



**Study Guide for
A Proposal for Considering the**

**Theology and Practice of Ordination in the
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

STUDY GUIDE TO THE ORDINATION REPORT

Introduction

The 1992 General Assembly commended for church-wide study a report entitled "A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." The report emphasizes the ministry of the whole people of God, and-- for the first time in the denomination's history -- explores all three offices (minister, elder, and deacon) in relation to this common ministry.

Groups that study the report have a significant opportunity to shape the church's future. The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit will compile their responses and report to the 1996 General Assembly, possibly recommending changes to the church's *Book of Order*.

Congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly entities, seminaries, groups of specialized ministers, and ecumenical partners are receiving a copy of the report, this study guide, and an invitation to participate in the study process.

The Study Guide

The study guide has been prepared to assist congregations and presbyteries in organizing groups to engage in careful reading and discussion of the report.

Constituting Study Groups

The study guide is designed for use primarily by groups of church officers. Groups should have as much of a balance as possible among ministers, elders, and deacons.

In order to enhance discussion, it is suggested that groups have 6-12 members; where larger numbers are involved, congregations and presbyteries are encouraged to organize several groups.

Time Commitment

The study guide has eight sessions, each of 90 minutes. Groups are free, however, to modify sessions in order to fit their particular needs.

Using the Study Guide

The study guide includes:

- 1) suggestions to help leaders organize each session.
- 2) questions to help participants study the report and prepare for each session.
- 3) a response form for groups to return to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit.

The study guide helps participants focus on the major points of the report. Leaders can modify or reduce suggested assignments, depending on the needs and interests of each group.

Each participant will need a copy of the ordination report. Additional copies of the study guide can also be ordered or leaders may reproduce the questions for preparation and distribute them prior to each session.

Ordering Information

Additional copies of the report (\$5) and the study guide (free) are available from:

Distribution Management Services (DMS)
100 Witherspoon Street
Room 1A-1425
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

800-524-2612 (outside of Louisville)
502-569-5618 (in Louisville)
DMS #272-92-411 (report)
DMS #272-92-412 (study guide)

Note: Prior to each meeting, participants will receive a preparation sheet, such as this one, to help guide their reading of the report.

Preparation For Session I

Read the Preface, Introduction, and Appendix of the report. Then, try answering the following:

1. What has meant most to you about your own ordination? What has caused you the most pain?
2. What issues gave rise to this report (Introduction, Section I.A. "Some Presenting Issues," pp. 5-8)? Rank them according to their significance to you.
3. In the Presbyterian tradition, we believe that God calls all people to ministry. In what sense does God call you to ministry?
4. Why does the church ordain people?

Session I

Focus: *Preface, Introduction, And Appendix To The Report*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (35 min.)

- Open with prayer, asking God's guidance during this study, so that the group may help the denomination discern where God is leading.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to help participants understand the overall purpose of the study and their place within it
 - b. to give participants an overview of the major issues and topics that the report addresses
 - c. to have participants consider the meaning of their own ministry
- If you did not distribute the preparation sheets for Session I prior to this session, you might do so now.
- Discuss the overall purpose of the study. (Use the material in the "Introduction" to the study guide (page 1, above). Invite responses.
- Ask people to jot down brief answers to the following questions. (If they have completed the preparation sheets for Session I, they may wish to refer to them.) Have paper and pencil available.
 - a. What about your ordination has meant most to you?
 - b. What about your ordination has sometimes caused you concern or pain?
 - c. Why are you here to engage in a study of ordination?
- After a few minutes, ask people to form pairs and share replies. Spend no more than 5 minutes on each question. If you wish, invite people to change partners after each question.
- In the total group, invite people to share some of their responses. Make a list on newsprint.

2. Issues that gave rise to the report (20 min.)

- Divide into 2-4 groups. Let each subgroup consider two or three of the issues, as found in the Introduction, Section I.A (pp. 5-8). Take no more than 5-10 minutes. Ask each subgroup to consider: What is the issue and how important is it to you and your congregation?
- In the total group, have the subgroups briefly report the nature of each issue and their evaluation of it. Check for general agreement or disagreement with their evaluation.

