

Leader's Guide for the DVD: *To All Generations: The Book of Confessions*

J.W. Gregg Meister

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INTRODUCTION

Your Challenge

Let's face it: reading our Book of Confessions is a daunting endeavor! It's comprised of different types of documents that were written over many centuries. It's translated into English from different languages, invariably with odd sentence structures and words we haven't spoken (outside of church) for over a hundred years. The book itself separates the documents with a lot of confusing numbers and, to make matters even worse, no pictures.

However, if you're reading this Leader's Guide you're thinking to yourself that the theological concepts buried within these documents are worth at least some consideration. But unless you've earned a doctorate in theology or church history – or you were one of those star academic students with whom I personally spent little time in seminary, you are perhaps understandably feeling somewhat inadequate for the challenge of leading your church members in a study of our Book of Confessions.

First Things First

So the first thing we have to do is convince ourselves that it's worth the effort. And then we have to overcome the more obvious obstacles. Who wants to admit to our church officers, "I have no idea what heresy the Anabaptists or Pelagians were propagating that got our theological ancestors so riled up. I only took two classes in church history and we didn't cover that"? Or perhaps a bit more embarrassing, "Before looking at the DVD (or producing it, in my case), I couldn't have told you how many documents were in our so-called 'Book' of Confessions or how many were actually not even 'confessions' but creeds or catechisms or 'statements.'" And then there's the question so familiar in our church today, "How do these faith statements apply to my life right now?" If something doesn't seem to have immediate application, then apparently it's not worth our time.

Some of us don't have a problem admitting that we were not the best students in seminary. Anyhow, we can now readily research answers to factual questions about individual confessions online. But what about the ideas, the beliefs, and the convictions that are affirmed and uniquely embedded in these documents? Why might it be worth the struggle to unpack some of these so-called confessions?

Is It Worth It?

One answer is that we Presbyterians are convinced that what a person believes influences how a person behaves. Beliefs lead to actions. If we don't rigorously examine our beliefs, then our behavior is subject to the whims of the moment. No parish minister would say that what a person believes doesn't matter, even if we may have considered the idea as college sophomores during a rap session at 3:00 in the morning.

Another answer to why study our Book of Confessions might take the form of a question: In reality, what's the alternative? To avoid studying the confessions and just slide along with snippets of faith statements are hardly the way to build a faithful and fruitful life. Dense though it

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may be, our Book of Confessions is a major tributary to the river of history that comes to us as our Reformed tradition. This rich heritage is ours—to inform us, to challenge us, and to comfort us—as we frame our own beliefs and as we help others clarify theirs. Ideally in the process of accepting our inheritance, we increasingly align our behavior with the Spirit of Jesus and with an appreciation for living under the canopy of God's Providence.

As A Teaching Elder

Since I first decided to make a video about these documents in 1992, I began reading a short section of one of the confessions during my morning devotions. I often found that even a few sentences helped focus my day. However, a personal use like this for those of us who are trained in theology is much easier than teaching such a diverse, deep, and complex set of documents to lay people.

If I were still a parish minister, here's what I would do:

I would bring the Book of Confessions into the center of parish life. For example, I would re-translate awkward, antiquated phrases into contemporary English and print a segment in each Sunday bulletin. I would write an article on it for the church newsletter and quote it in a meditation at a funeral service. I would show one chapter of the *To All Generations: The Book of Confessions* DVD at the start of each session meeting. I would build a series on the Book of Confessions using the DVD for weekly adult education classes and for extended study at church retreats.

About This Leader's Guide

Assuming that you are becoming convinced of the value in bringing our Book of Confessions into the core of your congregation's life and mission, this Leader's Guide is designed to encourage and equip you. It offers a variety of teaching options and techniques which are widely used in education settings.

The rest of this Leader's Guide is divided into three sections, followed by a short conclusion:

- Study Plan
- Supplementary Activities
- Interactive Techniques.

Take from this Leader's Guide whatever seems useful to you in your particular context. Mix it with ingredients from your own wisdom and experience. And if you have suggestions to share with others about using the guide and the DVD, please send them to me. I'll consider incorporating them in updates of the Leader's Guide.

