

Church Leadership Examination Questions and Answers

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Deacon Candidate

Section A

A1. Why do you believe you are saved?

Because God the Holy Spirit Himself testifies with my spirit that I am a child of God (Rom 8:16). After I came to repentance of my sins and belief in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, expressing my complete and total faith in Him alone for my salvation, and professed and confessed that fact publicly, even following Him in baptism, I changed. Inside me is an irresistible life and force (God Himself) that shapes and directs my whole being in the Way of God. And by God's grace I continue to be shaped more like Christ.

A2. How did God bring you to salvation?

God in His infinite mercy and grace, and the witness of His Spirit with mine by His Word and the words of His servants, did open my mind to my utter state of rebellion, sin, and depravity, and the damnation as punishment therein. And by that same Word, servants' words, and witness He instructed me in the path of salvation, that if I believed in the One He sent, Jesus the Christ, I would be saved from His wrath to come and for eternal life with Him. It was my great pleasure that my earthly father guided me in much of this transaction. God's love and His message pierced my heart and only Christ had the words of salvation and life to save me. Luke 2:35; Acts 2:37; John 6:68.

A3. What is the role of grace in your life and ministry?

Grace can have several meanings, but to me it is simply God's unmerited favor shown to us, an undeserved gift of love. God gives to us things such as salvation, peace, and joy as well as trials and tribulations, one, for His glory, and two, for our ultimate happiness, fulfillment, and benefit. Grace is God's "face shining upon us," His loving gifts lavished upon the very undeserving. Luke 6:35b says, "He Himself is kind to the ungrateful and evil man." Rom 5:8 tells us, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Everything works itself out through God's grace. It is my goal in ministry to reflect that complete kindness and love to others and most importantly introduce them to or deepen their relationship with the One who is truly full of grace, Jesus.

A4. Do you have assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Why?

Yes. See answer to question A1. Also, I am persuaded by God's Spirit within me, by the historical and scientific evidence, by the testimonies of great saints of old, starting with the Apostles, many of whom were killed for their beliefs, by many men and women that I trust implicitly, and by the consistent life-changing effect which it brings, that the Bible is the Word of God. Given that basis, the Word of God tells me in no uncertain terms that as a believer "you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). And I have the ultimate promise of Jesus Himself in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out." And the will of God is that all who come to Jesus and believe will not ever be lost but will be raised on the last day (John 6:39). By conclusion, I came to Jesus, I must have been given by the Father; therefore, as one of the elect, I am happily assured.

A5. Are you attempting to please God in every aspect of your life?

Yes, I have, do, and will continue to surrender every aspect of my life to the Lordship of Christ for His pleasure and my happiness.

A5-1. Are there any skeletons in your closet, which if revealed would bring dishonor unto the Lord Jesus Christ and the office of elder or deacon?

Nope. Closet is cleaned out. All skeletons out in the front yard for all to see that the power of God overcomes the Prince of this World and the corrupt flesh. Nothing is hidden; all my known sins are confessed and dealt with. I try to live a very transparent and well-examined life.

A5-2. Are you currently struggling with a particular sin that you cannot seem to remove from your life?

None in particular. I continuously struggle with sin and the "old man" and the temptations common unto man. I am very much like Paul in Rom 7, but the grace of God has made most of my sinful desires impotent, and I know I am not their slave. I am mindful of areas where I am weak, particularly my intensity and passion gets out in front of my better judgment (control). And I do have to remind myself that, "the anger [sometimes passion] of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

A6. Discuss your efforts to draw closer to Jesus?

It is my heart's desire to draw closer to Christ; and I make that my goal and practice and purpose of life.

A6-1. Do you pray daily? Yes, specifically morning and evening and at meals, but frequently for short periods throughout the day. I am very thankful to God and I like to let Him know.

A6-2. Do you read the Bible daily? Yes, or material that helps me understand God and His Word.

A6-3. Do you attend the church services regularly? Yes as often as I can get in the doors. I love attending church and Bible studies and the fellowship of and with Christian brothers and sisters.

A6-4. Are you an example to others of what a Christian should be like? Yes, I am a man of integrity in front of and behind the scenes who strives to grow closer to Christ and to be obedient to His calling on my life in word, thought, and deed.

A6-5. Are you attempting to win others to Christ? Yes, I attempt to use the practices learned in EE and elsewhere to lead others to Christ. I also regularly pray for friends and family that they would know the Lord. I ponder, scheme, and dream of better ways to share, often.

