

This publication is the result of a presentation given to or work growing out of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church as part of the Task Force's ongoing process. It is offered to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a tool to further conversation and study throughout the church. It does not necessarily represent the official views of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church.

On Being a Confessional Church

A presentation by John Wilkinson to the
General Assembly Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church
February 2003

Introduction

Theology matters. The late Robert Boling, who taught Old Testament to several generations of students at McCormick Seminary, held to a premise that any theological point worth making should be able to be made while waiting for a train at a Chicago “el” stop. So here goes... Theology matters; or, confessionalism matters. Or, claiming and reclaiming our confessional heritage, vision, and task to allow the *Theological* Task Force on behalf of the whole church to move ahead, to move through, to move into a faithful and hopeful future, all the while furthering the church's peace, unity and purity.

I don't really have very much new to offer today—simply some reminders, some patching together of sources and the posing of a few questions that might serve our mandate. Allow me first, please, the benefit of scriptural support. [Read Acts 8:26-31]

Theology matters. Scripture matters, clearly; yet our tradition has held—from Calvin to the present moment—that you do no one a service by simply giving them the Bible and wishing them good luck, particularly since we do not believe in luck! We need a road map, a guide. We need theology—we ourselves, the church, and the world that God loves so much.

Our mandate and our plan as a task force overflow with the claim of the need for theology. We have been asked to discern the church's identity, which is theological as well as historical and cultural and other things, focusing on four issues, three of which are overtly theological and the fourth—power—perhaps being the most theological of all. In our own plan for moving ahead we have reframed the issues of the mandate to affirm the inextricable link between what we believe and how we behave, theology and polity, and connected those affirmations to the practice of ministry and the mission of the church—why, and how, and to what end. Clearly, the church is claiming our confessional heritage in a numbers of ways to address our current conflicts. And yet, perhaps in ways similar to uses or misuses of the Bible, we are not always sure *what* the confessions say, let alone *how* we might use our confessional corpus and heritage to engage the present moment. And so, while recognizing that this is remedial for all of us, the planning team thought that it might be helpful to remember some of the “why” and “how” as we move ahead.

Why We Confess

If, as the Westminster Confession affirms, our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy God forever, then even this task, the task of theology, must have a doxological aspect to it. Reminding the church of that fact would go a long way. The late John Leith wrote that a confession of faith is an “acknowledgement of the gracious presence of God as our Creator, Judge and Redeemer. It is our YES to the presence of God in Jesus Christ. It is therefore, first of all, an act of praise and worship” (*A Brief History of the Creedal Task*, page 36).

And so we confess to worship God. There are other, more formal, more specific reasons why we confess. Those reasons will help to drive this conversation always to its usefulness both in terms of our mandate and the lens of peace, unity, and purity. We will spend some time in the second hour discussing both the denominational statements and the Moorhead and Rogers/McKim articles (see resource list), but it might be helpful to touch the key points of the very important 1986 statement, “The Confessional Nature of the Church,” endorsed just a few years following the 1983 reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). And, parenthetically, part of our curricular/resource development agenda might be to remind the church of this document and present it in an accessible, teachable way.

The 1986 statement asserts that statements of faith—confessions, we will primarily call them today—have three reference points: God, the church, and the world. All three are worth remembering. It’s worth remembering, for example, that the working title of our latest confessional statement was “A Brief Statement of the *Reformed* Faith,” but that its official title became “A Brief Statement of Faith.” If it is true for us, we believe that it is true for the world, and we invite the world, including the ecumenical church, into conversation with us.

The 1986 statement also considers *when* confession should be made, a not altogether closed question for our task force. The fancy term I learned in seminary was *statis confessionis*—state of confession. In 1986, anyway, those states of confession were three:

1. internal danger to the church, particularly by means of distortion of the truth;
2. external threat, either to safety or integrity; or
3. the opportunity of new insight.

It seems as if the last reason, “great opportunity,” has been our most recent reason to confess, evidenced by the Confession of 1967 and A Brief Statement of Faith, as well as several PCUS efforts that did not achieve official confessional status, but that remain invaluable tools for teaching and worship.