It takes heavy lifting to teach our Book of Confessions. But **you can do it**. All things are possible to those who believe.

Blessings on your efforts,

J.W. Gregg Meister 856-427-7263 Haddonfield New Jersey

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STUDY PLAN

*In this section you'll find a re-usable plan for conducting one or more classes on *The Book of Confessions* using the **To All Generations: The Book of Confessions** DVD. You can use the study plan as a template for every class meeting: only the DVD chapter and content of the discussion need change from class to class.*

The study plan as a whole illustrates types of activities to include, a sequence for the activities, and approximate timing.

The study plan below has four columns:

- *Types of activities are listed in the column on the far left.*
- *A description of each activity appears in the Description next column going to the right.*
- *Examples of those activities— especially keyed for the initial class—appear in the next column, along with any special preparation that specific activities may require.*
- *Estimated or suggested duration of each activity appears in the column on the far right.*

Tip 1: Check the Interactive Techniques section of this Leader's Guide for fuller descriptions of the interactive strategies used in this study plan, as well as others.

Tip 2: Discover ideas for extending the study plan's activities or substituting other activities in the Supplementary Activities section of this Leader's Guide.

Tip 3: Prepare for each class by watching the DVD chapter which the group will be studying. Do whatever background research you will need to feel comfortable with the content. Review the study plan for suggested activities. Decide how you will insert relevant content and edit or change the activities to fit your group and your setting.

Tip 4: Gather the supplies you'll need ahead of time. The study plan calls for note paper and/or sticky notes, pencils or pens, markers, poster paper and tape to hang the poster paper if it's not self-adhering, Bibles, and copies of the Book of Confessions. Participants can download the Book of Confessions from the Internet or purchase hard copy from our denomination's bookstore. See <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/book-of-confessions/>.

Tip 5: Get comfortable with the operation of the DVD player. Before the class begins, check that the TV monitor is plugged in, turned on, and connected to the DVD player. Sounds obvious but...

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Activity	Description	Examples	Time
<i>Do Now</i>	<p>Have something ready for participants to do as they gather that is related to the document they're going to study.</p> <p>A do now can be designed for individuals or for groups.</p> <p>Display the instructions so participants can read them silently as they enter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-print the names of the individual confessions and cut them into strips or blocks so that each strip or block contains a single Confession name. Provide a complete set for each three to five people. Direct each group of three to five people to work together on arranging the strips/blocks in chronological order. ○ Ask participants to jot two things they think they know (one on each sticky note) about the historical period or the particular document. Ask them to group like topics as they post their own notes on a board or large sheet you will have provided. ○ Ask participants to read a paragraph from the confession and write two or three sentences that express the ideas in their own words. 	5 mins.
<i>Opening Prayer</i>	<p>Lead the prayer yourself or call on someone else to lead it.</p> <p>In some settings, it's a good idea to ask the person ahead of time or to set up a schedule</p>	<p>It is appropriate to open every church meeting with prayer. It is especially appropriate for this study of the Book of Confessions to ask the Lord of History to bless participants in their efforts to understand church history and their own</p>	1 min.

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Activity	Description	Examples	Time
	of prayer leaders.	personal faith journeys.	
<i>Do Now Review</i>	<p>You can quickly review responses from the do now with the group OR not review them at all.</p> <p>At a minimum, walk around and scan participants' responses yourself to get a sense of where they're starting from or what they're thinking about. There's no need for you to comment at all. If you do comment, say something affirming.</p>	<p>Here are a couple of options for reviewing participants' responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do a popcorn share-out. Hear a couple of responses and maybe ask for any different types of responses. ○ Have participants read their responses quickly aloud and ask what they suggest to participants. They (or you) might say things like, "We already know a lot about medieval Germany" or "Our thinking on this topic is very diverse." 	3 mins.
<i>Introduction: Context</i>	<p>You can use the following information to introduce the Book of Confessions and the DVD <i>To All Generations: The Book of Confessions</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DVD teaches about the 11 major documents, known as confessions, which contain the key faith statements for Presbyterians. • The DVD is organized into four sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Display a timeline during each class. Ask a participant to stand at the point of the timeline for each era or for the particular era of the confession under discussion. ○ Display a map that shows Europe and the Mediterranean basin including the Near East and the Middle East. Ask a participant to point to the locale where the main action for each confession took place. If participants have access to individual maps (e.g., at the 	10 mins.

