

**Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church**  
**Suggested outlines for a group study of the final report**

*Preface*

The following pages offer outlines of a variety of approaches to structure a group study of the Theological Task Force's final report. The approaches range from four-week, 60-minute sessions to a two-day retreat.

Most of the approaches incorporate study papers that grew out of the work of the task force. The papers were written by task force members, growing out of presentations they made to the task force at various points during the task force's five years together. The papers are one way the larger church has to sense what the task force studied and discussed, but they are not an official part of the task force's final report to the 217th General Assembly (2006).

Also incorporated into the material are suggestions for ways to use tools for discernment the task force found helpful in its work.

Where indicated, some of the outlines are developed fully into curriculum leader's guides.

These outlines and the resources mentioned in them (with the exception of the two task force videos) can be found on the resource CD that was made available to every congregation, or on the task force's Web site at [www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity](http://www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity). Ordering information for the videos is on the Web site.

*The two designs on this page have been developed in detail for facilitators. You will find them on the resource CD or the task force's Web site (www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity).*

**Basic Study of the Final Report**  
(four one-hour sessions)

**One: Plan and Progress of the Work of the Task Force**

*Overview of the task force's mandate and process (Section II of the report), and of the issues with which they dealt (Section III)*

**Two: Theological Prologue**

*Study of Section I, "Theological Prologue," of the final report*

**Three: Resources for Peace, Unity, and Purity**

*Study of Section IV, "Resources for Peace, Unity, and Purity" of the final report*

**Four: Implementation of Learning**

*Study of Sections V and VI of the final report*

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**Engaging One Another in New Ways**  
(four one-hour sessions)

**One: Living in More Than One World**

*An opportunity to build community by reflecting on Scripture, hearing part of one another's life story, and growing to appreciate differences*

**Two: Balancing Complementary Commitments**

*An opportunity to learn about complementary commitments within the polity of the Presbyterian church and to explore how to hold such commitments in equilibrium*

**Three: Discerning the Movement of the Spirit**

*An opportunity to experience one way to discern God's movement by reflecting on how God has been at work in the past, and to build community by talking about same-gender issues from a personal perspective*

**Four: Understanding Different Viewpoints**

*An opportunity to explore and discuss the study paper, Same-Gender Relationships in the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints*

*On this page are two suggested outlines for six one-hour studies. Section numbers correspond with sections of the final report; the questions for each section are found in the study guide that is included at the end of the final report. Questions on study papers are found at the conclusions of the study papers. All of the resources mentioned can be found on the resource CD or the task force Web site: (www.pcusa.org./peaceunitypurity).*

**Six-Week Design #1**  
(six one-hour sessions)

**One: Introductory Presentation**  
*Section II and its questions*

**Two: Theological Prologue**  
*Section I and its questions*

**Three: Issues Before the Task Force**  
*Section III and its questions*

**Four: “Same-Gender Relationships in the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints”**  
*Study paper; use one-hour session from the facilitator’s guide to the paper*

**Five: “Principles of Polity”**  
*Study paper; use with Section IV and questions from both the study paper and Section IV*

**Six: “Discernment and Decision-Making”**  
*Study paper and its questions*

**Six-Week Design #2**  
(six one-hour sessions)

**One: Plan and Progress of the Work of the Task Force**  
*Section II and its questions*

**Two: Theological Prologue**  
*Section I and its questions*

**Three: Issues Before the Task Force**  
*Section III and its questions*

**Four: Balancing Complementary Commitments**  
*Use session two of “Engaging One Another in New Ways” (see previous page)*

**Five: Discerning the Movement of the Spirit**  
*Use session three of “Engaging One Another in New Ways” (see previous page)*

**Six: Understanding Different Viewpoints**  
*Use session four of “Engaging One Another in New Ways” (see previous page)*

*On this page are additional six-week designs with sessions ranging from two to three hours*

**Six-Week Design with two-hour sessions (or Twelve-Week Design with one-hour sessions)**

**One: Introductory Presentation**—*Section II and its questions from the final report study guide; use mutual invitation to share own recognition of need for repentance or pain around conflict*

**Two: Theological Prologue**—*Section I and its questions; portion(s) of the task force video Who Is Jesus Christ? with discussion questions from the study guide that accompanies the video*

**Three: Issues Before the Task Force**—*Section III and its questions; segment two on biblical interpretation from the task force video Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity with discussion questions from the video study guide*

**Four: Same-Gender Relationships in the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints**—*Study paper; two-hour session from the facilitator's guide to the paper*

**Five: Principles of Polity**—*Section IV; study paper Principles of Polity with accompanying discussion questions; engage in polarity management exercise, choosing one or more sets of the points of balance*

**Six: Discernment and Decision-Making**—*Section IV; study paper Discernment and Decision-Making with accompanying discussion questions; Graced Communal History exercise (may need more than one hour)*

**Six-Week Design with three-hour sessions (or three-day retreat)**

**One: Introductory Presentation**—*Section II and its questions from the study guide (that accompanies the final report); use mutual invitation to share own recognition of need for repentance or pain around conflict. Bible study: Love One Another (John 17:20-26)*

**Two: Theological Prologue**—*Section I and its questions; portion(s) of the task force video Who Is Jesus Christ? with discussion questions from the study guide that accompanies the video. Bible study: Walking on the Water (Matt. 14:22-33)*

**Three: Issues Before the Task Force**—*Section III and its questions; segment two on biblical interpretation from the task force video Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity with discussion questions from the video study guide. Bible study: Reflections on Foot Washing (John 13)*

**Four: Same-Gender Relationships in the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints**—*Study paper; two-hour session from the facilitator's guide to the paper. Bible study: The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church (John 14–17)*

**Five: Principles of Polity**—*Section IV; study paper Principles of Polity with accompanying discussion questions; engage in polarity management exercise, choosing one or more sets of the points of balance. Bible study: Living with Disagreements (Romans 14:1–15:13)*

**Six: Discernment and Decision-Making**—*Section IV paper with questions; Graced Communal History exercise. Bible study: Testing the Spirits (Jer. 28 and 1 Cor. 12–14), both together or 1 Corinthians alone*

The following two pages contain suggested retreat designs.

