



EPC

*A Global Movement of
Evangelical Presbyterian Churches*

Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Officer Training Manual

(9/25/22)

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Officer Training Manual

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Procedures for Acceptance into an EPC Court for Ruling Elders/Deacons



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1. Each has confirmed a personal call to serve in leadership

2. Each has been instructed and examined by Session representatives. The **Bible**, the **Leadership Training Guide**, the **Westminster Confession** and the **Book of Order** are to be used for this instruction and examination (BoG 12-6). Topics include:
 - a. Church Government
 - b. The Sacraments
 - c. The Faith of the Church
 - d. The Worship of the Church
 - e. The Discipline of the Church
 - f. The History of the Church
 - g. An understanding of the office to which one is elected.
 - h. Familiarity with The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms and an understanding what it means to “sincerely receive and adopt as the system doctrine as of taught in the Holy Scriptures”
 - i. Personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and the progress in spiritual growth
 - j. Study and review the Officer Ordination Vows for Ruling Elders/Deacons from the EPC Book of Order (BoG 13-2)
 - k. Affirmation of the Ordination Vows from the EPC Book of Order (BoG 13-2)

3. Each has been elected by Congregation

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Essentials of Our Faith



All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six book of the Old Testament and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God’s redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional essentials of our faith:

1. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!
2. Jesus Christ, the living word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior, indwelling in our hearts. He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God’s free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting she awaits the return of her Lord.
6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth personally, visibly, and bodily – to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20)
7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In Essentials.....Unity

In Non-Essentials.....Liberty

In All Things.....Charity

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EPC Ordination Questions/Vows for Ruling Elders and Deacons



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1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church you will on your own initiative make known to your Church Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
5. Do you affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception?
6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?
7.
 - a. (Elders) Do you promise subjection to your fellow presbyters in the Lord?
 - b. (Deacons) Do you promise subjection to your fellow officers in the Lord?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon) from love of God and sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
10. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon), whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before this congregation of which God will make you an officer?
11. Are you now willing to take responsibility in the life of this congregation as a _____ (Ruling Elder, Deacon), and will you seek to discharge your duties, relying upon the Grace of God, in such a way that the entire Church of Jesus Christ will be blessed?

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Reference Guide for Preparation of Officers for EPC Examination



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

#	SAMPLE QUESTIONS	REFERENCE
1	Share in 2-3 minutes the story of how you came to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord.	
2	Name some of the distinctives of Presbyterian theology.	The Five "Solas" - Leadership Training Guide p. 20
3	What are the three components of the Westminster Standards?	Leadership Training Guide p. 23
4	Explain the meaning of: a. Total Depravity b. Unconditional Election c. Limited Atonement d. Irresistible Grace e. Perseverance of the Saints	Leadership Training Guide p. 110-116
5	What is the difference between justification and sanctification?	Leadership Training Guide p. 107-108
6	What are the key differences between Presbyterian and congregational forms of government?	Leadership Training Guide p. 26/29
7	What are the three components of the Book of Order?	The Book of Government The Book of Discipline The Book of Worship
8	What is the primary mission of the church according to the Book of Order?	Book of Order G4-3
9	What are the three courts of the EPC?	Book of Order G2-1
10	Explain the difference between the Power of Order and the Authority of Jurisdiction.	Book of Order G3-2 and G3-3
11	Elders are elected by the congregation, so who do they represent?	Book of Order G9-8
12	What are the responsibilities of an elder in the life of the church?	Bible: Acts 20:17-38; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; James 5:14



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Reference Guide (continued)

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13	What is the elder's relationship to presbytery?	Book of Order G9-8
14	What is the deacon's relationship to the Session?	Book of Order G9-14
15	Where in the Bible would you find a description of the expected personal characteristics of an elder or deacon?	Bible: I Timothy 3:1-13
16	What is the pastor's relationship to the presbytery?	The pastor is a member of the presbytery, not the local church. The presbytery has authority over the pastor, in conjunction with the congregation of the church. The pastor is a voting member of the presbytery.
17	Why do Presbyterians believe that children of believing parents need to be presented for baptism as infants?	Book of Order W3-2
18	Why do we limit participation in the sacrament of communion to believers? How do you do this in a church?	Book of Order W3-3, W3-3D, W3-3I
19	Who has original jurisdiction over church members? Over Teaching Elders? Over Church Sessions? Over Presbyteries?	Book of Order D4-2
20	Were there any surprises to you from the Leadership Training Guide?	
21	Do you have any questions or concerns as a result of your study of the Leadership Training Guide?	
22	What do you perceive are some key strengths and weaknesses of your church?	
23	What issues do you see the church facing in the next five years?	
24	Share any questions or concerns regarding the ordination/installation vows you will take as a part of this process.	