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	<p>to reflect distinct periods of church history and the development of the confessions. In the DVD the four eras are called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Church Fathers [circa 2nd – 8th C] ○ Reformation [16th – 17th C] ○ Orthodoxy [17th C] ○ Post-Enlightenment [20th C]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An avatar of John Calvin introduces each confession. Twenty-three actors and high definition graphics take viewers behind the scenes to witness the making of each confession and to highlight the big issues each one addresses. • In this chapter of <i>To All Generations: The Book of Confessions</i>, [fill in what you feel is pertinent]... <p>Consider starting every class by viewing the 3-minute Introduction on the DVD. It will help get regular participants back in the groove and bring newcomers up to speed.</p> <p>You may also want to remind participants</p>	<p>back of the Bible), ask participants in pairs to find the locations.</p> <p>Give participants a <i>To All Generations Time Traveler's Companion</i> fact sheet with spaces for them to fill in the name of the confession, when, where, by whom, and why it was written, key ideas, and DVD notes. Distribute a blank <i>To All Generations Time Traveler's Companion</i> fact sheet each time the group starts on a different confession.</p> <p>Also give participants a <i>To All Generations</i> journal leaf with spaces for them to fill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ questions: whatever puzzles, bewilders, or confuses them ○ points of strong agreement: whatever makes them shout hallelujah ○ points of strong disagreement: whatever makes them frown or grumble, "Hey, wait just a minute!" ○ topics for further study: whatever they want to check into, check out more closely, or learn more about ○ memorable lines from the confession. ○ collective claim the confession makes on the 	

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	<p>briefly about the confessions they have already studied. You may also want to check if participants have any burning comments about the previous chapter. Limit this discussion to a total of 5 minutes.</p> <p>Before you show the new DVD chapter, quickly draw participants' attention to prompts on the fact sheet or the journal leaf. Ask participants to make notes as they watch each new chapter. Tell them you will also give them a few moments at the end of the chapter to make additional notes.</p>	<p>community, along with action steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ personal claim the confession makes on the participant, along with action steps ○ a personal prayer. <p>You may want to identify one or two of these prompts you want them especially to focus on. Alternatively, you can suggest substitute prompts or invite participants to pre-select any one or two prompts to keep in mind as they watch.</p>	
<i>Show DVD chapter</i>	Show the next DVD chapter.		4-8 mins.
<i>Reflection A: Stop and Jot</i>	At the end of the DVD chapter, give participants a minute or two to stop and jot while everyone is silent. They should use this time to make additional notes or organize their thoughts.		2 mins.
<i>Discussion A: Turn to Your Partner</i>	Ask participants to turn to a partner and share what stood out for them. Participants can refer to their notes.		4 mins.

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<i>Discussion B: Heads Together</i>	<p>Direct participants in their pairs to find another pair with whom they'll put their heads together. They have two tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to share what stood out for them ○ to come up with issues they want the whole group to discuss, based on the selected prompts. <p>If the heads-together groups have time before you reconvene the whole group, they can work on prioritizing their suggested topics.</p> <p>If they have even more time, they can begin pooling their knowledge and perceptions to elaborate on and add to each other's statements of what stood out.</p>	<p>If the group is relatively small, have participants work on the tasks below while they are still with their one partner.</p>	8 mins.
<i>Discussion C: Whole Group Facts</i>	<p>At the first class, guide participants in establishing norms for group discussion (take no more than five minutes). Participants can suggest norms, usually up to five, that will keep discussion open, civil, and safe. Ask if everyone can live with the suggested norms. Display the norms each time the class meets so participants can remind themselves, and each other, as needed. Refresh participants on</p>	<p>You might recommend that participants keep the golden rule in mind (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) as they propose norms. Typical discussion norms might include: take turns; share the air time; listen; respect others' views; keep confidences that are shared during the discussion.</p> <p>Participants will likely have divergent beliefs,</p>	5 mins.

