

# WASHED AND READY

## BAPTISM AS CALL AND GIFT OF MINISTRY

Scott Haldeman

Having processed, having been presented, having professed, having seen and heard water poured, the new Christians prepare for their washing, and someone prays:

Pour out your Spirit upon us and upon this water,  
that this font may be your womb of new birth.  
May all who pass through these waters be delivered  
from death to life,  
from bondage to freedom,  
from sin to righteousness.  
Bind them to the household of faith, guard them  
from every evil.  
Strengthen them to serve you with joy until the day  
you make all things new.<sup>1</sup>

The sign of the cross is made and oil seals the mark, making indelible the truth that new Christians no longer belong to themselves but belong to God and to the Body. They become members of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that [they] may proclaim the mighty acts of the One who called [them] out of darkness into God’s marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Thus, we make new Christians. Thus, we all began our journey of discipleship, our life of ministry—all of us, not just those with “Rev.” before their names.

This essay, then, is in an invitation to think about these things—on baptism and the life to which it leads. Obviously, consideration of what might be called the

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Plunged below sacred surf, marked as God’s own forever, new Christians are reassured of God’s unfailing love and irrevocable covenant promises, and they become incorporated into the Church and its ministry. Then the prayers continue as hands are laid upon their heads:

O Lord, uphold [*names*] by your Holy Spirit.  
Give [*them*]  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,  
the spirit of joy in your presence,  
both now and forever.<sup>2</sup>

“sacramental aftermath” is not the only way to approach the richness of the sacrament of baptism and its many meanings, perhaps not even the most adequate.<sup>3</sup> But to juxtapose the discipleship of all Christians to those who are ordained (whether as deacon, elder, or minister of Word and Sacrament) is my assigned task. All are called to serve, to participate in the work of the Body. Some are called as leaders—servant leaders, of course.<sup>4</sup> Other writers in this issue consider the distinctive things to which the leaders are called; I propose, instead, an answer to the query, To what are we all called? Having passed through the waters, what is our task? I propose, most simply, that it is to *get going*, to set out on the adventure called the life of faith.

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Baptism is not an end but a beginning, a doorway through which we pass to begin a journey. While the journey follows a path that is sure, since it has already been blazed by the Crucified and Risen One—its twists and turns, its bright slopes and shadowy valleys, its meanderings by still waters and its bridgeless crossings of swollen rivers become known to us only as we walk along. In other words, there is no map available. Yet there are things we know—qualities that shape the journey. These qualities are, in fact, already outlined in the brief prayers on the previous page.

Our discussion follows a path as well—a series of steps to arrive at our destination. We consider, first, baptism as a sacrament. Next, we gather at the starting point of the journey, the secure foundation of the font. After this, we attend briefly to three “qualities” of the journey itself. We conclude by reflecting upon the relationship between baptism and ordination—or, between the baptized and the ordained—as all participate in the one ministry of the church, its Great Ends. And, so, the journey goes on.

## BAPTISM AND THE JOURNEY OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

Baptism is both gift and call. So says the report of the Sacraments Work Group that was presented in Birmingham, Alabama, at the 217th General Assembly of the PC(USA) in June 2006.<sup>5</sup> So also says scripture, our rites, and our constitutional documents. The link is most obvious in the quote from 1 Peter and is indicated by the use of the conjunctive phrase “in order that.” Baptism is a gift. We are, as the BCW prayers indicate, delivered, reborn, cleansed, raised, bound, and strengthened. But that is not the end of the story. The gift includes a call, as the call includes a gift. Again, in the language of the prayers, we entrust the baptized “to do your will” or “to serve you with joy.” All who are baptized are called to proclaim to others the good news of God’s mighty acts, to testify to the light that brings joy to those who are lost because it allows them also to find their way and to join the journey. This is why, as our baptism is sealed, we ask God to provide a new spirit for each disciple—a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and fear of the Lord, of joy.

As I indicated above, three characteristics predominate. First, the journey is not a solitary one, but that of group bound irreparably. Second, the

journey is demanding, requiring much of us. Finally, the journey requires courage—but the source of courage is also supplied—it is bringing us full circle: the very promise that baptism communicates.