The five confessional functions identified: worship, defense of orthodoxy, instruction, rallying-point in times of danger and persecution, and church order and discipline all

seem to be in play at the present moment, though current conflicts seem to be emphasizing issues of orthodoxy and order/discipline.

Even so, there is a hierarchy in all of this. Confessions are subordinate to scripture, which is subordinate to the Lordship of Christ, the head of the church. Confessions are “provisional, temporary, relative,” or, as the preface to the Confession of 1967 states:

Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable. Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of the church’s duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God’s providence, may demand. (9.03)

The *other* part of our Constitution, the *Book of Order*, affirms that confessions “identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions” (G-2.0100b.). In fact, all of chapter two of the Form of Government in the *Book of Order* is worth our attention—a very useful summary of the “why” and the “how” of all this. And, the third and fourth of our ordination questions transport us immediately and compellingly to this conversation, as we pledge to be “instructed...led...and continually guided” by the confessions of the church (G-14.0207c. and d.).

And yet, at the end of the day, to build a case for why we confess based on references and footnotes, even those of constitutional import, is not quite adequate. We are, not to the exclusion of other traditions, but with an extraordinary uniqueness, a worshiping, serving and *learning/teaching* tradition. This is who we are. This stuff’s in our DNA, and a faithful future must take this seriously, responsibly, and joyfully. Confessionalism is a posture within the broader Protestant family that asserts, according to Jack L. Stotts, an openness, an expectation, an obligation that is **not** optional in order to preserve our “integrity, identity, and faithfulness”(Introduction in Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997, page xi).

How We Confess

If that is the case, though, it is perhaps useful to remember how we got to where we are, and where we might be going. Again, the usefulness of any of these comments will only be to remind us of what we already know.

Until 1967, in fact, the only confessional standard in American Presbyterianism was the Westminster Confession of Faith. American Presbyterianism is unique in that sense; many of our Reformed and Presbyterian partners throughout the world have embraced varieties of confessional material, some predating the Westminster standards. And even in the United States, we have wrestled with some of the wording in Westminster, particularly at the outset of the 20th century. If you have ever tried to decipher the layout of Westminster in *The Book of Confessions*, you will know that the Southern and

Northern churches revised the statement slightly differently in the 1900s and actually changed, to dramatic or less-dramatic degrees, the substance of the standard.

The 1986 statement on confessionalism argues that we have a *book* of confessions for two reasons, one historical and one theological. We will get to the history in a moment. “Reformed Christians,” the statement argues, “cannot recognize any one confession as a final, infallible encapsulation of true Christian faith and life...A *Book of Confessions* that includes some classical Reformed confessions and leaves room for new confessions makes unmistakably clear one of the most distinctive marks of the Reformed tradition” (page 14). As we will learn, however, that statement is not entirely without bias.

In 1967, at least two important things happened at the culmination of the 1958 union of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the United Presbyterian Church of North America to form the UPCUSA. A new statement of faith, the Confession of 1967 (C67), was adopted and a book of confessions was adopted that not only coupled C67 with the Westminster standards, but also placed them alongside two ancient creeds of the church, several Reformation era statements and the Theological Declaration of Barmen. Part of our interpretive task will be, I would submit, to take seriously both of those actions. For all of the energy—positive and negative—generated by C67, an equally important act, if not more so in the long view of things, was the adoption of a *Book of Confessions*. We went not from one to two confessions, but from one to ten or so. And, whether we think it was a good idea then or not, we as a task force are faced with an interpretive loop that never really was closed, either in 1967 or 1983. That is to say, the question of what it means to have a *book* of confessions still seems to be pregnant with possibilities.

Just a very little bit of history...

As union between the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the United Presbyterian Church of North America appeared inevitable, thoughts turned to the issue of theological formulations for a new church in a new age. In January 1956, the Presbytery of Amarillo overtured the General Assembly, at first, simply “... to consider the re-wording of the Shorter Catechism”(General Assembly Minutes, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1957, page 141).