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	<p>the group's discussion norms before opening up the discussion each time the class meets.</p> <p>Introduce the whole group discussion by reviewing responses to the prompts on the <i>To All Generations Time Traveler's Companion</i> fact sheet. Come prepared (or have designated someone else to come prepared) with the factual answers.</p> <p>Try to anticipate where controversy might arise and do whatever research you can to bring pertinent information. Check the Internet by using Google or some other search engine. Often Wikipedia can be a quick and useful source for factual information.</p> <p>If participants disagree on the <u>facts</u> in this discussion, correct the facts on the spot if you can.</p> <p>Tell the group that differences on key ideas and interpretations will be examined during the whole group discussion that follows.</p>	<p>opinions, perspectives, interpretations, and even differences as to facts. One or more participants may also hold views that you consider incorrect. Participants will not always state their views openly or will not always voice differing viewpoints. And they may not always know what their views are.</p> <p>One of a leader's most important tasks in a class is ensuring that all participants feel safe in exploring their own hearts and minds, and encouraging each other's spiritual growth. One powerful way you can foster that climate is by modeling careful listening, sensitivity, curiosity, and support.</p> <p>When there are questions or disagreements about facts, you can provide the information yourself or invite reliably knowledgeable participants to do so. If no one can provide the correct answer--along with appropriate evidence--on the spot, options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Name it: state that there is a disagreement on the facts. Clarify the precise source of the disagreement. 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designate someone to research the question further and bring information back to the group. If feasible, have someone check online during the class via laptop, smartphone, or iPad. 	
<i>Discussion D: Whole Group</i>	<p>Choose a discussion topic from the topics that participants have identified as discussion topics.</p> <p>If participants have not generated discussion topics, be ready to supply one or more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to pick up on something participants said stood out for them. • Propose one or more topics you have researched. <p>Frame the discussion topic as an open-ended question.</p> <p>We all strive for a climate in which all participants are comfortable sharing in the discussion. Some participants may need to be invited. As leader, you can encourage participants' contributions by limiting your own</p>	<p>Several ways to encourage all participants to share in the discussion include strategies for various scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no one speaks up or only a few participants dominate, ask participants to turn to a partner. Then re-open the discussion for partnerships to share what they discussed. • If several participants talk at once or tend to interrupt each other, indicate the importance of showing respect for everyone. Alternatively, acknowledge those want to speak, determine the order in which they will have the floor. Write the order down if that helps you remember and call on them in that order. • If one or more participants tend to dominate and others wish to get in but 	Time available

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	<p>to the functions of moderator.</p> <p>Tip 1: Help participants speak to each other. If one or more participants have trouble understanding a comment, ask the one who made the comment to say a little more about it or say it another way. Alternatively you can ask another participant to try rephrasing the comment. Save your opinions for</p> <p>Tip 2: Remain neutral. You can acknowledge participants' comments with a nod or a thank-you, or can follow up with an invitation for others to comment, such as "What do the rest of you think about what Rosa just said?"</p>	<p>can't, say that you'd like to hear from some people who haven't had a chance to speak yet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If participants tend to make lengthy statements which keep others from contributing, take control for the benefit of everyone. Announce that comments will be limited to a particular length (e.g., two minutes). Ask someone to serve as timekeeper and apply the time limits consistently. <p>"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is always a fine theological framework for organizing a group discussion!</p>	
<i>Reflection B: Stop and Jot</i>	<p>Ask participants to enter into silence for one minute. They can use the time to meditate on what they've heard or to jot notes for the <i>To All Generations</i> journal leaf.</p>	<p>Draw participants' attention to the section of the journal leaf which will have spaces for them to fill in during the class or at home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ collective claim the confession makes on the community, along with action steps ○ personal claim the confession makes on the participant, along with action steps ○ a personal prayer. 	1 min.
<i>Last Thoughts</i>	<p>Invite participants to share a short statement of one thing they are thinking or feeling on the basis of today's study of the Book of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whip around the room to give each person in turn a chance to say one phrase or sentence, or pass in response to your 	3 mins.