3. Major topics of the report (30 min.)

- Have the group compare the definition of ordination given in Part Three, Section I.A of the report (p. 51) with that in the *Book of Order*, G-14.0101. (Be sure to have copies of the *Book of Order* available.) How are they the same? Different? What issues or problems do you see?
- Invite participants to get an overview of the report in one of the following ways:
 - a. Have the group go through the Table of Contents, noting the various topics listed. Have participants rank these in order of estimated importance. Look together at the brief history of the study of ordination in the appendix.
 - b. Invite the group to share responses to questions 3 and 4 on the preparation sheet for Session I.

4. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Reflect briefly on how this first session went. Invite suggestions for next time.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session II.
- Close with prayer.

Preparation For Session II

Read Part One of the report. Then, try answering the following:

1. The report lists five pairs of characteristics of the church: a. divine gift and human institution, b. fellowship of believers and missionary company, c. being and doing, d. local congregation and presence of the church catholic, e. present reality and foretaste and sign of the kingdom. Take one of these pairs and apply it to your own congregation. How does your congregation exhibit both aspects?

2. The report argues that the church continually modifies its understanding of office to meet the needs of each age. Similarly, a congregation (or presbytery) sometimes needs to restructure its committees in order to respond to new challenges and opportunities. As your congregation (or presbytery) looks to the future, which committees or subcommittees might it establish in order to serve God and others more faithfully?

3. The report talks about Christians having a sense of call. How do you think God has called you? What has God asked you to do? How did you respond? How has ordination to office helped you use your gifts to serve the church?

Session II

Focus: *Part One Of The Report: The Church And Office And Ordination In The Church*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to broaden and deepen participants' understanding of the church
 - b. to help participants recognize that the church has continually modified its understanding of office to meet the needs of each age
 - c. to help participants understand gifts and calling in relation to office
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. The church (30 min.)

The report explores five ways of understanding the church: a. divine gift and human institution, b. fellowship of believers and missionary company, c. being and doing, d. local congregation and presence of the church catholic, e. present reality and foretaste and sign of the kingdom. Each pair of characteristics embodies a tension. The church is not a static institution but a dynamic interplay of characteristics.

- List on the board the five pairs of characteristics of the church.
- Discuss how the tension embodied in each of these pairs expresses itself in your congregation. How do these tensions find resolution? Which remain unresolved?

Example: In applying "fellowship of believers and missionary company" to their own congregation, participants could ask: To what degree does our congregation focus on nurturing fellowship? To what degree does it equip members to engage in mission and service in the world? Should one receive more emphasis than the other? Does one depend on the other?

3. Historical patterns of office (20 min.)

The report argues that the Bible does not provide a static model of church office, and that the church has continually modified its understanding of office to meet the needs of each age. The purpose of office is to help the church order itself so that it can more faithfully serve God and the world. One can make a similar case for other church structures.

- With the group's help, list on the board the current committee structure of your congregation (or presbytery).
- Discuss the circumstances under which the congregation (or presbytery) might delete or add a committee in order to serve more faithfully.

4. Call, Response, Gifts (30 min.)

The report argues that ordination to office depends on one having a sense of call, responding to that call, and using one's gifts in the service of the church.

- Discuss, as time allows, any or all of the following:
 - a. How does God call a person?
 - b. Why does a person accept or resist God's call?
 - c. What are some of the different ways in which people can use their different gifts in the service of the church?
 - d. How would participants talk about their own sense of God's call? How did they recognize it? What was God calling them to do? How did they respond?

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments on the session and how the study is going. Ask for suggestions for future sessions.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session III.
- Close with prayer.