### GAINING OUR BEARINGS:

#### SACRAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Before attending to our three characteristics, it is crucial to step back and indicate our location in the field of theology and of Christian thought. Our concern here is baptism as a sacrament. The sacraments are reminders of who we are and whose we are, and they help us imagine who we are meant to become. They are not things but events. The sacrament of baptism is not water but a washing before the gathered community. The Supper is not bread or cup but a sharing and ingesting of bread broken and wine poured. In the Reformed tradition, we call these two practices—and these two alone—*sacraments* because scripture indicates that Jesus himself told the first disciples to do these special things to recall who he was and what he taught them, and to make other believers into disciples. In technical language, there is *dominical warrant*, warrant from the Lord himself, for these two practices alone. Obviously, there are many other things that Jesus told his disciples to do: heal, cast out demons, feed the crowd, pray, preach, and teach. These are things we might emulate as well. But, in the context of the Reformation, Calvin and others argued with the authorities in Rome about why some practices were to be called *sacraments* and others were not. Calvin (with others) staked his claim on the assumption that sacraments were things that we do—events that, while we are doing them, we know in a way that is clearer than at any other time and place that the promises God has made to God’s people are sure. Calvin writes: “Therefore, let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace.”<sup>6</sup> The washing and the meal, just like scripture and preaching, place before us saving grace—the grace of Christ’s love as if, in fact, Christ were truly present.

Widening the lens one stop more, we must acknowledge that God is not dependent on the sacraments to communicate grace.<sup>7</sup> Rather, we are dependent on them as times and places in which our belief is renewed, since our faith is weak.<sup>8</sup> In other words, God gave us sacraments not as arbitrary

commands to follow mechanistically but as gifts to sustain us. If divine sovereignty means anything, it means God can communicate grace in whatever way God wants to—a burning bush, a parted sea, a young woman betrothed and yet pregnant, a persecutor thrown from his horse, even the half-hearted missionary outreach of First Presbyterian Church, Smalltown, USA. In fact, God is always trying to communicate grace. Isn't that what "the reign of God is at hand" must mean? Yet, for those who struggle between belief and unbelief (as all who are baptized must), God has made a promise to be present when the community gathers, when it does these special things. In other words, God has promised to show up when the community washes a new baby or anoints a stranger who becomes a friend. In the same way, God promises to move among us when the community eats together to receive our thanksgivings, to sanctify our table fellowship, to fill our hungry hearts as well as our bellies, and to evoke visions of the great day when all will gather at the feast and none shall want for anything. I contend that we do things like wash and eat together precisely to learn how to tune our antennae to receive the uninterrupted communication of divine love, to practice attending to the sparks of God and the signs of God's promised future that surround us at every moment, if only we would notice.<sup>9</sup> But, even if I am wrong, it is true that ordinary things—water, bread, wine—convey great messages and enact astounding truths when the people gather and the Spirit stirs. We catch, again, a glimpse of the heavenly treasures that are already ours since we are children of God and, so, heirs.<sup>10</sup>

#### SETTING OUT: FONT AS SECURE HOME FROM WHICH TO VENTURE

Baptism, in particular, conveys assurance that we, that our futures, rest peacefully in God's heart. We are marked as God's own forever. Whether being baptized or watching the baptism of another, we hear and see once more the astounding truth that nothing can separate us from God or from God's love. As Paul put it:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35, 37–39)

Nothing! Nothing at all can tear us from the arms of God. This is the heart of the sacrament, the act of washing and sealing—a blessed assurance.

Witness to this promise is what we enact at the font. Each time a baby is handed from parent to pastor to be thrust under water we enact the claim that even those most dear to us do not belong to us but are entrusted to the One who promises life even after death. We risk giving away our children to affirm that they are not ours but belong to the Body, just as we do. Through this attenuating of blood kinship to water-made-family, our children actually become more secure, not less; they are made not only adopted children of God but also members of a whole people who pledge to nurture and care for them, freeing them from being dependent solely on the ferocity and fragility of love in the nuclear family.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, those who are baptized as adults can give public testimony of their own faith, submit in the same posture of trust to have their worldly status washed away and become nothing more and nothing less than an adopted child of God, a sister or brother to all other members of Christ's church. And, as they do this, we all hear once again the promise that God embraces us, accepts us, claims us, adopts us, promising that the Everlasting Arms will never let us go. Embraced and assured that nothing will separate us from such a love, we can set out on the journey. Through the waters, up out of the font, we head into the world.