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	Confessions.	<p>prompt. All statements are made without comment from anyone else, except for a thank you at the end.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alternatively, ask for volunteers to make individual statements. All statements are made without comment from anyone else. 	
<i>Clearing Up</i>	<p>Check the parking lot for questions or issues that need to be addressed. In some cases you will be able to tell the group how those issues will be addressed rather than dealing with them during the class.</p> <p>Make announcements for the good of the order including an invitation for people to reflect further on the class and fill out the journal leaf at home.</p>	Set up a 'parking lot' in the room where participants can physically place written questions or issues which are not directly relevant to the discussion (and so should not disrupt or derail it), but which may need to be addressed before the class ends.	>5 mins.
<i>Closing Prayer</i>	Ask if there are specific needs or prayer requests. In framing the prayer, be mindful that the class is as much about ministry and community building as about learning.		>1 min.
<i>Ticket Out</i>	Ask participants to complete the ticket out the door and leave it with you. It will help you prepare for the next class. You may pick up	<p>Construct your own ticket out the door with space for participants to fill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an 'aha' (new information, perception, 	3 mins.

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	cues for pastoral care follow-up. Feedback is vital for ministry, community, and learning!	realization) ○ still not clear about ○ next time please do more of ○ next time, please do less of ○ other comment.	

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SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

This section presents some activities that can extend or deepen participants' encounters with the Book of Confessions during the class or at home. It may be useful if participants do a bit of research before tackling some of these supplementary activities.

Feel free to alter the activities or substitute your own to suit your particular congregation.

- Write a letter to a character who was involved in the historic event/document:
 - Pose questions for the character.
 - Express your agreement or disagreement with the character's position of action and say why.
- Take on the persona of someone from the era (it could be a historical figure or an imagined character including an ordinary person in the street) who would have been affected by the event/document you're studying. Write a journal entry that person would have written or letter that person would have written to a friend recounting the person's reaction to the event/document.
- Compose headlines for a newspaper of the time about the event/document you're studying.
- Draft copy for a one-minute news bulletin on the event/document you're studying:
 - Give the big news (i.e., major change, innovation, controversy) up front.
 - Add a few sentences describing key details.
 - Identify opposing views.
 - Indicate upcoming developments or implications of the event/document that will be reported on in the future.
- Write a blog in the voice of one of the characters involved in the event/document you're studying:
 - Focus on one aspect or part of the event/document this individual would likely pick up on.
 - Express the point of view this individual would adopt.
- Email a friend or family member commenting on one or two things that stood out for you in the event/document you're studying.
- Write a one- or two-sentence synopsis of the event/document.

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- Rate each event/document (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest) or give it a grade (from A to F, with A being the highest):
 - State the criteria or qualities by which you'll be rating the document:, such as clarity, elegance, conciseness, importance of the issue, relevance for you.
 - Make a few notes as to evidence in the document on which you base your rating.
- Choose a section of the document and put it in your own words.
- Log the claim that the document you're studying makes on your congregation and on you:
 - Write one thing the congregation might do in response to the document. What would have to be done to get the ball rolling?
 - Write one thing that you personally commit to do in response to the document.

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INTERACTIVE TECHNIQUES

This section lists techniques that can help participants get actively involved during a class. The explanation for each technique describes what it is and how to implement it. Where applicable, the explanation also includes what an appropriate follow-up activity would be.

The techniques are grouped according to when they can be most helpful during a class. The techniques for 'In the Middle of the Class' are further grouped by individual, small group, or whole group work.

At the Start of the Class

- **Do now.** An excellent way to get participants engaged when they enter the room, a *do now* is a short assignment or activity (up to 5 minutes) related to the study topic. Instructions for the *do now* should be posted so participants can see them as they come in and can begin to working on it immediately. A *do now* can be designed either for individuals or groups to work on together. When participants finish the *do now* task, you can follow-up with a quick scan or a brief acknowledgement of their work—or you can simply go to the next part of the study plan.

In the Middle of the Class

Individual Work

- **Stop and jot.** When participants *stop and jot*, they write individual notes in response to a question or other prompt from you. The purpose is to invite or consolidate individuals' thinking and reflection as they clarify their own beliefs. You might follow up with a *share out*, *turn to your partner* or *heads together*.
- **Text rendering.** In *text rendering*, an individual marks up a copy of a text—a portion of a document—by underlining, circling, or highlighting with a marker a unit of text (which could be words, phrases, or sentences, depending on your instructions). Usually the prompts for *text rendering* asks participants to mark the ideas that stand out for them or specific evidence in support of an idea. You can follow up with a *share out*, *turn to your partner*, *heads together*, whole group discussion, or another activity that makes use of the ideas or information that participants have marked.