Session III

Focus: *Part Two Of The Report: Ministry As God Service: A Biblical And Theological Basis For Exploring The Meaning Of Church Office*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to have participants explore the biblical understanding of service
 - b. to help participants understand the report's use of the term God Service
 - c. to have participants evaluate the usefulness of God Service as an image for the exercise of office in the church
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. The biblical understanding of service (30 min.)

The report emphasizes a biblical understanding of service.

- Divide into 2-4 groups, assigning each group one or more of the following passages. Have the groups look for characteristics of service in each passage.
 - a. *Luke 22:24-30*
 - b. *Mark 14:1-9*
 - c. *Romans 12:1-8*
 - d. *I Corinthians 12:4-11*
 - e. *Luke 4:16-20*
 - f. *Acts 3:1-10*
 - g. *Acts 1:21-26*
 - h. *Acts 6:1-4*
- In the total group, list characteristics of service that participants found in the passages of Scripture. Ask the group if they would add other characteristics.

3. The term God Service (30 min.)

The report identifies five dimensions of God Service: a. follows the model of Christ, b. is done freely, c. involves a multiplicity of activities, d. is

empowering, e. supports an understanding of church office as personal, collegial, and communal. It uses the term God Service to emphasize that ministry is service to God, not servitude or subservience to any human person or institution.

- Have someone read *Philippians 2:7-8* aloud. Note that these verses describe Jesus as the model of God Service.
- Discuss the following:

How do people ever use the word service to put others down? What are some of the bad ways in which people can choose to serve others?
- List on the board the five dimensions of God Service. Discuss how the term God Service avoids problems that may be associated with the word service. Invite the group to clarify any remaining confusion about the term God Service.

4. God Service as an image for the exercise of office (20 min.)

The report sees God Service as an image for the exercise of office. An important part of God Service is empowering others to ministry.

- Discuss the following:
 - a. How can church officers help empower other church members to discover and use their gifts for ministry?
 - b. How do you react to the term God Service? To what extent can you think of yourself as a God Server?

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments about the session and the report in general.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session IV.
- Close with prayer.

Preparation For Session IV

Read Part Three, Section I of the report. Then, try answering the following:

1. In a sentence or two, define each of the following categories for understanding ordination to office:
 - a. distinctive core functions
 - b. manifestations and forms of office
 - c. the communal dimension of leadership in office
 - d. the collegial dimension of leadership in office
 - e. personal gifts for office
 - f. personal character for office
 - g. personal authority
 - h. calling and preparation for office
 - i. relationship of the office to governing bodies
2. The report identifies certain gifts and character traits that every church officer should have. Which of these would you like to develop better in yourself?
3. The report argues that a call has three parts: a. a sense of inner call from God, b. a confirmation of this call by a particular community of God's people, and c. a testing of one's fitness for leadership by a governing body of the church.
 - 1) How might one discern that God is calling one to official leadership responsibility in the church?
 - 2) What should one do if one has a sense of inner call to the ordained ministry but is unable to pass seminary?

Session IV

Focus: *Part Three, Section I Of The Report: Offices Of Ministry In The Church: Ordination To Office, A Framework For Renewal*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to have participants become familiar with the common framework for defining all three offices (minister, elder, and deacon)
 - b. to have participants examine the gifts, character, and authority requisite for all offices
 - c. to help participants understand the elements of call in the Reformed tradition
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. The common framework of the report (20 min.)

The report uses a common set of categories for framing each office:

- a. *distinctive core functions*, i.e., tasks and responsibilities.
- b. *manifestations*. (Elders, for example, may be able to exercise their functions not only on a session, but also beyond the session.)
- c. *three dimensions of leadership: the communal, collegial, and personal*.
 - 1) the communal dimension includes *communal representation and authority*. (In terms of communal representation, church officers represent tasks that belong to the whole people of God. In terms of communal authority, church officers act on behalf of the whole people of God, not just the constituencies that elected them.
 - 2) the collegial dimension includes *collegial accountability and authority*. (Church officers are accountable to Scripture, the constitutional standards, the people, and

particular governing bodies. They exercise authority together, not simply individually.)
3) the personal dimension includes one's *gifts, character, and personal authority*.