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Key Information in the EPC Book of Order

Regarding the Role of Ruling Elders



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Basic Principle: Presbyterian Governance is by the *Elders*

- Chosen by the Congregation, but representing the Mind of Christ
- Ordained for Life
- Responsible to Govern
 - The Particular Congregation
 - The Presbytery
 - The General Assembly

The Details:

- The Marks of the True Church (BoG 1-3)
 - The Word rightly proclaimed
 - The Sacraments properly observed
 - Scriptural Discipline consistently practiced
 - Fellowship lovingly maintained
- The Purpose of the Church, *The Gathering and Growing of the Saints* (BoG 1-3 and 4-3)
- The Responsibility of Order and Authority of Jurisdiction (BoG 3-2 and 9-10)
- The Rights of the Session and the Local Church
 - Guaranteed Rights (BoG 6-1 through 6-8)
 - Original Jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving members of a local church (BoG 16-2)
- The Duties of the Session (BoG 18-3)
- The Rights of the Presbytery
 - Organize, Dissolve, Dismiss, or Receive a Particular Church (BoG 5-1)
 - Approve the Teaching Elders called by a Particular Church (BoG 10-8)
 - Care of the Candidates for Ministry (BoG 11-2)
 - Examine and Install Teaching Elders (BoG 12-2 through 12-5, 13-1A, 13-2 through 13-6)
 - Dissolve a Pastoral relationship with a church (BoG 14-1)
 - Original Jurisdiction over every disciplinary case involving ministers in the presbytery (BoG 16-2)
- The Duties of the Presbytery
 - The entire body (BoG 19-1, 19-4))
 - Its Ministerial Committee (BoG 21-2)

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Job Description

ELDER / MEMBER OF SESSION



OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY

The Bible identifies the responsibilities for elders in the life of any church to include

- Being shepherds and overseers of the flock (Acts 20:17-38)
- Providing effective leadership over the affairs of the church, including preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- Overseeing and managing God's household (Titus 1:7)
- Shepherding of God's flock, watching over them, and leading by example (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:14).

The EPC Book of Order (BoO) identifies the role of an elder to watch over the spiritual welfare of the congregation, to represent the mind of Christ, and to be a life model for congregation (BoO 9-8). Elders fulfill these responsibilities by serving as an ongoing part of the part of the leadership community of the church. When called by the congregation, ruling elders may also serve in an active role on the Session.

Christ's law of love is incumbent upon each Christian, but shall be discharged by all elders as an official duty, regardless of whether they are serving on the Session or not - to serve, proclaim, and minister in the name of Christ as under-shepherds. The elders' Responsibility of Order includes especially the sharing of the gospel, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and otherwise exhibiting to the world the fruit of the Spirit (BoO3-2)

The Authority of Jurisdiction is the authority to rule and is exercised jointly in the Session. Elders have no specific authority to rule separate from the joint decisions by the Session. The Authority of Jurisdiction is always to be exercised in accordance with Scripture, the Confession and Catechisms, and the Book of Order. The exercise of such authority shall always reflect the essential unity of the Church (BoO 3-3).

RULING ELDER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Book of Order identifies the following specific responsibilities of a Ruling Elder in G9-10, whether an Inactive Ruling Elder or Active Ruling Elder on active service on Session (Session Elder):

- Study and learn the Word, teach the Word
- Be an undershepherd – visit the sick, bereaved, lonely, aged, shut-in, all those with pastoral need
- Develop the spiritual life of children
- Connect with inactive members
- Encourage new members in their spiritual development
- Show care for the congregation
- Watch for moral failure – warn, admonish, reclaim, discipline

(continued)

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Elder Job Description (continued)

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QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

The following qualifications of an elder are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:

- Above reproach, blameless
- Faithful to his/her spouse
- Temperate, not overbearing
- Self-controlled, not quick-tempered
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Able to teach
- Not given to drunkenness
- Not a lover of money or given to pursuing dishonest gain
- Manages his/her family well in a manner that is worthy of full respect, with obedient children who believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient
- Not a recent convert
- Good reputation with outsiders
- Not violent
- Loves what is good
- Upright
- Holy
- Disciplined
- Committed to God's Word, holds firmly to sound doctrine, able to refute those who oppose God's Word

SESSION AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The EPC Book of Order (G18-1) specifies that the entire life of the local church is under the oversight and supervision of the Session. The Session is called to establish its own rules of governance and oversee/supervise the life of the church (BoO 16-10). BoO G18-3 identifies the following specific authority and responsibilities of Session, which is made up of Active Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders:

- Oversee the time and place of worship, special services, music, special offerings, and the sacraments without infringing on the responsibility of the Pastor as set forth in the Book of Order
- Organize itself within the bounds of the EPC Constitution and lawful acts of the higher Church Courts for the advancement of the gospel and mission of the local congregation
- Initiate the ministry of evangelism

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Elder Job Description



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SESSION AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES (continued)

- Oversee the discipleship ministries of the church, leading members to maturity in Christ
- Monitor the spiritual conduct of members
- Make baptism a priority and provide instruction on baptism
- Receive members and manage membership
- Establish a budget
- Oversee educational programs
- Oversee the work of the Deacons
- Train and examine those elected to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon
- Establish policy regarding use of the facilities
- Provide worship leadership when there is no Pastor
- Advance the mission and ministry of the church
- Order special offerings, days of prayer, days of fasting, days of worship, or other matters that benefit the spiritual life of the congregation
- Do whatever is necessary for the spread of the gospel, edification of members, the well-being of the congregation, the advancement of the kingdom, and the growth in grace of all.

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Job Description

DEACON



OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY

The EPC Book of Order (BoO) identifies the office of Deacon as one of compassion, concern for needs, and of serving others. Therefore, the first duty of the Deacon is sympathy and service. Historically, this office has been given the duty of being the Church's instrument for the ministry of compassion (G9-12).

According to Scripture, those who bear the office of Deacon should be mature believers, led by the Holy Spirit, who exhibit a manner of life that conforms to the biblical description of an officer in Christ's Church (G9-13).

Since the Board of Deacons is not a court of the Church, and since it is under the authority of the Session, the Session may assign special duties appropriate to that office. Such duties may include the care, maintenance, and preparation of the church and its facilities (G9-14).

QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON

The following qualifications of a deacon are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:

- Dignified
- Not double-tongued
- Not addicted
- Not greedy for dishonest gain
- Sound in faith and life
- Blameless
- Godly spouse
- Manage children and household well

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System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

A. The Bible

WCF – Chapter 1
SC – 1-3
E

What is the Bible?

Who wrote the Bible?

What do we mean by the “inspired” word of God?

What does the Bible teach us?

What is the rule of interpreting Scripture?

What authority does the Bible have for us?

Officer Training Manual

System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

B. God

WCF – 2, 3, 5
SC – 4-9, 11
E - 1

Who is God?

How many Gods are there?

How would you describe the Trinity?

What do we mean by these phrases?

Sovereignty of God

Predestination

Providential care

Officer Training Manual

System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
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C. **Mankind**

WCF – 4, 6

SC – 10, 12-20, 83, 84

How were we created?

Explain these concepts:

The image of God

Original sin

Total depravity

Officer Training Manual

System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

D. God's dealing with mankind

WCF – Chapters 7-20, 34

E – 2, 3, 4

SC – 21-36, 39-42, 85-90

What is a covenant?

Explain the Covenant of Works and of Grace

Which are we now under?

Who is the mediator of the Covenant of Grace?

What was his work as mediator?

What did He accomplish upon the cross?

Who is Jesus Christ?

(continued)

Officer Training Manual

System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

D. God’s dealing with mankind (continued)

How is a person saved?

What is Grace?

What is Faith?

What is Repentance?

How are we justified?

Who is The Holy Spirit? What is His work? (WCF – 34)

What is meant by the phrase “the perseverance of the saints”?

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System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

E. The Church

WCF – Chapter 25 & 35
BOG 1 & 6

What is the Church?