The 1956 General Assembly answered the overture in the affirmative, echoing the language of the United Presbyterian Church of North America when it adopted its new confessional statement in 1925: “the church affirms the right and duty of a living Church to re-state its faith from time to time so as to display any additional attainments in truth it may have made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

While arguing that the Shorter Catechism should remain unchanged, the committee assigned the task of responding to this overture was not prepared to argue that the Shorter Catechism was adequate on its own terms. It envisioned a new statement of faith. “A Short Statement of Faith written in these times,” the committee asserted, “dealing with the great verities of the Word of God and facing today’s burning issues, should be of

interest and value to church officers and church school teachers, to new members of our churches; and to any among us who wish to give plain answers about the faith we hold. It should bring to all the members of our Church some sense of participation in the thrilling revival of theology.”

What to do with Westminster, or, more generically, what to do with the current confessional standard, remained an open question. Some of us lived through this history more directly than did some others of us. The United Presbyterian Church of North America, in 1925, placed the Westminster standards in historical context, not, at that time, seeking to claim other historical Reformed confessions, but identifying the present moment as a time for a new theological formulation. The constitutional authority of the UPCNA Confessional Statement of 1925 was set aside at the 1958 reunion; at that point, Westminster became the sole constitutional standard. Some argued then, and throughout the 1960s, that Westminster was enough, and not simply enough, but more than adequate. Others argued that for many reasons Westminster needed an overhaul. Others simply ignored Westminster. The committee eventually given this charge reshaped those positions, except the last one. It proposed keeping Westminster in the confessional family and writing a new confession that updated some theological issues and reframed others.

The committee that produced the Confession of 1967 and proposed *The Book of Confessions*, chaired by Edward Dowey, certainly took issue with portions of Westminster, particularly with some of the content we will consider this week [see “The Proposal to Revise the Confessional Position of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to the 177th General Assembly, the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America” (May 1965); Leonard J. Trinterud, “Confessions of the Church: Times and Places,” Blue Book, pages 14-18; and Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *Confessions of the Church: Types and Functions*, pages 19-22.) Dowey and others made the point continually over the course of the confessional debate that if one confession was to stand for the entire tradition, that it should, at least, represent the most formative period of the theological enterprise. To Dowey and others, Westminster did not and could not represent Reformed theology at its best. I would submit that we continue to live with both positive and negative implications of that argument in the life of the church. Leonard Trinterud, prominent church historian, reminded the church at that point that the notion of a new confession and a *Book of Confessions* fell well within the streams of historic Presbyterianism. Reformed Christianity had always lived with an evolving confessional base: “new situations required new confessional documents” to be made “in actual life situations.” In 1581, Trinterud reminded, a *Harmony of the Confessions* (sometimes known as the “Salnar” harmony) was created containing approximately thirty Reformed confessional statements—based not on John Calvin’s Genevan Catechism, but Heinrich Bullinger’s Second Helvetic Confession.

And yet, for nearly 250 years, American Presbyterianism had not a catalog, or a chorus, but a single confessional statement—Westminster. Depending on your location on the Presbyterian spectrum, either Westminster was being abandoned, diluted, or rightly recast in the 1960s. Dowey stated clearly that the material on the Bible in the Confession of 1967 (appearing in the section on the Holy Spirit, by the way) “is an intended revision of

the Westminster doctrine” (Blue Book, page 29). That sat well with many, and not so well with many others. And while it may not be useful to re-visit fully the particularities of that conversation, we certainly are living with its trajectories.

Again, and very parenthetically, the issue of identity seems to be central to all of this. When we speak of the Reformed tradition, we are speaking of a river with many streams, or a quilt with many patches, or... choose your own metaphor! A technical debate at the time of the 1960s involved the nature and definition of Calvinism, from Calvin himself to the next generation of interpreters to American versions, including 19th century Princeton orthodoxy and 20th century Neo-orthodoxy. It is an identity question. My hunch is that all of this matters now because we continue to seek to live together with contemporary manifestations of historical iterations. In a recent *Christian Century*, William Placher calls this “messy and complicated and wonderful,” and it is all three of those, at least.

Part of the complicated nature of this particular conversation is the trajectory of dynamics generated by a reunion that is now nearly twenty years old. In nuanced ways, the Southern church was holding a parallel conversation as its northern counterpart was forming its *Book of Confessions*.