- d. a proper *call*, as well as adequate *preparation*.
- e. a *relationship to governing bodies* that exercise appropriate oversight

- Have participants look at the Table of Contents, Part Three. Discuss how each section under Part Three uses the same categories. Briefly discuss the significance of each category.

3. Gifts, character, and personal authority (45 min.)

The report describes the gifts, character, and kind of authority that every church officer should have.

- Use *one* of the following strategies to facilitate the discussion:
 - a. Have the group list, on one side of the board, some of the common criteria, whether good or bad, that churches use in selecting ministers, elders, and deacons. Which of these seem good reasons for selecting or rejecting a person? Which seem bad? Why?

Then, on the other side of the board, have the group list the gifts and character traits that the report identifies.

Compare the two lists. Discuss how the report's criteria could guide a church nominating committee.

OR

- b. Have participants discuss one or more of the following cases:
 - 1) A congregation is seriously interested in calling Mr. X as its pastor. In an interview with the pastor nominating committee,

Mr. X indicates that it is important to include children in worship, but that he does not feel that children's sermons are the best way to go. The committee notes that the children's sermon is a long-standing and highly valued part of the service. What does collegial leadership suggest here?

2) An elder has just returned from this year's meeting of General Assembly where she served as a commissioner from her presbytery. She voted for a controversial proposal that passed the Assembly by only a narrow margin. After her report to presbytery, several influential people from both the presbytery and her congregation question her vote. How might she respond to them, claiming communal and personal authority?

3) A nominating committee is trying to prepare a slate of deacons. Some members of the committee argue that experience in matters of finance or maintenance is essential. Others disagree. What kinds of gifts and character should deacons as church officers have?

4. Elements of call (optional, and if time allows) (15 min.)

The report argues that a call has three parts: a. a sense of inner call from God, b. a confirmation of this call by a particular community of God's people, and c. a testing of one's fitness for leadership by a governing body of the church.

- Discuss the three parts of a call. What is the potential for tension among these?

Example: A person may have a sense of inner call but be unable to pass the test that validates one for leadership. For another person, it may be the opposite: one is able to pass the test but does not have a sense of inner call.

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments on the session.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session V.
- Close with prayer.

Session V

Focus: *Part Three, Section II Of The Report: The Office Of Minister Of The Gospel*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to help participants understand the core functions of the minister of the Gospel
 - b. to have participants evaluate the three proposed manifestations of the office of minister of the Gospel
 - c. to have participants explore particular issues of leadership, preparation, and oversight of the minister of the Gospel
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. Core functions of the minister of the Gospel (30 min.)

The report identifies six core functions of the minister of the Gospel: authoritative proclamation of the Word, community formation, leadership in governance, prophetic witness to God's Reign and purpose in the world, edification of the body, and service of Table and Font.

- Ask participants to list what they believe to be the most important responsibilities of an ordained minister. Then, list the six core functions that the report identifies.
- Ask participants if the responsibilities that they listed fit under one or another of the six core functions. What did participants miss listing? What, if anything, did they list that ought to constitute an additional core function of an ordained minister?

3. Manifestations/forms of office (30 min.)

The report uses the term minister of the Gospel to emphasize that persons in non-congregational settings may also be able to exercise the core func-

tions of the office. In response to the reality of growing specialization, the report also proposes three forms of office: minister of Word and Sacrament, minister of Education, and minister of Pastoral Care. Persons preparing for the ministry would receive training and testing appropriate to each office and might need additional training and testing to move from one form of office to another (e.g., for a minister of Education to become a minister of Word and Sacrament).

- List and discuss the three manifestations of this office. Discuss the benefits and/or problems of this particular proposal.
- Discuss the way in which the six core functions would distinguish a minister of Pastoral Care from a person who simply offers Christian counselling.