A6-6. List any way in which you fail to meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Only two areas of concern seem apparent: 1) Level to which I "aspire" to the office; 2) Spiritual state of my children. In address to (1), I do not aspire or desire the position of Elder or Deacon as a position of vanity. God has given me skills, abilities, temperament, and desires. I think the office of Elder or Deacon is a great way and place for me to serve Christ with those gifts. As God has led me to this place, if approved, I am happy and anxious to serve.

As for item (2), I believe we have raised our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. I have personally taught them of the love of Christ. They, early in their lives, responded positively to the gospel, accepting and believing Christ as their savior. They were both baptized as a symbol and affirmation of that belief. They are respectful and civil young adults today; however, they do not practice the Christian faith, and my son has even expressed doubt about God's existence. Are they in the faith? I don't know for certain. I do believe in a wonderfully merciful and loving God who is not through with them yet.

A6-7. Discuss your efforts to build the faith of your wife, children and grandchildren (as applicable). Faith in Christ is, has, and always will be the centerpiece of our home – Christ is Lord. Our life revolves around that fact. We have worshipped together, studied together, prayed together, discussed, meditated, pondered it all together for the whole of our family's existence. I had the privilege of helping lead my wife to Christ and leading my children in the path of Christ. I have tried to arrange our family and living and means so that my wife can serve full time in the ministry as a teacher at Faith Christian School. We strongly support Christian education. Both our children received more than 90% of their schooling at Christian schools. Following the Lord Jesus is our life and love. It is our (my wife and my) plan to transition to more ministry activities as our kids get through college and need less financial support. Speaking of financial support, that has always been at the forefront of our devotion. I personally have tried to make as much money as I can so I can fund others in the ministry of the Lord. I guess to summarize, my efforts have been through example, teaching, devotion, education, and faithfulness in the things of Christ. I just don't want to waste my life!

A7. Are you recognized by the congregation as one who has spiritual leadership and maturity?

I assume. They keep nominating me for leadership roles wherever I serve. It has been my history.

A7-1. What leadership roles do you fill at the present?

Teach, serve where needed or desired, support several para church organizations.

A7-2. Have the elders confirmed you leadership abilities?

Yes, I believe.

A7-3. What weaknesses have been observed? Are you working to correct them?

None have been brought to my attention. But if they are, I will humbly examine myself and pray for God's strength and wisdom to correct them and remain accountable to do so.

Section B

B1. The inspiration, authority, trustworthiness and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

God, through His Holy Spirit, inspired and oversaw men to record historical events, poetry and songs, prophecies, and teachings in righteousness throughout man's existence. God inspires [more correctly illumines] people all the time in many ways of word, song, deed, and goal even today. God also inspired men to gather these writings (66 books) to form a sufficient and complete revelation of the God/man relationship so as to create a foundation of known truth for belief (Eph. 2:20).

Inspiration by God allows for complete and accurate communication of His thoughts while not eliminating the personality of the human author. The words communicate exactly God's desired message. Because of this inspiration, the Scriptures are authoritative, trustworthy, and without error as our guide in faith and life. I do believe that the original Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament are the accurate standards of reference. Translation to other languages is sometimes difficult. It is my opinion that the Holy Scriptures are so beautifully and perfectly written, compiled and preserved, that you can bank your eternal destiny on these words. Scripture is the only objective revelation of truth that we currently have. Even though God the Holy Spirit teaches us, He will not teach us contradiction to what He has already given.

B2. The Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the belief (fact) that there is but one God; however, He is comprised and manifested (made known) as three distinct persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The word "Trinity" does not exist in Scripture, but the concept is clearly taught throughout. God is one: Deut 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." God is plural: Gen 1:26a, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." God is Father, Son, Spirit – Matt 3:16-17; Matt 28:19, 1 Thes 1:1-5. Based on the teachings of Scripture, all 3 "persons" of God have the same God-like attributes however, there appears to be an order of deference: the Son submits His will to the Father and the Spirit goes forth from the Father and Son. Based on the soundness of Scripture and my understanding thereof, I believe this is fact (the triune nature of God).

B3. The doctrine of Election.