In 1962, the Presbyterian Church in the United States drafted “A Brief Statement of Belief” that was never submitted by a General Assembly to presbyteries for ratification. In 1976, the Presbyterian Church in the United States General Assembly approved “A Declaration of Faith,” along with a book of confessions. This proposal was ultimately rejected by presbytery vote; however, the 1977 PCUS General Assembly approved the publication of the statement for study purposes, where it has received considerable attention. One sidebar comment is the reflection I hear from time to time that the unofficial PCUS confession has received considerably more attention in the teaching and worship ministry of the church than its official, northern counterpart, the Confession of 1967, ever did. That issue, how confessions are appropriated in the life of the church, might certainly be worth pursuing. The proposed PCUS book of confessions would have paralleled the northern version, replacing, though, the Second Helvetic Confession with the Geneva Catechism. (“The Proposed Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, together with related documents approved by the 116th General Assembly and recommended to the presbyteries for advice and consent,” 1976; *Our Confessional Heritage: Confessions of the Reformed Tradition with a Contemporary Declaration of Faith*, recommended for study in the churches by the 117th General Assembly, The Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1978; “A Declaration of Faith,” Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1977, 1991.)

Several themes from the PCUS process are worth noting. First, the Southern church indicated a willingness to examine the Westminster standards at the same time the Northern church was so doing, just as the United Presbyterian Church in North America had done fifty years earlier. Ernest Trice Thompson wrote that the Southern church mirrored the Northern church: “Calvinism had remained the system of theology favored in the church’s theological institutions, but it was not the rigid, unyielding Calvinism of earlier years, a Reformed theology rather prepared to accept insights from Barth,

Brunner, Bonhoeffer, Tillich and others, all subject to revision in the light of a growing understanding of Scripture” (*Presbyterians in the South*, Volume III. Atlanta: John Knox, 1973, page 494). This is all worth remembering at least because the identity question at the heart of our work must consider the diversity of expressions manifested by former Northern and Southern streams, along with the many, many tributaries that served to form those streams in both south and north.

Trajectories

As I have suggested, the adoption of C67 and a book of confessions helped to forge the complex place in which we find ourselves. It may be well for us to think about these things just a bit more.

In their summary volume in the *Presbyterian Presence* series, John Mulder, Louis Weeks, and Milton J Coalter argue that “C67 both captured the spirit of twentieth-century American Presbyterianism and planted the seeds for future theological difficulty.” That difficulty, they wrote, was a “looser understanding of confessional authority” that prohibited the confession from serving as “a unifying basis for theological identity” (Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, *The Re-forming Tradition: Presbyterians and Mainstream Protestantism*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992, pages 132-133).

That is the core of the argument offered by Bradley Longfield in *The Presbyterian Controversy* and by James Moorhead in the article we will discuss in a bit. Both Longfield and Moorhead argue that, in part, the travail of twentieth-century American Presbyterianism has been a crisis of theological identity. Longfield, in a fine consideration of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy (which in many ways continued through the 1960s to today) spoke of the “nebulous doctrinal identity” of the mainstream church epitomized by the abandonment of the Westminster standards (Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists and Moderates*. New York, 1991, pages 3, 234). James Moorhead’s very fine essay on confessionalism in the *Presbyterian Presence* series continues along similar lines. Moorhead notes a “shift in the confessional church from affirming a set of truths to witness to God’s saving activity.” Wrote Moorhead, “In the last half century, formal theological pronouncements have functioned as general guidelines for religious discourse rather than as specific prescriptions for belief,” leading to a “looser style of confessional identity” (James H. Moorhead. “Redefining Confessionalism: Presbyterians in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Confessional Mosaic: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Theology*, edited by Milton J Coalter, John M. Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990, pages 59-77).

That argument will be worth our consideration, and not purely as an academic exercise. Edward Dowey took a first cut for us. Expressing appreciation for Moorhead’s treatment of the Confession of 1967, Dowey wrote, however, that “Confessionalism was *recovered* in 1967, not ‘redefined’...” (Edward A. Dowey, Jr., “*The Re-forming Tradition*:

Presbyterians and Mainstream Protestantism: A Review,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Volume XIV, Number 1, New Series 1993, pages 1-10).

