

Why we do what we do.

(The following document is a collection of questions regarding our church – first published as worship folder inserts...)

Why do you recite a Creed or Confession?

The word “creed” means, “I believe.” The word “confession” means, “to acknowledge and accept.” The earliest documents of the Christian church reveal that believers verbally recited the core convictions of the faith during their services (especially when a convert was about to be baptized.) We communicate our connection with this “communion of the saints” when we recite the same doctrinal truths that have been believed and accepted by the church from the very beginning: *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* — 2 Timothy 1:13,14

Why do you have an “Elder’s Response?”

The scriptures define the expected character and duties of an “overseer,” or elder. One quality that an elder must possess is the “ability to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; 24). Elders are not called to simply run an “organization.” They are charged with a calling to protect God’s flock with a consistent word of truth that will nourish and strengthen the sheep. When a sermon is preached in our fellowship, they must shepherd the church toward a proper response to that message — whether by approval, or by clarification based upon the standard of scripture: *He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.* — Titus 1:9

Why is your service ordered as it is?

Our passion is to order our service upon the forms of worship found in both the Old & New Testaments. The scriptures demand that we “worship the correct God, correctly!” The ARPC has detailed how that worship should be performed in their **Book of Worship**: *Public worship is corporate in all its parts with active participation or silent attention, or both. It should be orderly, interesting, and inspiring toward spiritual ideals and Christian service. It should be directed to the total person involving intellect, emotion, and will. It should include any or all of the following acts of worship: Prayer and thanksgiving; singing of praise; the reading, hearing and preaching of the Word; the administering and receiving of the sacraments; the giving of tithes and sacrificial offerings; an appropriate response to the Gospel; an affirmation of faith; and the dismissing of the people with a Biblical benediction.*

— Chapter II “The Nature of Worship” [Section 2]

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(For answers to other questions, please visit our FAQ’s page at www.CommunionPres.org.)

Can an “elder” really forgive my sins?

“Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21). This question was asked of Jesus’ ministry. Christ’s Kingdom arrives with this announcement, *“If your brother sins...forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” (Luke 17:3,4); “...repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations...” (Luke 24:47); “If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.” (John 20:23).* This last verse is a reference to the authority that the apostles of Jesus had to advance and preserve Christ’s church. Since the gospel announces the remission of sins for all who truly repent, sinners who trust in Christ alone ought to hear the assurance of pardon from the very representatives of Christ who have been set apart to establish His will. *“...everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.” (Acts 10:43)*

Who is allowed to read scripture in church?

Communion Presbyterian desires to reflect a biblical worship that can be emulated in the home. We envision every member of a family participating in family worship under the authority of the head of the home. Therefore, in a like fashion, able family members are welcome to participate in our service under the authority of our Session. In order to help maintain the proper decorum of our Sunday service, a “reader’s guideline” has been published. Those who wish to read may request this document for participation in our “reader rotation.”

Do I have to be a member to take the Lord’s Supper?

YES! You must be a member of Christ’s body, THE church! Our church is a local, visible manifestation of the world wide communion of the saints. Therefore, those who come to the Lord’s Table here must publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ as their savior, having been baptized into His body and demonstrating a lifestyle of faithful discipleship. This does not mean being a “perfect saint.” However, it does mean that believers share the following convictions and desires: the love of and for God, a humble obedience to His law, a grateful heart for Christ’s purchase of salvation, devotion to His church, a commitment to reconciling relationships, sorrow for sin, and a joyful anticipation of Christ’s return. There may be days when we do not sense all or any of these; yet, this is when we must assuredly come to the Table to hear in our heart and to grasp with all our senses what Christ has done for us in His atoning and redeeming sacrifice — To all who are such as these, you are invited to the feast!

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What does it mean to be “Presbyterian”?

“Presbyterian” comes from the Greek word, πρεσβύτερος, which means “elder.” Presbyterians are therefore led by a group of elders. This means first of all that a Monarch or a Pope does not run the church, but gifted men elected by individual congregations. “Elder rule” also provides a system of checks and balances designed to keep sole control of a church from the whims of just one person. Elders share the oversight of a church as shepherds. They are charged to lead the sheep into truth, love, and service while defending the flock from error. While other Christian churches can be “elder ruled,” Presbyterians adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) as a standard for interpreting the Scriptures, and seek to be “connected” so that no single church would exist alone, but rather as a member of a cohesive body for mutual support and accountability.

What is the Westminster Confession of Faith?

In 1643, the English Parliament called upon the theologians of the day to write a concise statement of Protestant belief regarding doctrine, worship, church government, etc. The result of this meeting at Westminster Abbey was a 33 chapter document that has become the standard Confession of the Presbyterian church, as well as the historic Congregational and Baptist churches. In brief, the Confession affirms the ancient creeds of the Christian faith while opposing specific dogmas of the Roman Catholic church. The Confession is NOT considered to be equal with Scripture and is not a complete theological treatise. It is simply an overview of the most important convictions for which all (Protestant) Christians should affirm. Although Christians DO disagree about certain aspects of the Confession, Presbyterian elders must hold the “most essential and necessary” assertions of the Confession regarding faith and practice.*
(Some “scruples” are permitted! However, “ordaining bodies” of conservative denominations are consistent about what is “essential and necessary” to believe.)*

How can I meet with an elder of the church?

Each Sunday, our elders attend and participate in our services. They are happy to meet, pray, and discuss any and all matters related to the Christian faith and the life of our fellowship. Our elders also have specific areas of responsibility for the oversight of our church. This means that one elder may be better equipped than the other to address a specific question. However, our elders work in concert with each other, and meet monthly as a “Session” to specifically pray, organize, and chart direction for this ministry. The congregation is invited and encouraged to attend our monthly Session meetings.