What I believe about "election" is what I think the Scriptures teach and that is that God, before the foundation of the world (before the physical universe came into being), through His infinite wisdom and unknowable counsel chose or purposed, and created, those who would be saved and those who would not. The fact of the matter is that God is the impetus or prime mover in the existence of the universe, in our existence, and in our future lives. God's choosing does not negate man's responsibility in the matter; however, it is a foregone conclusion – God's specific will. From the human perspective, it looks as if we chose God. The Scriptures speak on and teach these concepts clearly throughout: Deut 29:29; Isa 40:13-14; John 1; Rom 9; Rom 11:34; Acts 2:23, Acts 17:25-26; Eph 1; 1 Cor 2:16. I have pondered and meditated on this doctrine for a long time. I believe God's sovereignty in the matter is left to us as an area in which we must trust God completely.

B4. The Sovereignty of God.

I believe what I think the Scriptures teach about God's sovereignty and that is that all the reality that we could possibly know, and all the realities we don't know, all belong to God for Him to do with as He pleases. Also, absolutely nothing happens in all these realities without God's absolute expressed permissive or directive will. Gen 6:17; Gen 18:10-14; Job 1; Dan 1:2; Acts 17:25; Acts 2; Rom 8 & 9 all declare God's complete and unchallengeable rule. However, in all his sovereign dealings, God never acts outside his character of being perfectly holy, just, merciful, and loving. God is in complete control of everything, working them together for His glory and our good.

B5. The doctrine of man's creation and nature. (Discuss your view of the length of days of Genesis 1).

I believe what I think the Bible teaches about the creation of man and the universe and that is that in the beginning, before anything else, God created the heavens and the earth from nothing, ex nihilo, in 6 literal 24-hour days (I believe the earth is relatively young); and it was good. The description of God's creative activities is captured in Gen 1 and afterwards echoed in Exo 20:11, Psa 33:6, Psa 146:6, Mark 10:6, John 1:3,10, Acts 4:24; 14:15, 1 Cor 8:6, Eph 3:9, Col 1:16, Heb 11:3, Rev 4:11, Rev 10:6, and Rev 14:7 to name just a few. The absolute amazing nature of this creative event is beyond human reasoning or descriptive capabilities. God specifically made man as his highest physical creation in His own image, i.e., imbued with certain qualities of his Maker. Mankind was designed for fellowship with God and for rulership (dominion) over all God's physical creation. Ex 20:11, Ps 146:6, Mar 10:6, John 1:3, Acts 4:24, Acts 17:24, Eph 3:9, Col 1:16, 1 Cor 8:6.

B6. The doctrine of sin.

Sin is the rebellion of man against God's person and His ordinances. The first sin or original sin ["original sin" is more correctly defined in SC Q.18] was committed by our original parents, Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God and ate from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve suffered the prescribed consequences for their disobedience and as mankind's representatives passed on, or imparted, the guilt of that original sin and inherent sin nature to the rest of all humanity which followed. As humans, we are born guilty of Adam's sin and by nature are rebellious and deserve the same punishment. Our hearts are desperately wicked, our works are as filthy rags, and not one of us left in our "natural" state would or could seek God and righteousness.

B7. God's covenant with man.

This idea of "God's covenant with man" is very strange to me. It seems to me based on my understanding of the word covenant (solemn agreement or promise of one party to others or between parties often inaugurated with blood) that every time God makes a statement concerning what He will and/or will not do, He is making a covenant. The word covenant is used 295 times in my NASB. The Bible is divided into two covenants or testaments, the old and the new. There are covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David (often representing Messiah). *But*, based on what I read in Galatians 3, there does seem to be one overarching covenant of God with man under which the other covenants provide administration. God chose Abraham (Gen 18:19, Neh 9:7) and made an everlasting covenant to be his God and the God of his descendants (Gen 17:7). And that covenant stemmed from God's covenant with Adam and Eve in Gen 3:15 to redeem mankind through Eve's seed. And God promised Abraham to bless him and his descendants and those that blessed him throughout all nations through his seed, namely one Jesus the Christ. (Gal 3:16, Gen 22:18, Acts 3:25). God's overarching covenant is stated in Jer 31:31-34 and reiterated in Eze 11:19-20 and Heb 8:17-13. It was consummated and manifested at the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ ("It is finished.") God promised that He would put His spirit in His chosen ones (the elect) and that He would never leave us or forsake us and all that came to Christ He would in no wise cast out. (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6, John 6:37, Matt 28:20, Jos 1:5,9) The way man "cashes in" on this promise is by godly repentance and saving faith in Christ: "hearing with faith" (Gal 3:2,5). After God has opened our minds, we must exercise the saving faith we've been given: believing the facts or evidence before us, yielding to Christ as Lord of our lives, obeying His commandments, trusting in Christ and His promises, and living a life of commitment to Him. God steadfastly keeps His promises!