### Retreat on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church

#### Friday

- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Opening worship or singing
- Community building**  
Refer to “Resources for Fostering Community and Dialogue” for ideas
- 8:00 p.m. **Biblical interpretation**  
Show part two of the task force video *Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity*, followed by one of the Bible studies on the resource CD or task force Web site, such as “Reflections on Foot Washing” (John 13)
- 9:30 p.m. Closing worship, possibly incorporating foot-washing ritual

#### Saturday

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. **Theological reflection**  
Show all or part of the task force video two *Who Is Jesus Christ?*. Discuss questions from either the video study guide or the study guide for Section I of the final report, such as: “What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is Lord?”
- 10:15 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. **Presbyterian history and polity**  
Present the points of balance from *Principles of Polity* study paper. Discuss the questions in the study paper. Do the polarity management exercise (see session two of “Engaging One Another in New Ways”) using one of the sets of polarities from the four named as “points of balance.”
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. **Sexuality**  
Explore the study paper *Same-Gender Relationships and the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints* using the facilitator’s guide for the paper.
- 2:30 p.m. Break
- 2:45 p.m. **Discernment**  
Do the Graced Communal History exercise in small groups of no more than ten in a group (see session three of “Engaging One Another in New Ways”).
- 4:45 p.m. Break
- 5:00 p.m. Closing worship, possibly with Communion

## Church Officer or New Member Retreat

### Friday

- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Opening worship or singing
- Community building**  
Refer to “Resources for Fostering Community and Dialogue” for ideas.
- 8:00 p.m. **Biblical interpretation**  
Show part two of the task force video *Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity*, followed by one of the Bible studies on the resource CD or task force Web site, such as “The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church” (John 14—17)
- 9:30 p.m. Closing prayers

### Saturday

- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. **Theological reflection**  
Show all or part of the task force video two *Who Is Jesus Christ?*. Discuss questions from either the video study guide or the study guide for Section I of the final report, such as: “What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is Lord?”
- 10:15 a.m. Break
- 10:30 a.m. **Presbyterian history and polity**  
Present the points of balance from *Principles of Polity* study paper. Discuss the questions in the study paper. Do the polarity management exercise (see session two of “Engaging One Another in New Ways”) using one of the sets of polarities from the four named as “points of balance.”
- Noon Lunch and free time
- 2:00 p.m. **The church and its confessions**  
Present *On Being a Confessional Church* study paper with accompanying questions.
- 3:30 p.m. Break
- 3:45 p.m. **Discernment and decision-making**  
Present steps of communal discernment process from study paper *Discernment and Decision-Making*; assign case studies; utilize discussion questions
- 4:45 p.m. Closing worship if new member retreat  
If church officers, break here then...
- 6:00 p.m. Supper
- 7:00 p.m. **Ordination**  
Present *Ordination: Biblical Roots, Tradition, and Practice* study paper with accompanying questions.
- 8:30 p.m. Closing Worship

*The following are possible thematic series growing out of the work of the task force.*

**Thematic Approaches**  
(one-hour sessions)

**Biblical Interpretation (1-3 sessions)**

Task force video *Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity*, segments two and three  
“Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture/Biblical Authority and Interpretation”

**Christology (1-5 sessions)**

Task force video *Who Is Jesus Christ?*  
Theological Prologue from the final report, with study guide questions

**Presbyterian History and Polity (1-2 sessions)**

*Principles of Polity* study paper  
Polarity management exercise

**Sexuality (1–7 sessions)**

Analytical Exercise of Romans 1:16-32  
*Same-Gender Relationships in the Church: Seven Theological Viewpoints* study paper

**Discernment (1-7 sessions)**

*Discernment and Decision-Making* study paper with accompanying questions  
Task force video *Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity*, segment one  
*Resources for Fostering Community and Dialogue*  
Graced Communal History exercise (2-3 hour block)  
Bible study(ies) on “Testing the Spirits” (Jer. 28 and 1 Cor. 12—14)

**The Church and Its Confessions (1-2 sessions)**

*On Being a Confessional Church* study paper with accompanying questions

**Ordination (1-2 sessions)**

*Ordination: Biblical Roots, Tradition, and Practice* study paper with accompanying questions

**Interactive Bible Studies (1-9 sessions)**

Walking on the Water (Matt. 14:22-33)  
Reflections on Foot Washing (John 13)  
The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church (John 14—17)  
Living with Disagreements (Rom. 14:11—15:13)  
Testing the Spirits (Jer. 28 and 1 Cor. 12—14)  
Sinners Encounter Jesus (John 7:53—8:11)  
Leviticus  
Romans 1  
Love One Another (John 17:20-26) (meditation with accompanying questions)