At the same time that the narrowing argument has been made, a quieter call for the broadening of our confessional corpus has also been in play. Perhaps you, as a member of the Theological Task Force, have been asked, as have I, whether it is time for a new confession. I usually respond by saying that what we have is plenty if we would be about the task of digging deeper—though that’s just my personal opinion. Though there was relatively little debate at the time on the choice of inclusion in the UPCUSA *Book of Confessions*, since that time various questions have been raised, more so from the perspective of inclusion rather than exclusion. The Geneva Catechism, for example, or the Belgic Confession, have received considerable attention in the church because they represent what *The Book of Confessions* does not—an articulation from the French-speaking church at the very time of John Calvin. B. A. Gerrish, among others, made a strong case at the time for the inclusion of either the French or Belgic confessions, and the Office of Theology and Worship has been leading a similar conversation over the past several years (B.A. Gerrish, “The Confessional Heritage of the Reformed Church,” *McCormick Quarterly*, Volume XIX, Number 2, January 1966, pages 123-124).

How we place this particular conversation on the broader canvas of the confessional nature of the church is also worth some energy and imagination. In many ways, the UPCUSA and the PCUS efforts of the 1960s presaged a wave of new confessions in the Reformed and Presbyterian community, globally and in the United States.

In the 1980s, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) produced two major studies, “Called to Witness to the Gospel Today” and “Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed Tradition Today,” which sought to articulate a contemporary understanding of the confessional task. At the heart of Reformed confessionalism, according to the WARC should lay a Christology that leads to freedom and discipleship. Special attention must be paid (in the 1980s, remember) to racism, women and families, cultural diversity, and world peace. Reformed confessions—regardless of the era in which they are written—must always consider the issue of scripture, the relationship between grace and law in the context of covenant, and a faithful ecclesiology (see World Alliance of Reformed Churches, “Called to Witness to the Gospel Today,” February 1983 and World Alliance of Reformed Churches, “Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed Tradition Today,” 1982).

If you are seeking an interesting pedagogical exercise, assemble an adult education class and think aloud about what a contemporary statement of faith might include. William Placher’s paper, “Between Confessions,” indicates the great changes in the church and world in the period between 1967 and 1983—between C67 and A Brief Statement of faith. Gender, class, and race. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of apartheid. Technology. Science. Post-modern. Post-denomination. The rise of secularism and the rise of evangelicalism as religious and political forces. What *would* a new confession say, *or*, how could we bring a contemporary perspective to our existing confessional corpus?

Jack Stotts, in his superb introduction to Jan Rohls' volume on Reformed confessionalism, suggests that the common themes of confessions since the Barmen Declaration are: an ecclesiology that affirms the unity of the church; the centrality of Jesus Christ, human and divine, with more focus on the human; a high view of scripture that incorporates the importance of critical tools for understanding the written word; social ethics; and mission (Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*, introduction by Jack L. Stotts. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, page xii).

And our very own *Book of Order* suggests that any theological statement should consider the sovereignty of God, the election of the people of God, covenant life, faithful stewardship that “shuns ostentation,” the recognition of the human tendency to idolatry, and living in obedience to the Word of God (G-2.0500a.1-4). Again, any particular list is helpful as it places itself within the broader streams of Presbyterian history and Reformed thought. For our purposes, though, any list, or any particular aspect of this larger conversation, is only useful as it serves our purpose as a task force and furthers the church's peace, unity, and purity.

Why This Matters

So while I might not need to convince anyone in this room, or the broader church for that matter, that theology matters, that confessionalism matters, the real opportunity presents itself in the ways that these things will matter for our work and witness now. And so I will not presume to prescribe, but rather to suggest some questions and issues for our mutual consideration, which we will begin to touch on today and tomorrow, but which may help to serve our work in the months and years ahead.

- How do we appropriate the varied articulations of theological issues in *The Book of Confessions* as they pertain to our mandate?
- How do we explore the question of a *book* of confessions and the varying perspectives on theological “clarity?”
- How will we consider the varying uses of confessions: teaching, worship, doctrine, and, in light of our current conflicts, as polity guides?
- How do we best lift up our confessional heritage and the statements themselves?
- How might our curricular resources serve this task?
- How can we gain access to other helpful material—the former PCUS offerings, the Reformed Church of America “Our Song of Hope,” for example, creeds from the global Reformed and Presbyterian family?
- How do we engage confessional issues raised in various quarters of the church—for example, the three-point statement articulated by the Confessing Church group?
- How do we connect the dots between the conversation on biblical authority and interpretation with this one and with our broader mandate?
- How do we—the church at large—prepare candidates for ministry in a confessional church?

