justice in Transformation of Society—integrated response
- Sin of Idolatry—making anything created ultimate, not worshiping only the creator

Something We All Share—Great Ends of the Church

***“The great ends of the church are
the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
the maintenance of divine worship;
the preservation of the truth;
the promotion of social righteousness;
and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.”***
(Book of Order, F-1.0304)

Expectations of All Church Officers

Officer Orientation Retreat

1. Pray regularly for the congregation and its role in the ministry of Christ's Church.
2. Make participation in the total life of the church a personal priority.
3. Share your gifts of Time, Talent, & Treasure in support of the church's ministries.
4. Respond in a timely fashion to registration invitations, especially for officer meetings.
5. Pay special attention to congregational priorities.
6. Participate in meetings, listening to others and sharing your opinions.
7. Be active on the teams to which you are appointed and supportive of their decisions.
8. Ensure smooth execution of specific tasks/responsibilities.
9. Be proactive in encouraging participation in and support of church's ministries and programs.
10. Be an interpreter and advocate of Board decisions and other developments in church life within the congregation and beyond.

Visioning

- Discern new possibilities for faithful participation of the congregation in Christ's mission
- Look ahead to set direction for future ministry
- Establish direction and pace—and lead forth!

Modeling

- Demonstrate by the way it works together what it means to live and work as a Christian community
- Lead in ways that inspire faith and encourage others to lead
- Lead by example in personal and congregational life

Theological Engagement

- Be the custodians and interpreters of the faith in the congregation
- Celebrate positive attributes of our shared faith and practice
- Grow in your faith and ability to articulate it

Pastoral

- Provide for the nurture, growing into Christ, and for the discipline of the congregation
- Order the congregation's life
- Deploy Christ's gifts of ministry and mission
- Identify and nurture the gifts of others so they may grow and mature in faith

Political

- Be the center of leadership and decision-making in the congregation
- Share the governance of the church by Inviting/Engaging/Integrating/Disciplining members in shared ministry
- Lead as servants rather than rulers

Managerial

- Provide oversight of the congregation's people and resources
- Practice good stewardship in open, honest manner
- Identify and adopt Christ's priorities over our own

Making the Church of Tomorrow Work

Officer Orientation Retreat

The Need for New Wineskins

“(Jesus) also told them a parable: ‘No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.’”

--Luke 5:36-38

Basic Principles of Ministry Work

#1—Divide the Work!

#2—Multiply the Ministry!

#3—Grow the People, Grow the Church!

1. The goal of good boards and committees is to involve as many people as possible, to encourage them in the life and ministry of our church:
 - a. by matching people’s gifts to needs and opportunities around us
 - b. by trusting people to do their best without micro-management
2. As servant leaders, we are called to **Invite, Engage, Integrate, and Disciple** our church family for ministry.
3. We must trust our members—and help them to trust themselves.

Moving from Activity to Purpose

From Program Development to Faith Formation

1. Integrating Biblical principles with daily life
2. Willing to walk with those who are wounded, hurting and searching
3. Teaching stewardship of life rather than stewardship of resources
4. Spirit-led rather than structure-led
5. Unchanging gospel engaging with changing needs

From Church Focus to World Focus

1. Moving from preserving institutional church to engaging the world with kingdom message
2. Focusing on learning rather than teaching/training
3. Cultivating mission-driven church rather than curricula-driven church
4. Defining success in terms of effectiveness rather than activity/productivity

From Success to Effectiveness

1. Standards for evaluation based not on how many, but on what happened
2. Laypersons called to share accountability/responsibility—not just staff and leaders alone
3. Emphasizing the move out: meeting needs, healing hurts, working toward wholeness/justice
4. Concentrating on “being” church more than “doing” church

From Gathered Church to Scattered Church

1. Balance between gathered and scattered: should complement and feed each other
2. Emphasizing Monday-to-Saturday spirituality
3. Church as “mission outpost” and “equipping station”
4. Purpose is kingdom of God in daily work and relationships
5. Practicing the priesthood of *all* believers

(Adapted from Edward Hammett, *Making the Church Work*)

SESSION COVENANT

First Presbyterian Church
West Chester, Pennsylvania
January 1, 2021

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:1-6)

As members of this Session, we have been called by God through the voice of this congregation to serve the people of God with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. Therefore, we bind ourselves together with bonds of honesty, support and encouragement.