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## A COMMUNAL JOURNEY

Using the metaphor of journey to describe the life of faith is, of course, far from original. The nascent nation of Israel as a ragged band of escaping slaves wandered for forty years. Centuries later, John Bunyan in his classic work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, posits a trek to describe the way of salvation. But the church is more accurately portrayed by the former than the latter—for Bunyan's "Christian" walks alone.<sup>12</sup> Instead, I submit, the baptized life, like the Jewish life, is inescapably communal. Certainly, there are times when one must retreat for prayer and contemplation or to take a lonely, prophetic stand or to face one's own demons, but these are exceptions that prove the rule—a stepping out from but not beyond one's ties to the Body. Paul's favorite metaphor for the church guides us because as a religion of God-in-flesh, of a new heaven and a new earth, Christianity is less about the sanctification of individuals than it is about creating communities of witness to the promises of God that are already detectable and will be fulfilled, "and all flesh will see it together."<sup>13</sup>

Baptism itself points in this same direction. First, as we have already seen, passage through the font attenuates all other social and kinship bonds, setting us in a new relational matrix. The one who asks: "Who are my mother, sisters, brothers? and answers: Those who do the will of God," claims us, too, as members of a new household, the household of God (Matthew 12:48–50). We are all now adopted children, all related as members of the same Body, no longer divided by the categories of human demographics so crucial to defining how we relate to one another in the workaday world—race, gender, sexuality, age, economic class, and the like. Rather than placing ourselves and others in the cramped boxes of identity that such categories represent, we might better say, as the spiritual says: "If anybody asks you who I am? Tell them I'm a child of God!"

Second, and closely related, baptism emphasizes that we are all equal. Simply equal in God's sight certainly, as well as we can muster, in each other's sight too. All who travel with us are important. And,

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practicing the accordance of equal honor to all, we may be better prepared to respect those whom we meet along the journey—the homeless person, the gang member, the Muslim, the immigrant, the senator, the lesbian, the evacuee—and listen to them, hear both their wisdom and their need, and, as best we can, be of service.

Third, we as baptized members of the Body are interdependent. No one of us can say to another that we have no need for another member. It is not for us to judge who belongs; God does the calling, bringing this group in this time and place

together as a community. We, instead, must find our place, whether as "eye" or "hand" or "foot," whether as less respectable and so accorded all the more respect or as respectable and so needing no special treatment (1 Corinthians 12:12–26). Respecting our bond and the different gifts each has been given, we get along as best we can caring for one another, being about the Body's work. Our attention is best focused on where we are headed so as to put into perspective our disagreements and tensions. The journey, like any other journey, will not be without its conflicts, but these are best understood as opportunities to practice deep listening for the prompting of the Spirit, who may be opening new visions of our common vocation among our various positions; to forgive one another for any harm inflicted; and to celebrate the different gifts with which God has graced the Body. The water of forgiveness, reconciliation, and new birth intimately binds us. We go not our own way, each concerned only with the salvation of her own soul; instead, we go together into the broken and bleeding world to bind wounds, speak hope, and announce what God is up to.

## A DEMANDING JOURNEY

Going together, as we venture from the assurance of the font into a need-filled world, the demands upon us will be great indeed. Loved, I can, but also must, now love others. Drowned and yet alive, I can, but also must, place my life at risk that good news might be

spread. Anointed, forgiven, restored, I can, but also must, be about reconciliation, peacemaking, and pardon-granting. The gift contains a call.

The journey of the baptized is demanding, first, because there is so much to do, so many places where we may be led in order to serve. We are to be Christ's body upon the earth, continuing in the ministry that Jesus of Nazareth embodied for those few years long ago. The weight of this calling is not great because Jesus demands so much. Recall that he said the yoke he asks to take up is easy—even if the cup is often bitter. The demand is daunting because of the world's suffering; the world's need is so vast. So many are hungry. So many are dying. So many are alone. So many are in despair. There are many wars and rumors of wars. Violence plagues our homes, our streets, our schools. Discrimination, exploitation, exclusion are perpetuated in our offices, our cities, our legislatures. None of this is beyond the concern of the Body, the baptized. Those who need our companionship and our good news are our sisters and brothers, our neighbors, our enemies—and they are a legion and we are commanded to love them all, to provide for them, to pray for them, to visit them, to embrace them.