Example: Ministers of Pastoral Care would not normally administer the sacraments. Yet, they could still exercise the core function of service of Table and Font by helping to prepare people to understand and receive the sacraments.

- Similarly, if there is time, discuss the way in which the six core functions would distinguish a minister of Education from a professor of religious studies at a local state university.

D. Particular issues (optional, and if time allows) (20 min.)

The report describes dimensions of leadership for the minister of the Gospel, including gifts and character. It also makes several new proposals: a period of licensure, membership in both a congregation and presbytery, and the possibility of some ministers having voice without vote in presbytery.

- Discuss the issues that have the greatest significance for your congregation (or presbytery):

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- a. Gifts and character
 - b. Preparation
 - c. Licensure
 - d. Membership in both a congregation and presbytery
 - e. Ministers with voice but not vote in presbytery

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments on the session.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session VI.
- Close with prayer.

Session VI

Focus: *Part Three, Section III Of The Report: The Office Of Elder*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to help participants appreciate the importance of the office of elder
 - b. to help participants understand the core functions of the elder
 - c. to help participants think *either* about the report's proposal that the office of elder have manifestations beyond the session *or* about the kind of preparation that would best assist newly-elected elders
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. The office of elder (20 min.)

The report emphasizes the importance of the office of elder, insofar as it provides for shared governance, discipline, and leadership.

- Divide into groups of three. Invite each participant to talk about "the most unforgettable elder I've known."
- In the total group, list the gifts and character traits of their unforgettable elders.

3. Core functions of the elder (30 min.)

The report identifies six core functions of the elder: authoritative discipline of faith communities, strengthening and nurturing congregations/governing bodies, oversight of the mission and work of the church, participation in the governance of the church, providing for and guarding the integrity of worship, and liturgically representing the ministry of discipline.

- Divide into the same groups of three, with at least one elder in each group. Discuss the six core functions of the elder. Which of these are functions of elders in your congregation? Which are not?
- In the total group, share the results of the small group discussions.

4. Manifestations/forms of office *or* preparation for office (30 min.)

The report explores the possibility of ordaining elders to service beyond the session, so long as they fulfill the six core functions. The report also suggests that elders enter a period of candidacy and training prior to their ordination.

- Select *one* of the following options, according to the group's interests.
 - a. Read and discuss one of the following examples from the report:
 - 1) A large urban presbytery advertises a search for an associate executive for church support and mission development. Among the persons whose application comes before the search committee is a woman -- never before ordained to any office -- who has been a member of a Presbyterian church all her life and who has thirty years of experience in fund-raising for charitable causes, but feels called to devote the rest of her active career to service within the church. Because the position is for an associate executive presbyter, the person must be a presbyter -- a minister or ruling elder. She is neither.

Question: Why could not the presbytery elect her an elder after asking her congregation to test her fitness in terms of gifts and character for the office? (Note that the distinctive character of the elder is prudence.)

2) A certified Christian educator serving a local congregation does not understand himself to be called to the office of Gospel ministry, but does wish to share his gifts and wisdom with the wider church. He would be open to serving on committees and task forces of higher governing bodies, but he has never been ordained as a ruling elder. As an employee of the congregation, it seems unlikely he would ever be elected to its session because of congregational fears about conflict of interest.

Question: Why could not the congregation -- if it so discerns that he is in fact gifted and called to the leadership ministries appropriate to the office of elder -- proceed to elect him as an elder not in service on the session? In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances, and to prevent abuse, the congregation could request that the presbytery examine him and validate both his sense of call and his fitness for exercising the office of elder.

In either case, invite participants' reaction to the following:

- 1) Who in your congregation might be able to seek ordination under this broadened understanding of the elder?
- 2) Why would your congregation support (or not support) ordaining elders to service beyond the session?

OR

- b. Have the elders in the group discuss the kind of training that would assist newly-elected elders in fulfilling their core functions. If non-elders are present, invite them to ask questions of the elders.