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- **Jot and paste.** Individuals or small groups who *jot and paste* generate responses to a prompt by writing one response per sticky note and posting them on a board or poster paper. If fixed categories of responses have already been identified, you can ask participants to place their comments in the relevant section of the board or poster. If categories of responses have not been identified ahead of time, you can ask participants to look for similar comments and post theirs nearby. Alternatively, you can read each comment aloud and let participants decide in which cluster of ideas it belongs. Follow up depends on the purpose of the *jot and paste* activity. For example, if the *jot and paste* was designed to identify topics of interest, you and the participants can see where participants' interest was concentrated. You can then help the whole group synthesize the individual suggestions in that cluster into one or two more specific topics.

Small Group Work

- **Turn to your partner.** *Turn to your partner* structures conversation between two participants seated next to each other (typically for a discussion lasting 1 to 3 minutes). Before asking participants to turn to their partners, you will want to check that everyone has a partner. If the group has an odd number of participants, it may be necessary for one small group to have three participants. Sometimes it may make sense for you to arrange partners so that spouses, staff, newcomers, or very reserved participants are paired with others in the group. As leader, you set the topic, the task, or the prompt for the pairs to respond to; you describe the expected outcome or product, if there is one; and you tell participants how much time they will have for the conversation with each other. In their pairs, partners can either take turns giving their own responses or can construct a joint response. You can use *turn to your partner* to generate ideas when the whole group is slow to do it or when many people want to get into the discussion. You can follow up with some kind of *share-out*.
- **Heads together.** *Heads together* is a time-delimited, structured conversation for three or more participants. The group can be made up of people sitting near each other or by melding two pairs of partners after each pair has come up with its own response to the prompt. As with *turn to your partner*, you can follow up with some kind of *share-out*.
- **Think, pair, share.** *Think, pair, share* refers to a short period of silence (up to 45 seconds) as individuals contemplate a prompt from you, followed immediately by a *turn to your partner*, *heads together*, or other method for sharing. The *share-out*

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could be with a small group, such as all those seated in the same corner of the room, or with the whole group.

- **Jigsaw.** A *jigsaw* is a method for distributing the reading of different sections of a single document—or the reading of different but related documents—to small groups who become the ‘experts’ in their respective sections. The reading and discussion in the small groups is followed immediately by a *share-out* so that the whole group benefits from the expertise of all the small groups. The typical length of each group’s reading assignment is the amount that can be read and discussed in about 10 minutes (ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a page). Initially members of each small group silently read the section assigned to their group. (You might suggest they mark the text by *text rendering* as they read. You can also suggest that each small group appoint a facilitator, note-taker, and reporter.) Still in their small groups, participants discuss what they read and collectively come up with the information that you have asked them to present to the whole group. The last step in a *jigsaw* is the share-out of information from each small group to the whole group.
- **Brainstorming.** *Brainstorming* is a method for generating many ideas quickly. Participants, usually in a small group of up to 6, respond to a prompt with as many ideas as they can think of, even outlandish ones, in a compressed time period (up to 3 minutes). No comments or judgments are permitted as the ideas are generated. Participants may shout out and build on each other’s ideas (which is why outlandish ideas may be helpful). A recorder writes the essence of each idea as fast as they’re called out, ideally on a poster that all participants can see. The follow up to *brainstorming* is a winnowing or refinement of the ideas and possibly melding them with ideas of other small groups.

Whole Group Work

- **Popcorn share-out.** A *popcorn share-out* is a relatively quick, non-systematic method for obtaining feedback or sample responses to a prompt from a few individuals (who may present their own work or the work of a small group). You may call on any volunteer or you may want to specify the point of view you want the group to hear about (e.g., those who agreed with a certain character’s logic). You may also want to announce at the outset how many individuals you will call on (“Let’s hear from 2 or 3 people”). Typically, a *popcorn share-out* calls for a short response in contrast to a full report from every individual or small group. In the course of a *popcorn share-out*, you might listen to the first few responses and then ask for others to speak who had substantively different responses. To end the *popcorn share-out*, you may want to invite responses from participants who

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have a burning comment that they feel must be shared before the group moves on.