B8. The Person and work of Jesus Christ.

B8-1. Discuss the two natures of Christ.

B8-2. Discuss Christ's role as Prophet, Priest and King.

Wow! That's a whopper. I believe about Jesus what I think the Scriptures teach and that is that He was [is] God manifested in Human flesh: completely God (with all the divine attributes) and completely man (with all the human characteristics and frailties except the sin nature). He had to be God in order to withstand the wrath of God and be raised from the dead and completely and sufficiently pay the required punishment (price, atonement) for mankind's sin. He had to be man in order to be our (mankind's) representative in the punishment as the perfect lamb. His virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection from the dead made fellowship with God available to those who *had* and would believe. He was and is the savior of the world.

Christ's coming to this world brought back to us the true prophet, priest, and king that mankind had distorted. True prophet in that He was the "truth revealer." He revealed to us the truth about our reality in all respect to our life with God. Jesus said He was the way, the truth, and the life. Scriptures say He was full of truth and that truth itself was realized through Him (John 14:1). And that we would know the truth and it would free us. He was [is] the clear exposition of what really is. Christ also brought back the true priest and priesthood and inaugurated our priesthood. As the true priest, He completely represents us before God, a perfect mediator, and also offered the perfect sacrifice once and for all time, Himself as the perfect lamb, to God as payment for our sins, making those who would and had believed, righteous before Him. Jesus is also our perfect king in that He, having offered the one sacrifice, sat down at the right hand of God, the position of rulership until such time as God would completely eliminate His enemies (Heb 1, 10; 1 Cor 15:25). Jesus reigns and continues to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. All things are subject to his rule: all authority in heaven and earth has been give to Him. Also, we saints as His children, will rule the kingdom of God with Him forever (Dan 7:18; Matt 19:28; 1 Co 6:2). Jesus fulfills perfectly the roles of prophet, priest, and king that mankind had perverted.

B9. Justification by grace through faith.

Rom. 3:21-26; Rom 4:4-5; Rom 5:1-2; Gal 2:16; Jam 2:21,25; 1 John 4:10.

As we stand before God in our natural (1 Cor 2:14) state, we are vile, rebellious, hellions in direct opposition to the kingdom of God. We are sinners: guilty of the original sin (passed down through Adam) and guilty of all our own

sins, past, present, and future, and guilty of our collective sins as a race/species/nation. Left to our own, we would continue in this state and be justly condemned from the kingdom and to eternal torment. But God... in His infinite mercy and love, under no obligation, made a way for us to be with Him by paying the horrific, required price for our sins with His own blood. God freely and happily pardons our sins, justifies us, makes us not guilty, credits the righteousness of Christ to us and sees us as righteous when we by saving faith receive and rest on Christ alone. Our faith, which is also a gift, is an act of our will, an instrument, to believe (understand, yield, obey, respond, confess) in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as payment for my sins. You are justified by God once. You are made by God “just as if” your sins never were or will be – they are separated as far as the east is from the west.

B10. The necessity of sanctification and good works.

B10-1. What is the role of grace in sanctification?

B10-2. What is the role of the Ten Commandments in sanctification?

“Necessity” makes it sound so obligatory, like a requirement for some work on our part; it’s more like unavoidable. God the Holy Spirit lives within us (1 Cor 6:19; Jam 4:5). We are made new creations by God. Our desires, our urges, our dreams come from that nursery of holiness. Unless we work really hard at quenching the Holy movements of God, sanctification and good works are unavoidable. As believers, we are commanded to grow in our likeness to Christ and in grace (Phil 2:12; 1 Pet 2:2-5; 2 Pet 3:8; Eph 4:15). We are provided good works to walk in, to do (Eph 2:10). And, miracle of all we are supernaturally aided in our motivations and abilities to do them (Phil 2:12-13). And, we are God’s craftsmanship and He will see the job completed (Phil 1:6). So, God saves us, puts the desire in us to be like Christ, prepares works in advance for us, and helps us fulfill these tasks through His very own will and works. I can’t see where grace isn’t in every aspect of sanctification. In fact, it’s all grace. That is one of the beauties of the Christian faith, we are more and more able to die to our old selves and live for and to our Lord Christ and become more like Him. The Ten Commandments and the Bible are our standard by which God tells us how we should live and be living. They are our ever-present reminders and guideposts in the vast confusion of relativistic moral standards. They are our definitive bearings on the good works which we are to be about.