The journey of the baptized is also demanding because the Body itself must sometimes be confronted to recollect its mission and values. We not only struggle along through briars and deserts and all manner of rough places, but we must also contend with one another, with this group to which we inescapably belong and yet constantly lets us down. So concerned with institutional survival, the churches act out of anxiety and not hope. So concerned with status, the churches make obeisance to those with political and economic power rather than treating all (whether president or pauper) with equal dignity. So concerned with tradition, the churches speak more of what was than of what may be. So concerned with policing behavior, the churches alienate those who need them most. The litany could go on and on, but the point is made.

Alternatively, those who have been washed, who are no longer Jew or Greek but Christian, who are no longer

male or female but Christian, who are no longer slave or master but Christian, are invited to live differently. We are free to risk letting our institutions die because that will not be the end of the story. We are free to do a new thing because that is what God is up to as well. We are free, with Jesus, to eat with sinners and tax collectors, to break Sabbath custom, or, with Paul, to enjoy meat offered to idols because we know that God is God of the whole world and that anything done with a thankful heart is met with divine favor. The demand of challenging the visible church in love is not an easy one to take up, but it is sometimes the task of those on the journey.

Finally, we may say with Nelle Morton that “the journey is home.”<sup>14</sup> We, ourselves, are unlikely to come to the end of the path to the promised land, to see the culmination of the coming age. It is better to content ourselves with the part we are given to play: to walk a bit of the way, smoothing the road for others who will follow, pointing ever to the destination even if we, like Moses and like Martin Luther King, Jr., will only be able to glimpse the land that flows with milk and honey, but not to enter it. It is not always easy to “keep on keepin’ on” when the destination seems as far off as ever. Yet, refreshed with Living Water and recalling the

promises that one day all shall be well, we persevere. The rewards of the journey are sometimes enough: instances of genuine healing, tangible gains in a struggle for justice, genuine mercy given and received, or revelatory words from an unexpected quarter. And, in bleaker moments, one of us may be inspired to recall the mighty acts of God and restore hope. Recollecting what God has already done and imagining what else God may have in store, the Body walks on, assured despite the demands that together we will remain on the path and find ourselves, one day, in God's promised future.

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## A DAUNTING JOURNEY

While the demands of the journey are challenge enough for the Body, there is yet more to daunt us. As I have already noted, we must face the vast need of the world and our own tensions and conflicts, and we must ready ourselves for the long haul. However, we must also, like Jesus in his final visit to Jerusalem, “set our face like

flint” against the forces of death whose ire we provoke as we sow the seeds of new life.<sup>15</sup> The most common greeting of divine or angelic figures to biblical characters is “Be not afraid.” This statement is meant to assure but not because there is actually nothing to fear. There is much to be afraid of. The powers and principalities that oppose the coming of peace with justice can inflict substantial harm against both individual disciples and the Body as a whole, as well as many other innocents. Yet the promise of baptism is that nothing can separate us from God’s love. On our journey, when we comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, we will face opposition. Sometimes the protectors of privilege will lash out—arresting, detaining, torturing, and killing. At such times, we need to be reminded that we do not stand alone, but are embraced even beyond physical death by loving, divine arms. Like Luther, who stood, no doubt trembling, before king and pope, unrelenting in his critique of unjust ecclesial and temporal powers, we may take comfort in the remembrance, “I am baptized.” Returning to the waters frequently, renewing our vows, and hearing again the divine promises, we may find a courage that sustains and empowers us in the works of prophetic action on behalf of the Body, on behalf of God. Recollection of our baptism, of the impossibility of being torn from the arms of God, may instill again the courage to be true to who we are, the courage to act on behalf of justice, the courage to become together the very Body of God in and for the world. Thrusting our hands once more in the waters, soaking our brows, we are free from the paralysis of fear and stand firm.

