

REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERY
Moderator: Rev C Tuck Clerk: Pastor N van der Wel
C/O 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

ESTABLISHING THE WORSHIP OF GOD

EXTRACT MINUTE

The Composite Presbytery of Eastern Australia met on the Sixteenth of March 2017 and was constituted. Among other things,

5. Business Arising.

IV. Establishing the Worship of God.

It was Moved, Seconded, and Agreed THAT:

The Document on “Establishing the Worship of God” as revised and amended be adopted and distributed as required.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery by the Clerk on the Twenty-Ninth of December 2020.

Pastor Neil van der Wel
 Clerk of Presbytery
 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

ESTABLISHING THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Definitions:

- Fixed/Constituted Congregation:

- i. The Westminster Form of Church-Government (“Of Particular Congregations”) gives a good definition of a Fixed Congregation:
 “It is lawful and expedient that there be fixed congregations, that is, a certain company of Christians to meet in one assembly ordinarily for publick worship. When believers multiply to such a number, that they cannot conveniently meet in one place, it is lawful and expedient that they should be divided into distinct and fixed congregations, for the better administration of such ordinances as belong unto them, and the discharge of mutual duties.”
- ii. A Fixed Congregation is not defined by:
 - Size (i.e. Few – Matthew 18:20; or Many – in Jerusalem and Ephesus).

- Meeting place (i.e. Private Home – Acts 18:7; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2; or Public Place – Acts 1:13; 2:46; 3:1; 5:12; 19:9).
- Organization (i.e. Without Local Elders or Deacons – Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; with Local Elders and Deacons – Philippians 1:1).

- **Preaching station:**

- i. A 'Preaching Station' is also not defined by size (many or few) or meeting place (hall or home), but describes a 'missionary' situation into which a minister is authorised and enabled by the Presbytery to go to preach and lead in worship, with more or less regularity, until such a time as a Congregation would be formed or, contrariwise, the work be suspended due to lack of interest or lack of means.
- ii. A 'Preaching Station' might be distinguished from a Fixed Congregation by the lack of desire among the attendees of the former to be established as a Fixed and Settled Congregation, with attendees perhaps continuing in membership of other Congregations.
- iii. For a 'Preaching Station' to become a Fixed Congregation under the oversight of the Presbytery, a number of professing Christians, ordinarily from at least two different households, ought to express their desire to the Presbytery to be constituted as a Congregation, that they might assemble for public worship each Sabbath and discharge their mutual duties as members one of another.

Key principle – We must always endeavour to be as biblical as possible (maximalist), rather than doing the least amount necessary to be still called biblical (minimalist).

- i. The Public Worship of God must be established according to the principles set down in the Scriptures.
 - a. Deuteronomy 12:32
 - b. Hebrews 8:5
 - c. 1 Corinthians 14:40
 - d. Matthew 28:20.
- ii. The Regulative Principle must be upheld.
 - a. Singing of Psalms without instrumental accompaniment (Psalm 105:1-2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 13:15)
 - b. Prayer (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
 - c. Scripture Reading (Nehemiah 8; Colossians 4:16; 1 Timothy 4:13)
 - d. Preaching (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - e. Sacraments (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17-34; 12:13)
- iii. Worship is only to be conducted by qualified men.
 - a. Only biblically qualified men are to lead in worship.

- b. In Congregations under the oversight of the Presbytery, and in the absence of ministers or elders, public worship may only be conducted by godly men who are able to lead, and who have been approved by the Interim Session.
 - c. Scripture does not permit women lead or to take any public role or part in Public Worship. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12).
 - d. Conducting public worship when no men are able to lead in public worship.
 - 1. Entire services can be listened to by the congregation, either via a recording or a “live” link up e.g. streaming/telephone.
 - 2. Help and training in the conduct of Public and Family worship will be given by ministers from the Presbytery.
- iv. Visiting Ministers to Preach and Administer the Sacraments in Congregations.
- a. Ministers from the Presbytery, will visit the Congregation, regularly, as they are able, and as funding for their expenses is available. Where funds are limited the Congregation may seek assistance from the Presbytery.
 - b. Only ministers, approved by the Presbytery, or Interim Session, and the Interim Moderator, after consultation with the Congregation, may preach in a Congregation under the oversight of the Presbytery, or take public meetings held within the Congregation. A list of approved Ministers is available from the Clerk of Presbytery.
 - c. Only recorded or published sermons by Ministers approved by the Presbytery and/or the Interim Session may be used during Public Worship and in other meetings of the Congregation. A list of approved Ministers is available from the Clerk of Presbytery.
 - d. Only Ministers from the Presbytery, or approved by the Presbytery, or Interim Session, and Interim Moderator, may administer the Sacraments in a Congregation that is under the oversight of the Presbytery. The Interim Session is responsible for the administration of the Sacraments in the Congregation.
 - e. The receiving of help from the Presbytery is not dependent on whether or not a congregation has come directly under the Presbytery’s oversight.
- v. Establishing local office bearers.
- a. The ordinary method of appointing Office Bearers, set forth in Scripture, is for other ministers and elders to be involved in examining, appointing and ordaining men to office (Ministers, Governing Elders, and Deacons). This would ordinarily be the role of the Presbytery (as a court with jurisdiction wider than a local congregation). Ministers, Elders, and Deacons may not be appointed to office in a Congregation without the formal consent of the members of the Congregation.
 - a. Acts 6:1-6
 - b. Acts 14:23
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:14
 - d. 2 Timothy 2:2
 - e. Titus 1:5
 - b. Where there are no existing office bearers in a Congregation, the Presbytery will appoint an Interim Session to govern the affairs of the

Congregation until the Lord raises up biblically qualified men to serve as Elders and Deacons in the Congregation.

- c. While biblical office bearers are necessary for the wellbeing of a congregation, we must not rush into ordaining men (1 Timothy 5:22). There should be time for testing (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:10) and training (e.g. 2 Timothy 2:2).

vi. Offerings.

- a. It is recommended that an offering box be provided in a convenient place, and that offerings are not taken up during Public Worship.
- b. A record of the monies collected, and dispersed is to be kept by the Deacons or, if there are no Deacons the Elders. Where a Congregation does not have Local Elders or Deacons men approved by the Interim Session are to keep financial records. The dispersement of funds ought to have the prior approval of the Interim Session.

Key principle – We must always endeavour to be as biblical as possible (maximalist), rather than doing the least amount necessary to be still called biblical (minimalist).

Appendix

Order of Service

Call to Worship

Prayer.

Old Testament Reading – Start with Genesis 1 and read consecutively through the Old Testament.

Praise – Start with Psalm One and sing systematically through the Psalms. 6-8 stanzas is good guide as to length of the portion sung.

New Testament Reading – Start with Matthew 1 and read consecutively through the New Testament.

Prayer.

Sermon.

Prayer.

Praise. As above.

Concluding Prayer or Benediction.