B11. Explain each point of the five points of Calvinism.

The five points of Calvinism are most often recalled by the acrostic TULIP: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. The five points of Calvinism or Doctrines of Grace describe what the Bible teaches us about God’s great act of gracious salvation. We, man, are totally depraved in that we are incapable and unwilling to do anything but rebel against God. Our hearts are deceptive. Our minds are continuously evil. We are spiritually dead. God in His amazing grace (that is unconditional) chose, before the foundation of the world, to save some of mankind through His atonement in Christ. The ones that will be saved were chosen by Him not based on any conditions whatsoever – only God’s secret counsel (Deut 29:29). At the right time, the atonement of Christ’s sacrifice will be applied to each of these chosen ones by God the Holy Spirit and for them only does the atonement apply. Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient for all but will only apply to those who will be saved. God through His Spirit as well as various methods and agents, effectively calls His elect to saving faith outwardly and inwardly. The love of God, His fellowship, the fellowship of other believers, eternal life, the whole package and the influence of God the Holy Spirit is too wonderful to possibly resist. Once we are brought into the family of God, God promises that He will not lose any of us nor can any be snatched away. The elect stay that way: they persevere and they are preserved.

B12. The person and work of the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit, third person of the Godhead, is coequal in every respect with God the Father and God the Son. There is a deference in the relationship of the Trinity as discussed in B2. God the Holy Spirit’s work is manifested in two ways. First, He is sent forth by the Father and Son to the elect to be our “Helper” in all things spiritual and true. Initially He opens our minds to our state of rebellion against God and guides us lovingly to Christ by divers methods (John 3; John 7:29; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Also, once saved, He helps us by teaching us the things of God and reminding us of the truths we’ve been given in His Word (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:10). And what it is to worship and even pray in truth (John 4:23-24, Rom 8:26). God the Holy Spirit dwells within us and guides us in the paths of righteousness (Rom 14:17; Tit 3:5-6) and teaches us to glorify Christ (John 16:13). He also teaches us and enables us in the use of gifts provided by Him (Luke 11:13; 1 Cor 12:27): gifts provided to glorify God and edify us His people. God the Holy Spirit is our teacher and helper in righteousness and empowers us to live that righteousness – a “Helper” all around. He is so intimate with us, we even grieve Him and quench Him when we walk away. The second manifestation of God the Holy Spirit’s work is that of guarantor or our seal (affirmation) for adoption and inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Rom 8:16; Eph 1:14). The Scripture teaches that God graciously gave us His Spirit as His pledge of our redemption. When God the Holy Spirit bares witness with our spirits we know we are children of God – a gracious comfort (Rom 8:16).

B13. Worship and the Sabbath.

Worship is the outpouring of adoration from a believer or group of believers, whether in private or public, with the purpose of communing, praising, and glorifying God. Worship of God is prescribed and described in the Word of God, and we are to follow these guidelines for our worship. Corporately, Christians are to gather together and worship God regularly – one day in seven. This meeting was done on Saturday until the resurrection of Christ, and on Sunday thereafter. Worship both public and private is to be done in an orderly manner (1 Cor 14:40) and with reverence containing the activities we see described in Scripture: proper prayer, singing, preaching, teaching, reading of God’s Word, and administration of the sacraments.

Concerning the Sabbath, God established the Sabbath with His pattern in creation, that one day in seven man shall rest. He reinforced that requirement by making it the fourth commandment given to the OT church. To rest on the Sabbath is an outward sign that we have entered into God’s rest, that we trust in Him to provide for all our needs – for our life. Activities on the Sabbath are to be centered around worship, acts of mercy, and ministry as well as rest and ceasing to strive for one’s livelihood. We are to make this a priority in our lives; observing the Sabbath is a command from God as well as for our benefit. And we remember that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, so observing it does not become a “work” for salvation – legalism. As stated the Sabbath was originally established on the last day of the week, Saturday. I believe this Sabbath (as with many things under the administration of the law) was a symbol of the true Sabbath to come in Christ, when we truly enter into the rest of God. By the leading of God the Holy Spirit and the authority of the church and apostles, the Sabbath was established for the New Testament church to be on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the day of our Lord’s resurrection. We and all the saints now truly enter into God’s rest – it is finished.