As leaders called to model the Body of Christ, we will:

1. Maintain a community and climate of worship so that the central question is not "What is the group consensus?" but "What is the leading of Christ in our midst?"
2. Be intentional in developing relationships with one another, and engaging in conversation and ongoing study together, in order to build and maintain Christian community and foster trust.
3. Gather good data and basic factual information, identifying alternatives and possibilities. Keep all possible options open in order that creativity may contribute to the process.
4. Lay aside all biases and blocks to the Holy Spirit, leaving the outcome to God's direction, being willing to consider new ideas, and being obedient to the results.
5. Spend time in reflection and prayer, listening for God's intimations of the future and hints of God's direction, relying on scripture, listening, and deep engagement with Christ and each other.
6. Share with the community what one has seen, heard, or felt in the reflection time and speak from our personal experiences related to the subject.
7. Act in a spirit of love and humility, honoring the truth that God works through each member of the body. Be aware God may be speaking through another person and remember that no one possesses all of God's truth.
8. Listen attentively and with respect and openness to our sisters and brothers, believing that all desire to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Focus on ideas instead of questioning motives, intelligence, or integrity.
9. Wait for God's timing. Continue to ask God for direction during the waiting. Speaking with a united voice depends on waiting long enough to receive a common sense of leading.
10. Lead by example, by sharing our faith and resources to further the church's ministry through:
 - a. Regular attendance and participation in Worship
 - b. Intentional involvement in a Christian Education program
 - c. Consistent Stewardship through pledges and contributions
 - d. Joyful engagement in the Fellowship Activities with our members
 - e. Ongoing participation in the Mission Outreach of our church
11. Use our leadership roles to empower and encourage others, so that our members may experience the joy of serving and that God's ministry will be done. We recognize that it is our responsibility to work with our committees and groups to provide clarity of roles, resources for their work, and directions in selecting priorities.
12. Maintain confidentiality within the group, sharing only "public" information in ways that build up the Body of Christ.

Furthermore we agree:

1. Committees and boards are authorized and responsible for their particular areas of ministry as described in their job descriptions in Administrative Manual. They do not need additional permission to fulfill their duties.
2. Committees and boards are authorized to spend budgeted and committee-controlled line items, not needing additional permission from the session. Other funds should receive prior approval. If a committee/board requires funding beyond its budget, it may submit a request to the session, detailing its rationale and design. Because budget allotments are made based on each committee/board's plan, a request will be examined for its consistency with the church's long-range plans.
3. Session meetings generally will last no more than 90 minutes.
4. We will allot time in each meeting for ongoing training/reflection/dreaming—this provides the opportunity for the Session to set both the vision and the direction of the church, while committees may labor together to “make it happen.”
5. Written reports from each committee will be submitted to the clerk by noon on the Wednesday before Session meeting, so that an agenda can be made and all materials distributed electronically the Thursday prior to session meeting, and will be read by all session members prior to meeting.
6. Written reports are not ministry minutes or summaries, but will follow the templet divided into:
 - a. Action Items—issues requiring session approval by formal vote
 - b. Discussion Items—occasions that a committee requests feedback from the session, which the session will provide without a formal decision or vote. In most cases, “major items” will be presented for discussion at least one month prior to action.
 - c. Information Items—actions the ministry team has taken as authorized by session; these items will be noted, but not mentioned unless (1) a session member has a question or (2) the reporting elder would like to highlight something.
7. Teaching Elders are authorized to approve and perform baptisms, weddings, funerals, communions and other duties included in their ministries, under the guidance of session policies, reporting as “information” such activities at each session meeting.
8. We will speak as a governing body. While we may disagree during our discussion, our voted decision will be considered the official position/decision of the session, and we will not undermine this decision by conversations within the congregation. We work and stand together.
9. We will speak the truth in love to each other, knowing that sometimes this may hurt another's feeling; we agree that it is better to be honest than agreeable.
10. We will support one another in our shared ministry, encouraging and assisting whenever possible. Because the church has called us to lead them, we consider our responsibilities to be a sacred trust, and will thank God regularly for the opportunity to serve our community and our God.
11. At this time in our lives, we each agree to fulfill these responsibilities. If a member of our session should have a change in personal circumstance which no longer allows him/her to fulfill these responsibilities in a timely manner, the member may resign from the session with absolute appreciation for ministry provided.
12. We are a team that trusts each other, holds each other accountable, and works together for the shared ministry of our church. Thanks be to God for this opportunity to serve!

