

# Ordination Vows – What did we promise?

## Session Starter #24

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### Prayer

*Book of Common Worship*

*Elder ordination prayer*

Almighty God: In every age you have chosen servants to speak your word and lead your people. We thank you for these men and women whom you have called to serve you as ruling elders. By the power of your Holy Spirit, develop in them the gifts of ministry; may they have the same mind that was in Christ, serving you in the world as long as they shall live; through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

### Introduction

That your faith in God and your integrity of purpose may be declared before God and all people, you are required in terms of this preamble to answer the questions appointed for all who would enter the office of ruling elder.

*Book of Forms section 449*

### Scripture

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

*Mark 14:22-24, NRSV*

### A Brief Commentary

We are covenant people. God made a covenant with Noah, symbolized by the rainbow, and later pledged to bless the descendents of Abraham and Sarah. Through King David, God promised a Messiah. On the night of his arrest, the Messiah drank from the cup with his disciples and announced a new covenant. We are united with God, and with one another, through covenants.

### Reflection

Whenever Presbyterian elders are ordained they answer four questions (see *Book of Forms*

*449.1-449.4*). Whether we have been elders for decades or a few days, it can be beneficial to reflect on what we promised to God and to the church when we accepted this sacred trust.

- 1. Do you believe in God...?**  
The answer to the first question is a confession of faith in God as revealed through the scriptures. Before anything else happens, elders confirm that they are Christian believers.
- 2. Do you accept the subordinate standards...?**  
The answer to the second question confirms that elders accept the reformed and reforming doctrine of our denomination and will be guided by that doctrine as they provide Christian leadership within the church.
- 3. Do you accept the government of this church...?**  
Elders promise, through the third question, to abide by the governance of our denomination while providing a leadership that nurtures the peace and unity of Christ within their own congregation and within the worldwide church.
- 4. Do you promise to perform you duties...?**  
The answer to the fourth question is a promise to serve in an uplifting and grace-filled manner that will bless and encourage the church’s ministry of hope, peace, joy and love in the world.

### DISCUSSION

1. Describe the covenant we make with God by fulfilling these vows.
2. Describe the covenant we make with the congregation by fulfilling these vows.
3. Describe the covenant we make with the world and the church beyond our congregation by fulfilling these vows.