## BAPTISM AND ORDINATION: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Critical of the way Christianity had become, in a sense, professionalized (with monks, nuns, and priests living lives of deep prayer and active service, while all others were dependent on their intercession and mediation to gain salvation), the Reformers placed great emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Calvin established four offices to serve the larger Body and its ministry: deacons, elders, ministers of the gospel, and doctors. Individuals who demonstrated applicable gifts and talents and could testify to a calling

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from God could serve in these offices.<sup>16</sup> But we have struggled ever since with the tension between the ministry of all and the particular ministries of some.<sup>17</sup>

What I hope is clear from this meditation on baptism is that there is one ministry of the church that extends from the font to the promised “river of life.” Born in the womb of baptism, the church and all its members walk steadily on toward the new Jerusalem, where God will dwell with God’s people, where there will be no more death and every tear will be wiped away. The ordained are not the only ones on this journey—all the baptized must go the distance. As we have seen, the ministry of all is communal, demanding, and daunting; yet the font provides sufficient strength. We are all to contribute to the fulfillment of what our Constitution defines as The Great Ends of the Church: the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.<sup>18</sup> All of us are to speak good news to our neighbors. All of us are to participate in and nurture the Body. All of us are to participate in public prayer. All of us are to preserve the truth and promote justice. All of us are to point out signs of God’s promised future. These are not things that only pastors, deacons, and elders do. Washed, all of us are made ready to serve.

We need leaders, certainly. What we don’t need are followers, at least in the passive sense of the term. We need those who are set aside to study, to listen, to be available to be interrupted and come to hospital or home, to preach and teach, and to preside at font and table. We need those who call us back to the waters and to the bread and to the wine, so that weary arms are revived and stale visions are replaced by fresh imaginings of what could be, what has been promised, and where we must go next. The Body requires such service and, to ensure that such responsibilities are fulfilled, we need to designate those with talent and calling to do them. We need to free some persons from certain worldly duties so as to focus on the health of the Body itself. But those called out from among the Body are not to function as the Body, only to help the Body function. The ordained are those set apart from the baptized in order to assess

how the community as a whole is doing in order to ask: Have we left any behind? Are we embracing the stranger? Are we headed in the right direction? Yet it is the Body that actually welcomes, embraces, and takes the next steps on the journey.

The ordained are crucial to keep the Body strong and to help us avoid missteps. They are especially helpful when they candidly assess how well we are balancing our three primary tasks: our testimony to what God has already done, our attention to the needs of our neighbors, and our focus on God’s promised future. Still, they only serve the Body to which we all belong. So let the charge with which I conclude be for all the baptized:

Go now, therefore, friends, as members of  
Christ’s Body on this earth!  
God has no hands but yours, so touch all  
creatures with healing tenderness.  
God has no ears but yours, so listen for the sobs  
of the silenced that they might not  
be forgotten,  
and attune yourself to the distant triumph  
song that heralds hope.  
God has no nose but yours,  
so follow the stench of rot that no one will  
die abandoned,  
and detect the perfume of new growth to  
find fertile fields in which others  
may thrive.  
God has no tongue but yours, to taste and tell of:  
the Bread of Life,  
the cup of wrath,  
Living Waters,  
the Banquet where all are welcome.  
God has no eyes but yours, so keep them, at once,  
on the prize, and  
on the despised,  
so that, even as you leave no one behind,  
you may reach the land of Promise!