Here we hold ourselves and each other accountable to this covenant, and the policies and/or agreements we make together. We commit ourselves to one another, this congregation and the God we serve together.

The Session of First Presbyterian Church
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Committee Organization

Officer Orientation Retreat

Dates to Remember

January 10	Election of Officers
January 24	Ordination and Installation Service—all new officers <i>(Please inform pastors if unable to be present.)</i>
January 28	Officer Orientation—All Officers are invited, 7:00-8:00pm <i>(Please review materials and watch video prior to meeting)</i>
February 4	Deacon Orientation—all Deacons are invited, 7:00-8:00pm <i>(Please review materials and watch video prior to meeting)</i>
February 4	Trustee Orientation—all Deacons are invited, 7:00-8:00pm <i>(Please review materials and watch video prior to meeting)</i>
February 6	Session Orientation—all Ruling Elders are invited, 7:00-8:00pm <i>(Please review materials and watch video prior to meeting)</i>

Meeting Times

Attendance at and participation in the various boards and committees, and co-operation with other officers are primary requirements for all officers. At present, meetings of the boards are ordinarily held as follows:

Deacons	Quarterly meetings at 7:00pm
Session	Fourth Monday (proposing third Tuesday) of each month at 7:00pm
Trustees	Third Monday of each month at 7:00pm

Committees and Ministry Team meetings are usually held to meet the availability and convenience of most of the members. Each of the boards does much work through committee and ministry teams, so nominees should expect to serve on two teams annually.

After serving six years, outgoing officers are not eligible for re-appointment to the same office until after one year has elapsed.

Session Committees

- Christian Education
- Congregational Life & Membership
- Finance & Stewardship
- Missions
- Personnel
- Youth
- Worship

Theological Reflections on Growth

Officer Orientation Retreat

1. In your reflection, what constitutes a “healthy congregation?”
2. How does growth figure into a healthy congregation—what kinds, how much?
3. How does the Spirit of God interact in a process of discerning/decision making?

Ten Principles of Health and Disease

1. Wholeness is not attainable - But it can be approximated
2. Illness is not the necessary complement to health - It's okay to be sick, and feel burdened
3. The body has innate healing abilities - No one can give you or the congregation what you don't already have
4. Agents of disease are not causes of disease - All disease processes are enabled
5. All illness is bio-psycho-social - Everything is connected
6. The subtle precedes the gross - Early detection is the best treatment
7. Everybody is different - No universal treatment for every congregation
8. Healthy circulatory system is key to health and healing - Feedback systems promote health
9. Breathing properly is nourishing to whole body - Spirit must be active among body of Christ
10. Brain is the largest secreting organ of body - mind converts ideas into biochemical realities

(Peter Steinke, Healthy Congregations)

Constitutional Affirmations for Ordination and Installation

Officer Orientation Retreat

1. I trust in Jesus Christ my Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. I accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to me.
3. I sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and I will be instructed and led by those confessions as I lead the people of God.
4. I will fulfill my ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions.
5. I will be governed by our church's polity, and I will abide by its discipline. I will be a friend among my colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit.
6. I will in my own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love my neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world.
7. I promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church.
8. I will pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.
9. *(For ruling elders)* I will be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service. I will share in government and discipline, serving in councils of the church, and in my ministry, I will try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ.
10. *(For deacons)* I will be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need, and in my ministry, I will try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ.
11. *(For Everyone)* With God's help, I do promise. Amen!