B14. The doctrine of the Church.

B14-1. Who are the ministers of the Church and why is this important?

B14-2. What are the “means of grace”? Discuss each.

The church is people. Specifically people whom God has chosen to save by His grace through their faith in Him and His promises (saving faith) – God’s people, God’s household. The church is seen two ways: the invisible and the visible church. The invisible church is all who have or will ever be saved. And the visible church is that group of believers and their children alive on earth today (Acts 2:39; Gen 17:7). The church is described as the body of Christ where in He is the head; the bride of Christ – a love gift of the Father; the temple of Christ – the dwelling of Christ’s Spirit; the Kingdom of Christ – His people, property, and power; the pillar and foundation of truth. Christ, in whom all authority rests, established His church, the pillar and support of the truth, on the foundation, the rock, of the apostles and prophets (the Word of God) with Himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Tim 3:15). By this authority and under this authority, the people of God should be about the Great Commission of making disciples through sound proclamation of the Word, true administration of the sacraments, and proper exercise of discipline and examination. As the body of Christ, each of us has a role in this mission; we are all ministers. The word minister is translated most often from the Greek diakonos or diakoneo, which means to serve. All members of the church are ministers of the gospel. “... let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe.” (Heb 12:28) We are equipped by God, His Word, and our leaders for “the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” (Eph 4:12) And Christ knows of our deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance and it makes Him glad (Rev 2:19).

We, the church, as God’s children and the body of Christ, are expected to grow spiritually. Along with the service of and to others to build us up, God has given us aids for our sanctification. The aids are called “means of grace.” The means of grace are special gifts that God has made available to every believer for our spiritual growth. There are four particular means of grace that God has given us: His Word, prayer, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.

Reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God’s Word is one way we grow up in Christ. Communing with God through Jesus with the aid of God the Holy Spirit by way of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and petition draws us nigh unto God. Along with these, the two ordinances instituted by Christ and properly carried on in the church are baptism and communion – there are only two sacraments. These means of grace are particularly sweet because they are also physical signs and seals of the covenant of grace made by God. Baptism, the initiatory rite into the visible church, done once to believers and their children, is a symbol or sign of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ in His sacrifice – the crucifixion of our old self. It is a sign of the change and cleansing from sin that is sealed in our hearts. Baptism is likened to circumcision of the OT as declaring us as God’s covenant children. It aids us in giving us assurance that we belong to God. Baptism does not save. It is not a regenerative activity. Baptism also aids those who witness it many times over the course of a life, hearing the confessions and seeing the cleansing of God applied symbolically to another. (By the way, I think the power of the sign of our death, burial, and future resurrection is missed in the baptism done by sprinkling.) The Lord’s Supper, or communion, is

the other ordinance instituted by Christ. This sacrament we are commanded by Christ to do in remembrance of Him until His return. It is a sign of the death of Christ on the cross where His body was broken and His blood was shed for my transgressions (Isa 53:4,5). As we commune with Christ, who is spiritually present with the ordinary bread and fruit of the vine, we receive the food and drink into our bodies and Christ into our hearts – we are affirmed of the reality of Christ with us (John 6:56; Heb 13:5; Matt 28:20). These means of grace are a beautiful gift from our loving Father to help us in our walk here on earth to grow up into the likeness of Christ (Eph 4:15).

B15. The importance of the Sacraments.

B15-1. Why do we “fence the table”?

B15-2. Why do we baptize babies?

The sacraments, as just discussed, are important because Christ our Lord ordained (Matt 28:19; Luke 22:19) that they be practiced and they are a means of grace as well as physical signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

What is meant by “fencing the table” of the Lord’s Supper is that we strongly remind those present that the Lord’s Supper is for believers only, God’s children. It also means that we warn believers that if they have [known] unconfessed sin in their lives, are living a lie, or are planning their next sin, that they should let the elements pass them by. We do this because the Word of God gravely warns us that if we partake of the Lord’s Supper unworthily, we are guilty of the body and blood of Christ; we commit a great sin against Him, eating and drinking judgment onto ourselves.

We baptize babies because children of believers (God’s chosen ones) have always been parties to the covenant of grace. The initiation into the church in the OT was circumcision. The initiation into the church of the NT, as ordained by Christ, is baptism. As circumcision applied to converts and their children, so does baptism (Col 2:9-14). The baptism of children does not mean they are saved. And, to paraphrase the WCF, the grace promised is truly offered, exhibited [shown], and conferred [given] by God the Holy Spirit according to God’s counsel and His will and His timing.

