

Appendix B Recommendations of Presiding at the LORD's Supper

To: Council of the Maumee Valley Presbytery

From: The Branch of Congregational Life

Re: Policy and Practices for Presiding at the LORD's Supper

Date: January 13, 2017

In November of 2015 the Council asked the Branch of Congregational Life (BCL) to address the quandary surrounding who may preside at the LORD's Supper and where they may do so within the context of the Maumee Valley Presbytery. The issue was addressed at five meetings—four in 2016 and one in 2017. The Scriptures, *The Confessions* and *The Book of Order* were used as a basis for our discussions. We sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit, considered past and current practices and envisioned God's grace moving through the Sacrament in future celebrations. While we did not reach consensus, we remain at peace with one another and put forward to you our recommendations.

There are two streams of thought present in the Branch of Congregational Life as it relates to those who may preside at the LORD's Table.

- 1.) The majority opinion is that *The Book of Order* calls Presbyteries to limit who may preside, unless the Mission of God is in danger of being stifled. The Session of a particular congregation is responsible for authorizing the celebration of the sacrament of the LORD's Supper therefore our recommendation is as follows:
 - a. Teaching elders may preside at the LORD's Supper at the congregations where they serve and at the invitation of any other Session.
 - b. Commissioned Lay Pastors may preside at the LORD's Supper only in the congregations to which they have been commissioned.
 - c. Ruling elders who have completed Session approved training led by a teaching elder or a consultant/educator trained in the Reformed Tradition may preside at the LORD's Supper in that particular congregation only. Sessions who approve such training of Ruling Elders shall report to the Branch of Congregational Life the process by which their Ruling Elders were trained.
 - i. Another option besides training is for the Session to approve a Ruling Elder to use a liturgy verbatim as found in the *Presbyterian Book of Common Worship*.
 - d. Chaplains and Campus Ministers may preside at the LORD's Supper in their particular and unique settings with the approval of the Committee on Ministry.
 - e. Candidates for Teaching Elders may not preside unless previously ordained as a Ruling Elder and approved by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). If so ordained as a Ruling Elder and approved by CPM, they may preside at the LORD's Supper only in the congregations in which they are serving as a candidate and in the congregation of which they are a member.
- 2.) The minority opinion is that *The Book of Order* allows for a much broader interpretation and the faithful witness of hospitality and welcoming within the Beloved Community of Christ would be enhanced by a more open approach. Because the grace received from God via the Sacraments is

not subject to the qualifications of the presider—for indeed who is worthy to preside?!—no harm is done to the Sacrament, and great good may be accomplished in the way of spiritual fellowship across churches. Therefore, the minority recommendation includes the following:

- a. Teaching Elders may preside at the LORD's Supper both in the congregations where they serve and by the invitation of any Session within Maumee Valley Presbytery.
- b. Commissioned Lay Pastors may preside at the LORD's Supper in the congregation where they have been commissioned and by the invitation of any Session within Maumee Valley Presbytery.
- c. Ruling elders who have completed Session approved training led by a teaching elder or a consultant/educator trained in the Reformed Tradition may preside at the LORD's Supper in that particular congregation and by the invitation of any Session within Maumee Valley Presbytery.
 - i. If it is a hardship for the Ruling Elder to receive training, the Session may approve a Ruling Elder to use a liturgy verbatim as found in the *Presbyterian Book of Common Worship*.
- d. Chaplains and Campus Ministers may preside at the LORD's Supper in their particular and unique settings with the approval of the Committee on Ministry. Once approved, the privilege for presiding extends to any other congregation within Maumee Valley Presbytery who offers an invitation via their Session.
- e. Candidates for Teaching elders remain the most complicated. Here are two possible approaches:
 - i. Each candidate be encouraged to request the opportunity to serve on the Session of the church where they are a member. If approved, they would be ordained as a Ruling Elder through that congregation. After this ordination, the candidate would participate in training approved by either the Session of the congregation where they were ordained or by the Session of the congregation where they are serving as a Candidate. Once so trained, the Candidate may preside at the LORD's Supper in the congregation where they function as a candidate, in the congregation where they hold membership, and by the invitation of any Session within Maumee Valley Presbytery. Of note: Such an arrangement would mean cooperation from the congregation where the candidate is a member and the congregation where the candidate is serving. Ideally, the ordaining congregation could see the ministry carried out in the candidating congregation as an extension of their own service to the Beloved Community of Christ.
 - ii. The Presbytery ordain the candidate as a Ruling Elder and then train them so that they may preside at the LORD's Supper in the congregation where they function as a candidate and by the invitation of any Session within Maumee Valley Presbytery. It is understood that in order to properly proceed with this practice, an overture should be made to PCUSA's General Assembly.

Both the majority and the minority agree on these two points:

- 1.) Any PCUSA Teaching Elder has the authority to train ruling elders to preside at the table.
- 2.) The Presbytery shall make available a syllabus and resources for those Teaching Elders who wish to provide this training. In addition, the Branch of Congregational Life shall see to it that a class under the instruction of a Teaching Elder be made available no less than once a year. Sessions

shall report to the Branch of Congregational Life the process for which the ruling elders are trained.

- 3.) The responsibility for proper administration of the Sacraments lies in the hands of the Session of each congregation. Therefore, before inviting anyone to preside, the Session should take seriously its responsibility to examine the person who is being invited to preside.