### Notes

1. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 412; hereafter, BCW.
2. *Ibid.*, 413.
3. For a rich yet concise meditation on central scriptural metaphors for baptism, see chapter 3, “Baptismal Meanings” in James F. White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 52–72.
4. See the “Proposal of the Task Force on Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the PC(USA),” *Minutes of the 204th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Part I, Journal (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1992), 1021–1092. In 38.120, we read: “One member of the task force . . . asked . . . Are not all Christians called to discipleship—to the service of the purpose of God and the Reign of God? . . . The New Testament seems to teach that ministry or service to God of the people of God is a task that belongs equally to all. . . . [Yet] there are offices and gifts that differ, and each part of the body of Christ is distinctive and has its own role to play.”
5. See “Sacramental Study Group Issues Draft Report” at [www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/worship/sacramentworkgroup.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/worship/sacramentworkgroup.htm). This report also appeared in volume 40.1 of *Call to Worship*.
6. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV.xiv.17.
7. Calvin illustrates this by negative example to justify his exclusion of women from ministry and even from the power to baptize as lay persons. He assures those who baptize immediately after birth because they fear that an unbaptized child might die outside of the promise of grace that “. . . infants are not barred from the Kingdom of Heaven just because they happen to depart this present life before they have been immersed in water. [As] we have already seen that serious injustice is done to God’s covenant if we do not assent [to this principle], as if [God’s covenant] were weak of itself, since its effect depends neither upon baptism nor upon any additions” (*Institutes*, IV.xv.22).
8. Calvin makes this point particularly strongly when discussing the Eucharist: “For seeing we are so weak that we cannot receive him with true heartfelt trust, when he is presented to us by simple doctrine and preaching, the Father of Mercy, disdaining not to condescend in this matter to our infirmity, has been pleased to add to his word a visible sign by which he might represent the substance of his promises, to confirm and fortify us by delivering us from all doubt and uncertainty,” in “Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1540) in *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Missoula, MT: Scholar’s Press, 1975), 510.
9. Calvin, again: “. . . Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory” (*Institutes*, I.v.1).
10. As we read in Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born

of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Galatians 4:4–7).

11. While I express this in my own terms here, the contrast between biological and ecclesial relations is inspired by words from Barbara Lundblad, professor of preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In her phrase, the church is "water-thicker-than-blood family."
12. "At last there came a grave person to the gate, named Good-will, who asked who was there? . . . [Christian answered:] Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. . . . [Good-will asks:] But how is it that you came alone? [Christian answered:] Because none of my neighbors saw their danger as I saw mine," in John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Washington Square Books, 1957 [1678]), 25.
13. I am thinking of ecclesiological formulations such as those of Letty Russell, who writes: "To speak of 'church in the round' is to provide a metaphorical description of a church struggling to become a household of freedom, a community where walls have been broken down so God's welcome to those who hunger and thirst for justice is made clear," in *The Church in the Round* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 12. The final phrase of my sentence was, of course, made famous by Handel in his oratorio *Messiah* but comes from Isaiah 40:5 and is also quoted in Luke 3:6.
14. See Nelle Morton, *The Journey is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), especially pages xvii–xx.
15. It is actually Isaiah's "suffering servant" who sets his face like flint in sure hope that God will not abandon him, but the text, Isaiah 50:7, has been long associated with Jesus' Passion in the lectionary selections of Lent and Holy Week.
16. See 38.184 in the "Proposal of the Task Force on Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the

PC(USA)," *Minutes of the 204th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, Part I, Journal (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1992), 1035.

17. From the report of the Peace, Unity, and Purity Task Force, Section III.C, 19–20: "We also studied ordination. This study, which also involved analysis of the work of others as well as the sharing of personal views, yielded the following key insights: One model of Christian leadership that is consistently offered throughout the New Testament is servant leadership. Christians are to imitate Christ in a posture of self-giving and service, and to 'outdo one another in showing honor' to others (Rom. 12:10) by respectful attention and loving care. Reformed theological tradition emphasizes: the common Christian vocation of the entire body, the 'priesthood of all believers,' in which all members are called by God to promote the ongoing health and maturation of the body of Christ that certain members of the body of Christ are called by God through the voice of the church to lead and nurture the body in its spiritual growth and in mission. These ordained officers must adhere to confessional, governance, and disciplinary standards not required for membership. Beyond these themes, Scripture does not provide a thoroughly developed theology of ordination, and a theology of ordination has not been clearly and consistently articulated in the development of Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine. As one might expect, then, ordination has been a source of some confusion and a matter of controversy in our history. From the outset of American Presbyterianism to the present, denominational conflicts have often centered on matters of fitness for ordination. The current controversy regarding issues of human sexuality and ordination is the latest example of this recurring pattern." See the report, especially lines 551–572, at [www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/fullfinalreport.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/fullfinalreport.pdf). Accessed May 17, 2006.
18. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order*, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, 2005–2007 (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2005), G-1.0200.