B16. The end times.

According to God’s Word, just as surely as there was a beginning, there will be an end to this chapter of mankind. At the appropriate time, the author will walk on the stage and the play will be over (C.S. Lewis paraphrased). Jesus the Christ will return to earth in great power and glory seen by all. We are taught in 1 Thes 4:13ff and 1 Cor 15:50ff that Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout and a trumpet call and we will all be caught up together to be with Him and with Him we will forever be. What happens after that has been a point of debate and discussion for years. We know there will be a final judgment and the eternal state of things will be established – new heaven, new earth, always in God’s presence for the believers, eternal separation from God, punishment in Hell for the wicked. I personally am a premillennialist. I don’t think the Scriptures support the order of events nor the generally “rosy” state of affairs presented by the post- or amillennialist views. I am certainly not a preterist.

My personal view about end times is that the study of eschatology is important because God took the time to tell us about them; therefore, I’m going to study and pray and meditate over them so as to grow closer to God and not be fooled by Satan. I do try to keep it all in balance. Some are obsessed with predicting the future. About the future, of this I am sure: I will walk with Christ and trust Him and within a few years or even seconds, we all, one way or another will see Him face to face. Times and epochs are not for us to know. We are to walk by faith imminently ready for our appointment with Christ.

Section C

C. Church Government and Discipline - please write short answers to the following questions.

C1. Who is the head of the Presbyterian Church in America?

Jesus the Christ (I)

C2. Why do we hold to the representative or Presbyterian form of government?

Because we believe it is scriptural. (II, 1-1)

C3. Who are the officers of the Church according to Scripture?

Teaching and ruling elders and deacons (1-4)

C4. How do officers exercise their jurisdiction?

By joint power in courts (1-5).

C5. How do the people exercise their power in the church?
Choosing their officers (3-1)

C6. What is the constitution of the PCA?
Its doctrinal standards set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Book of Church Order (III).

C7. What are non-communicating members of a church?
Children of believers (6-1)

C8. What are communing members of a church?
Those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the communion table (6.2)

C9. Who is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church?
Communing members (6-4)

C10. Can women serve as Teaching or Ruling Elders?
No (7-2, 24-1)

C11. What is the difference in authority of Ruling and Teaching Elders?
None (8-9)

C12. What are the responsibilities of a Ruling Elder?
I think the BCO says is well, succinctly and completely, in Section 8-3: "It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the Church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock."

C13. What are the duties of a Deacon?
And likewise from the BCO Section 9-2 for Deacons: "It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation."

C14. In what do Deacons need the consent of the congregation and approval of the Session?
Matters of special importance affecting the church property (9-2)

C15. What is the relation between the Deacons and the Session?
Deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session (9-2)

C16. How often shall the Deacons meet?
Once per quarter and as requested by the Session (9-4)

C17. What are the courts of the church?
Means of government: Session, Presbyteries, General Assembly (10-1, 2)

C18. Who is the Moderator of the Session?
Pastor (or Teaching Elder) (10-3)

C19. Who composes the Session?
Pastor (or Teaching Elder), Associate Pastors (if applicable), and Ruling Elders (12-1)

C20. What are the duties of the Session?
The church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church (12-5)

C21. Is a Teaching Elder a member of a local church?
No, he's a member of the Presbytery (8-7).

C22. Who calls men to church offices?
God (16).

C23. Who calls a pastor to a particular church?
That particular church (20-1).

C24. Who must consent to pastoral call?
The Presbytery (20-1).

C25. Who must consent to the dissolution of a pastoral relationship?
The Presbytery (23-1).

C26. How are Ruling Elders and Deacons elected?
Upon meeting eligibility and a proper vote of the congregation (24-1-5)

C27. Who presides at a congregational meeting?
The Pastor or an appointee made by the Session (25-4)

C28. Who is entitled to vote at a congregational meeting?
All communing members (25-1)

C29. To whom does the property of a church belong?
Duly elected trustees or corporation officers (25-8).

C30. Can a congregation withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in America and retain its property?
Yes (25-9)

C31. What are the reasons for church discipline?
To instruct and guide the members and promote purity and welfare (27-1)
To glorify God, reclaim the errant, and maintain the purity of the church.