Who is its head?

What is the work of the church?

Who are the members of the church?

What is the difference between the visible Church and invisible Church?

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System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

F. The Sacraments

WCF - Chapters 27, 28, 29
SC – 91-97
BOW – Chapter 3

What is a Sacrament? What are the Sacraments?

What is Baptism? Who may be baptized?

What is the Lord's Supper?

What are the Session's responsibilities with respect to the Sacraments?

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System of Doctrine



Resource Material: The Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Book of Order and the Essentials

Abbreviations: WCF – Westminster Confession of Faith
SC – Shorter Catechism Questions
BoG – Book of Government
E – Essentials
BoW – Book of Worship

G. Judgment and the Life to Come

WCF – Chapters 32-33

SC – 37, 38

E – 6

What happens to a believer at death?

What do we mean by eternal life?

Is Christ coming again?

Will there be a final judgment?

What do we mean by “The Resurrection?”

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The Polity of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

A. The Book of Government

Chapter 2

- a. What are the courts of the church?

- b. What does the word “Presbyterian” mean?

- c. Explain the concept of “Review and Control.”

Chapter 3

- a. What is the nature of the authority Christ has given to the church?

Chapter 4

- a. What is the first duty of the church?

- b. What are some of the other duties?

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

A. The Book of Government

Chapter 6

- a. What are some of the rights reserved to a particular church?

Chapter 7

- a. Who may call meetings of congregation?
- b. Who is the moderator and who is the clerk of congregational meetings?
- c. Does the moderator have a vote?

Chapter 8

- a. What is the responsibility of the Session with respect to receiving members?
- b. What three ways can a person join a Presbyterian church?
- c. Explain what the Inactive roll is, and what is the session's responsibility with respect to inactive members?
- d. What is the session's annual responsibility with respect to the membership rolls?

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

A. The Book of Government

Chapter 9

- a. What are the offices of the church?
- b. What is the nature of church office?
- c. What are the qualifications for the office of Teaching Elder?
- d. What are some of the callings included in the call to the office of Teaching Elder?
- e. What are the qualifications for the office of Ruling Elder?
- f. What are some of the callings included in the office of Ruling Elder?
- g. What are the qualifications for the office of Deacon?
- h. What are some of the callings included in the office of Deacon?

Chapter 10

- a. Who calls people to office in the church, and how is that call confirmed?

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

A. The Book of Government

Chapter 11

- a. Briefly describe the preparation necessary for one called to the office of Teaching Elder.

- b. Briefly describe the preparation necessary for one called to the offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon.

Chapter 13

- a. What does the act of ordination signify?

- b. Who is responsible for the ordination of Ruling Elders and Deacons?

- c. Who is responsible for ordaining Teaching Elders?

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

A. The Book of Government

Chapter 16

- a. What is the area of jurisdiction for church courts?

- b. Briefly describe the areas of responsibility for each of the 4 organizational units of the church?

Chapter 17

- a. What are the ordinary duties of the Board of Deacons?

Chapter 18

- a. What are the ordinary duties of the Session?

Chapter 19

- a. What are the ordinary duties of the Presbytery?

Chapter 20

- a. What are the ordinary duties of the General Assembly?

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

B. The Book of Discipline

Chapter 1

- a. What is the nature of church discipline?

- b. Who are the rightful subjects of church discipline?

- c. What is the desired end of church discipline?

- d. What is the basis and authority for church discipline?

Chapter 4

- a. What is the concept of “Original Jurisdiction”?

Chapter 5

- a. What offenses are the proper objects of church discipline?

Chapter 11

- a. What are the types of disciplinary sanctions?

Chapter 13

- a. Briefly describe the rights of appeal.

EPC Officer Training

The Government of the Church



Resource Material: The Book of Order

C. The Book of Worship

Chapter 1

- a. What is man's chief end?
- b. Define "worship".

Chapter 2

- a. Who defines what is acceptable in worship?
- b. What are some of the elements of worship?
- c. Who is responsible for determining the order of worship that a particular church follows?
- d. Who are the participants in worship and how should that participation be characterized?
- e. What part does the Bible play in worship?
- f. What part does music play in worship?
- g. What part does prayer play in worship?
- h. What part do offerings play in worship?