



## Resources on Congregational Vitality

### ***The Book of Confessions***

#### The Confession of 1967, 9.35–37

Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

The church gathers to praise God, to hear [God's] word for [humankind], to baptize and to join in the Lord's Supper, to pray for and present the world to [God] in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strength, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, to be tested, renewed, and reformed, and to speak and act in the world's affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.

The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission to the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity.

#### Confession of Belhar, 10.3–4

We believe

- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another;
- that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain;
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted;
- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways;
  - in that we love one another;
  - that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another;
  - that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another;
  - that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind;

- have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope;
- together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ;
- together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity;
- together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ;
- that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another;
- that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;
- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God;
- that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;
- which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;
- which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.

#### A Brief Statement of Faith, 11.4

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,  
sets us free to accept ourselves  
and to love God and neighbor,  
and binds us together with all believers  
in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles  
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,

engages us through the Word proclaimed,  
claims us in the waters of baptism,  
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,  
and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world  
the Spirit gives us courage  
to pray without ceasing,  
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
and to live holy and joyful lives,  
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

### **The Directory for Worship**

In Christian worship Jesus Christ is truly present and active among us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. Wherever the Scriptures are read and proclaimed and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are celebrated, the Church bears witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word, and proclaims the mystery of faith. Through these means of grace, God imparts and sustains our faith, orders our common life, and transforms the world. Through these same acts of worship, we share in the life of the Spirit, are united to Jesus Christ, and give glory to God.

God's gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the Church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church flows from Baptism, is nourished at Lord's Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all. In the same way, the Church's ministry emerges from the font, arises from the table, and takes its



# MATTHEW 25

shape from the Word of the Lord. Therefore the worship of the triune God is the center of our common life and our primary way of witness to the faith, hope, and love we have in Jesus Christ.

To be a Christian is to worship Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To be a member of Christ's body, the Church, is to share through Word and Sacrament in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (*Book of Order* W-1.0106, W-1.0107).

### ***The Book of Common Worship (WJK, 2018)***

Service of Ordination and Installation	460
Culto de Ordenación e Instalación	479
Commissioning a Ruling Elder to Pastoral Service	494
Installation of Council Leaders and Staff	498
Scripture Readings	502
Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs	503
A Litany of Gifts	503
The Calling of the Church	504
Prayers for Various Occasions	508
Commissioning to Service	516
Conclusion of Service	525
Constituting a Congregation	535
Uniting Congregations by a Presbytery	547
Vacating a Church Building	550
Dissolving a Congregation	554
Additional Texts	556
Dedication of a Church Building	655
Dedication of a Place for Sacred Use	663

### ***Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal (WJK, 2013)***

Go to the World!	295
Go in Grace and Make Disciples	296
In Christ Called to Baptize	297
Lord, You Give the Great Commission	298
Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)	301
When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace	302
Come Sing, O Church, in Joy!	305
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	306
Come, Great God of All the Ages	309
Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather	311
Men of Faith, Rise Up and Sing (Shout to the North)	319
The Church of Christ in Every Age	320
The Church's One Foundation	321

For All the Saints	326
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation	394
Here in This Place (Gather Us In)	401
What Is This Place	404
Listen, God Is Calling	456
Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters	490
Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ	526
Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether	529
You Are Holy	596
Will You Come and Follow Me (The Summons)	726
Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (The Servant Song)	727
We All Are One in Mission	733
From the Nets of Our Labor (We Will Rise Up and Follow)	751
Together We Serve	767