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments on the session.
- Hand out the preparation sheets for Session VII.
- Close with prayer.

Session VII

Focus: *Part Three, Section Four Of The Report: The Office Of Deacon*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- State objectives of today's session:
 - a. to help participants understand the core functions of the deacon
 - b. to have participants evaluate the significance of the office of deacon for the church's ministry
 - c. to help participants think about the kind of power that the deacon exercises
- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

2. Core functions of the deacon (30 min.)

The report identifies six core functions of the deacon: exhibiting the moral authority of sympathy, witness, and service within the church and before the world; discerning and embodying the presence of the church in the world, and of the world in the church; caring for the needs of God's people in crisis; challenging structures and conditions that keep people powerless and voiceless; voluntarily assuming official powerlessness for the sake of empowering others; and liturgically representing the church's presence in the world (and vice versa).

- If your congregation does not have a board of deacons, discuss the session's responsibility for this work. (See the *Book of Order*, G-6.0407.)
- List the core functions of the deacon on the board.
- In groups of three, discuss the following:
 - a. Which of these core functions do the deacons in your congregation emphasize?
 - b. What are some of the issues in your community in which the deacons might get in-

involved if they were to fulfill all six of these core functions?

- In the total group, share responses.

3. Significance for the church's ministry (30 min.)

The report argues that the office of deacon is in special need of renewal. It suggests, as in the case of the elder, that the church consider ordaining deacons to service in a variety of settings.

- Discuss the following:
 - a. Which persons in your congregation might be fulfilling some or all of the core functions of deacon through their professional or volunteer work?
 - b. How could these people help lead and involve others in ministry?
 - c. Why would your congregation support (or not support) ordaining them?

4. The issue of deacons' power and powerlessness (optional, and if time allows) (20 min.)

The report emphasizes the "official powerlessness" of deacons. They have no role in the governance of the church. They nonetheless have a special opportunity to witness to Christ's power.

- Discuss the following:
 - a. The report identifies two distinctive gifts of the deacon: an ability to discern and communicate the presence of Christ and a willingness to exhibit the scandal of the gospel in the corridors of power.
 - 1) How have you seen people discern the presence of Christ in those who are suffering?
 - 2) How have you seen people exhibit the scandal of the gospel?

b. The report identifies the distinctive character of the deacon as a demonstrated openness and vulnerability to others.

1) How does vulnerability make a person powerless?

2) How does it open one to experiencing Christ's power in a new way?

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Invite comments on the session.
- Hand out the preparation sheets and questionnaire for Session VIII.
- Close with prayer.

Preparation For Session VIII

Read Part Four of the report. Then, try answering the following:

1. The report proposes that every ordained person be installed or commissioned to a form of service. Installation occurs when one assumes a position of governance (e.g., as an elder on a session). All other persons would have a commission to a particular task. If you were rotating off a session or a board of deacons, or moving away from a pastoral call, what kind of commission would you like to have for continuing service?

2. Which of the issues in the remainder of Part Four do you find particularly important for yourself or your congregation (or presbytery)?

3. Attached is a questionnaire for evaluating the report in its entirety. Please fill it out. At the last session, you and other participants will work together to fill out a **GROUP RESPONSE FORM** (with the same questions) to return to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit.

Questionnaire, Session VIII

1. What did you find most important about this study? List at least three points.
2. What did you find helpful or problematic about the term *God Service*?
3. What did you find helpful or problematic about the idea of three manifestations/forms of the minister of the Gospel (*minister of Word and Sacrament, minister of Education, minister of Pastoral Care*)?
4. What did you find helpful or problematic about the report's description of the deacon?
5. What did you find helpful or problematic about the idea of ordaining elders (deacons) to service beyond the session (*board of deacons*)?
6. What did you find helpful or problematic about the idea of elders (deacons) being commissioned to a particular form of service, even after completing service on a session (*board of deacons*)?
7. What other comments on the report would you like to convey to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit?