- **Talking stick.** A *talking stick* is an object such as a pointer, a bookmark, a decorated tongue-depressor, or a small toy that is passed to an individual who then has the floor to speak in response to a prompt. You might decide to use a *talking stick* when many participants want to speak at once or tend to interrupt each other. A *talking stick* can also be helpful when few people volunteer to speak. Immediate follow up is passing the *talking stick* to another participant. Either the individual who holds the *talking stick* or you can decide to whom to offer the *talking stick* next. Participants may always choose to decline the *talking stick* or decide not to speak if it is put into their hands.
- **Whip.** A *whip* is a relatively quick method for inviting a short response from every participant in a group. Depending on your instructions, each person in turn responds to a prompt with a word, phrase, or sentence without interruption or comment from anyone else. Participants are always free to pass. If one or more participants choose to pass, you might offer them an opportunity to give their responses after everyone else has had a chance to speak.
- **Dot voting.** *Dot voting* is a method for identifying which ideas or items among many are of greatest interest or urgency (or whatever criterion you lay out). In *dot voting*, individual participants are allotted a fixed number of circle stickers (that is, dots) or checkmarks which they can 'spend' next to the posted ideas they choose. You set the ground rules ahead of time as to whether or not participants may put more than one of their dots or checkmarks next to a single idea. You can follow up by identifying the ideas that received the most votes or by negotiating a settlement if two or more ideas received the same number of votes.
- **Gallery walk.** A *gallery walk* is a technique for exposing all participants to a set of displayed products which are usually the output of various small groups. (The small groups may have all been working on the same issue or problem, or on different aspects of an issue or problem.) The products are posted in an area where participants may freely walk by individually or in small groups. You can ask participants to read and reflect in silence as they review the products. Alternatively you may ask them to add their questions or reactions to the products by posting them on a sticky note or writing in a different color marker. Asking participants to record their questions or reactions is relevant if the products will continue to be used. Follow up to a *gallery walk* may be an activity in which the ideas are refined, synthesized, or prioritized, or turned into action.

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At the End of the Class

- **Parking lot.** A *parking lot* is a designated area of a blackboard, a bulletin board, or a sheet of poster paper on which participants post topics or issues they would like addressed but which are not immediately germane to the discussion at hand. A bowl or a plate can be designated as the *parking lot* if wall space is not available. Without interrupting the group's activity, individual participants may place issues in the *parking lot* at any time. Alternatively, you or the group may identify an issue that's raised publicly as a *parking lot* issue. Participants write their issues on sticky notes or 3x5 cards they attach to the poster paper or bulletin board. A norm can be set as to whether individuals who put issues in the *parking lot* must write their name on their posting or may remain anonymous. At a logical point in the class, typically at a break or close to the end, you can review the *parking lot* issues privately or publicly. If you review them publicly, you can read each one aloud or paraphrase it, and either respond with an answer or indicate how it will be addressed at a later time.
- **Ticket out the door.** A *ticket out the door* is a short response (usually in writing) to a prompt that participants complete individually at the end of a class and leave with you. Ideally the prompt for a *ticket out the door* is crafted so that participants can respond in under 2 minutes. The *ticket out the door* serves both to consolidate their thinking and to give you feedback. A sample of content-oriented prompts you might consider for a *ticket out the door* includes: what stood out for you, what one belief will you pray about, what new idea did you gain from today's class, what one thing will you do as a result of today's class, where are you confused or unclear, what remaining questions do you have about the topic, and what suggestions do you have for additional topics to cover in the future. A *ticket out the door* may also probe participants' perceptions of how effective or satisfying they found the class, as well as invite their suggestions for improvement.

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CONCLUSION

Please send me your suggestions, based on your experience, for making this Leader's Guide ever more useful in the life of our congregations.

Blessings on your efforts,

J.W. Gregg Meister, Interlink Media

phone: 856-427-7263

Interlink Media

250 Kings Highway East

Haddonfield, NJ 08033

www.interlinkmedia.NET

www.PresbyterianChurchUSA.com

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