

Invitation to Study and Respond

The following study guides are designed to help you, in your ministry context, provide the feedback the Form of Government Task Force needs to fulfill its mandate from the 218th General Assembly (2008). The 218th General Assembly (2008) strongly urges your participation in this process.

Using These Guides

The task force assumes that individual preparation will significantly enhance discussion in every ministry context. We encourage each congregation and governing body to include in the study process the time, study guide, and resources for personal preparation prior to any group experience. We encourage you to print out the study guides for use in the study process. Suggested resources are available online and may also be copied for distribution.

The task force also assumes that study, discussion, and response may be planned and accomplished differently in different settings. The guides that follow suggest ways to engage in this study, but your task force looks forward to receiving your feedback through whatever process you deem most appropriate for this study in your context.

Some settings for study that the task force has imagined include, but should not be limited to:

- An adult study series in a congregation on Presbyterian Polity and the Form of Government
- A special session meeting or retreat for the purpose of studying the Form of Government
- A special task force (at any congregational or governing body level) charged with reviewing the document and bringing recommendations to a meeting of the governing body.
- Delegation to any or all of the current constitutional committees at middle governing body and General Assembly levels (e.g. COM, CPM, COR, Nominating Committee, PJC, etc.) and or Council.
- A designated time during or attached to a regular or stated meeting of the governing body.

The Guidelines for Group Response include suggestions of particular provisions of the Form of Government that the task force believes may be of particular relevance in various contexts and some questions which you may wish to discuss. This is not intended to limit the scope of your review and discussion but rather to invite you into the specific content of the document. A governing body (or committee) may also choose to refer those or other specific questions or sections of the document to individuals for reflection during their individual preparation time. The Guidelines for Individual Preparation do not include that kind of specificity.

In response to our charge from the 218th General Assembly (2008), we encourage broad participation in consideration of the proposed Form of Government. We appreciate your feedback.

Study Resources Available:

- Revised Draft of the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and the Form of Government (<http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>)
- “What Is Missional Ecclesiology?” (by Paul Hooker for the task force) (<http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>)
- Current *Book of Order* (<http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/boo07-09.pdf>)
- “Advisory Handbook for Councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures Required by the Form of Government” (part of the task force report to the 218th General Assembly (2008)) (<http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>)
- Comments from and recommendations made to the 218th General Assembly (2008) Assembly Committee on Form of Government Revisions (<http://www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/>)

For Further Background Study:

The original task force read the following books in preparation for drafting the proposed Form of Government and commends them to you.

A Generous Orthodoxy by Brian McLaren. Copyright © 2004 by Brian D. McLaren. Published by Zondervan.

Bearing the Marks of the Church by Charles Wiley, Kevin Park, and Darrell L. Guder. Copyright © 2006, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, on behalf of the Office of Theology and Worship. Available from Presbyterian Distribution Service, PDS# 70424-06-001.

The Continuing Conversion of the Church by Darrell L. Guder. Copyright © 2000 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Distinctively Presbyterian by Bill Chapman. Copyright © 2006, Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, Kentucky.

Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book IV: Of the Holy Catholic Church by John Calvin.

The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America by Darrell L. Guder. Copyright © 1998 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church by Diana Butler Bass. Copyright © 2004 by the Alban Institute.

Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers by Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker. Copyright © 1986, John Knox Press and 1999, Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker. Published by Westminster John Knox Press.

Rethinking the Church by James Emery White. Copyright © 1997, 2003, by James Emery White. Published by Baker Books.