Session VIII

Focus: *Part Four Of The Report: Ordering Persons In Office -- Applications And Issues*

Suggested Order for Discussion

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Open with prayer.
- Choose the option that you will follow, and state objectives of today's session:

OPTION 1:

- a. to have participants understand and assess the relation of ordination to installation and commissioning
- b. to help participants identify other key issues in Part Four of the report
- c. to prepare participants to evaluate the report in its entirety

OPTION 2:

- a. to have participants spend the entire session on evaluating and responding to the report
(Note: As a third option, a group could use Session VIII to study Part Four of the report and agree to meet for an additional session to evaluate the report.)

- Ask for general reactions to the reading and the preparation sheets for this session.

Note: Groups that choose Option 2 should proceed directly to 4, below.

2. Ordination, installation, and commissioning (15 min.)

The report proposes that every ordained person be either installed or commissioned. Installation occurs when one assumes a position of governance (e.g., as a minister in presbytery or as an elder on session). Other persons would require a commission from the appropriate governing body. For example: an elder who rotates off the session would have a commission from the session to an appropriate kind of ministry in or on behalf of the congregation.

- Divide into 2-4 groups. Ask participants to discuss their reaction to the proposal that every ordained person be installed or commissioned to a task. Consider the following:

- a. How could you continue to exercise the functions of your office even if you were no longer active in a pastoral position, on a session, or on a board of deacons?
- b. Would you like having a continuing commission to service, or would you prefer to be free of further responsibilities after ending your work in a pastoral position, on a session, or on a board of deacons? In any case, explain why.

- In the total group, share a few brief responses (if there is time).

3. Other key issues (15 min.)

In Part Four, the report makes several suggestions that will be of particular interest to committees and commissions that have responsibility for ordering persons in office (e.g., presbytery committees on ministry and on preparation for ministry).

- List and discuss some of the key issues in this part of the report:
 - a. the possibility that all ordinations occur together once a year in a presbytery-sponsored service
 - b. the possibility that the church write new ordination questions to reflect the distinctive functions of ministers, elders, and deacons
 - c. suggestions about mobility between offices
 - d. suggestions about release from office
 - e. suggestions about alternative and part-time ministry

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- f. reflections on historical tensions between governing bodies in the practice of ordination

4. Evaluation (50 min., if part of Option 1; 85 min., if part of Option 2)

One of the goals of the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit is to learn from congregations' study of this report. By responding to the attached GROUP RESPONSE FORM, participants will help the unit to know if and how to propose any changes to the *Book of Order* in the church's practice of ordination.

If following Option 2:

- Invite individuals to jot down brief replies to the following questions:
 - a. What are three major things that I have learned during this study?
 - b. What in the report gives me serious concern?
 - c. What aspects of the report seem especially promising?
- After a few minutes, ask people to form pairs and share replies. Spend no more than 5 minutes on each question. If you wish, invite people to change partners after each question.

- In the total group, invite people to share some of their responses.
- Ask participants to summarize highlights of the group's study.

- a. Parts One and Two
- b. Part Three, Sections I and II
- c. Part Three, Sections III and IV
- d. Part Four (if covered by the group)

For both Option 1 and Option 2:

- Ask the group to discuss the GROUP RESPONSE FORM together, and come to agreement about specific responses to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit.

5. Conclusion (5 min.)

- Thank participants for their faithful study of the report over the past eight weeks.
- Close with a period of prayer for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the church universal.
- Return the GROUP RESPONSE FORM to:

The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit
Office of Theological Studies
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

5. What did you find helpful or problematic about the idea of ordaining elders (deacons) to service beyond the session (board of deacons)?

6. What did you find helpful or problematic about the idea of elders (deacons) being commissioned to a particular form of service, even after completing service on a session (board of deacons)?

7. What other comments on the report would you like to convey to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit?

Please return immediately to:

The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit
Office of Theological Studies
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

Thank you for your assistance!