C32. What are the censures of church discipline?
Admonition, suspension of Sacraments, excommunication, suspension from office, and deposition of office (30-1).

C33. Can you answer affirmatively the questions required for ordination? Yes.
C33-a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Yes.
C33-a-i. Have you read the Bible in its entirety? Yes.
C33-a-ii. Are you able to summarize its contents? Yes.
C33-a-iii. Are the Scriptures the final authority for every aspect of your life? Yes, in matters pertaining to faith and life.

C33-b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on

your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has take place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow? Yes.

C33-b-i. Have you read the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms? Yes.

C33-b-ii. Do you disagree with any part of the Confession or Catechisms? No, nothing significant. I am sure there are areas that I don't understand or would prefer different wording or clarification.

C33-c. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of Biblical polity? Yes.

C33-b-i. Have you read The Book of Church Order of the PCA? Not entirely, particular sections only; others briefly skimmed.

C33-b-ii. Are you convinced that the form of government is in agreements with the general principles of Biblical polity? Yes.

C33-d. Do you accept the office of Ruling Elder (or Deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the church of which God has made you an officer? Yes.

C33-e. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord? Yes.

C33-b-i. Will you support the decisions made by the officers and members of Immanuel? Yes.

C33-b-ii. Will you avoid complaining about decisions you disagree with and further will you correct those who do complain? Yes.

C33-f. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church? Yes.

C33-b-i. Will you work with other officers in frank brotherly confidence and cooperation? Yes.

C33-b-ii. Are you in harmony with the goals of the church? Yes.

C33-b-iii. Are you willing, in love, to correct erring brethren? Yes.

Section D

D. Duties of Elders and Deacons

D1. Elders - list the practical duties of an elder in each category.

D1-a. example (I Peter 5:1-5)

Elders are called to oversee and lead by example (servant leaders) as such (in no particular order):

- Work eagerly and voluntarily for the Lord.
- Work not for personal gain.
- Hold up under suffering.
- Revel in God's glory.
- Be subject to and pray for our leaders.
- Be humble toward one another.
- Be blameless in life with sobriety and holiness of life.
- Be of good report within and without the church.
- Rule one's own household well.
- Exercise all those duties to which private Christians are compelled by the law of love.
- Be zealous to evangelize, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, gentle.

D1-b. shepherd (Ezekiel 34)

Elders are to shepherd God's people as such:

- Help provide for their physical needs: healing, delivering, feeding, comforting, visiting, making secure, easing burdens, including and especially with respect to children.
- Guard the flock diligently from corruption of doctrine and morals, wolves seeking their own gain at the cost of the flock.
- Guide and direct the flock to the source of life, Christ, using divers persuasive means.
- Pray for and with God's people under his care.

D1-c. teacher (Titus 1:9)

Elders should be able to teach and expound God's Word and cultivate that skill in the following ways and for the following purposes:

- Exhort sound doctrine to the flock.
- Refute heresies and attackers of the faith.
- Teaching how to correctly handle the Word of Truth.
- Instruct in righteous behavior and lifestyles – right doing.
- Correction of error which leads to unfounded emotions and sinful behaviors.
- Convince one of the truth.

D1-d. ruler (I Tim 5:17)

Elders have oversight of the flock of Christ and are God's provision with gifts for government of the church, and they are commissioned to rule as such by:

- Setting up rulers – ordaining leaders.
- Judging and disciplining the flock.
- Providing for orderly functioning in all areas of God's church.
- Furnishing oversight and direction with prudence, stewardship, and love.
- Administering the sacraments.

D2. Deacons

D2-a. What are the duties and responsibilities of the deacon?

The duties of the deacon are:

- Minister to those in need (all and various needs).
- Develop the desire to minister in the flock.
- Collect and distribute the gifts of the people to the church.
- Provide care of the property of the congregation.
- Submit to the supervision and authority of the session.

D2-b. Why does a deacon have to be of such high moral character? (I Tim 3:8-13)

Deacons must be men of high moral character for the following reasons:

- They hold a specific, special office set forth in Scripture and are thus declared representatives of Christ and His church.
- They are in positions of responsibility with money and property of others and need to be trustworthy.
- They are intimate with people's needs and must hold confidence and trust in these matters.

D2-c. Why is a special office of deacon needed in the church?

The Bible teaches that the office of deacon was instituted by the apostles to assist in the temporal affairs of the church.