- How do we forge a theological identity given our current resources and ecclesiastical context?
- The UPCUSA produced the *Book of Confessions* with no supplementary interpretive materials, problematically, some would argue. How might we remedy that situation?
- How can presbyteries and congregations become communities of theological discourse?
- How do we connect our ecclesiology, theology, and polity, particularly in light of the issues posed by the diversity of our discipleship?
- How can we, as Edward Dowey suggests, use our Reformed confessions as a kind of hermeneutical tool to understand the Bible, the church, ourselves, and the world?

There are any more questions, to be sure.

At Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, we use A Brief Statement of Faith to structure our new member classes. I often tell our new members that they could do a lot worse than reading the Brief Statement every night as they go to bed or early in the morning when they rise. A few weeks after saying that, a person on the membership committee came up to me after worship. “You know, I’ve been doing that.” “Doing what?” I asked. “I have been reading the Brief Statement every night before I go to bed.”

I was stunned—first, that somebody had actually listened to me. But I was also ushered into a sense of gratitude at the difference this church leader said that such a little confessional discipline made in his life. Would it be so?

And finally, may we return to the story with which we started (read Acts 8:35-38). “The thrilling revival of theology,” a call which we all share and which has been given to the church to steward and proclaim, echoing always the earliest and most profound of confessions, “Jesus is Lord.”

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Small Group Discussion
A Close Reading of What the Confessions Say about the Bible
February, 2003

Materials needed: copies of *The Book of Confessions*

Divide the participants into three smaller groups and assign each group the following portions of the Confessions:

Group A – Second Helvetic, 5.001–5.010

Group B – Westminster, 6.001–6.010

Group C – Confession of 1967, 9.27-9.30

Other references: Scots Confession: 3.18, 3.19
Shorter Catechism: 7.002–7.003, 7.089–7.090
Larger Catechism: 7.113–7.116, 7.265–7.270
Barmen Declaration: 8.04, 8.11, 8.17, 8.22
A Brief Statement of Faith: 10.4

Ask the small groups to do the following:

Read the text.

Ponder the text to yourself, noting key terms and images.

Discuss the following items, with one person assigned to report key insights:

1. Main point
2. Strengths and weaknesses
3. Contributions to the work of the task force and the “peace, unity, and purity” of the church

Questions to Jumpstart Small Group Discussion:

- What is the key point of the text?
- How does the key point function in the broader context of the confession?
- What is NOT being said?
- If you could say “yes, but…” to the confession’s authors, what would you say?
- How do you resonate, personally, with this text?
- How do you think the text serves the task force mandate?

Resources on Confessionalism
Materials for Presentation to Theological Task Force members
February 2003

Church documents:

“Confessions and Confessing in the Reformed Tradition Today.” World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982, Geneva, Switzerland.

“A Declaration of Faith.” Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY, 1977, 1991.

Catalog of Theological Statements of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assemblies (1935-1996). Office of Theology and Worship, Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY, 1996.

Our Confessional Heritage: Confessions of the Reformed Tradition with a Contemporary Declaration of Faith. Recommended for study in the churches by the 117th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1978.

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“The Confessional Nature of the Church.” Commended to the church for study by the 198th General Assembly (1986). Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Louisville, KY, 1986.

“The Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.” Pittsburgh: Board of Christian Education, 1956.

“The Proposal to Revise the Confessional Position of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to the 177th General Assembly.” United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, May, 1965.

“The Proposed Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, together with related documents comprising the Report of the Ad Interim Committee on a New Confession of Faith together with a Book of Confessions to the 116th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.” 1976.

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Leith, John H. "The Writing of a Reformed Confession Today." *Reformed World*. Volume 39, Number 2, June 1986, pages 501-517.

Rogers, Jack B. "Biblical Authority and Confessional Change." *Journal of Presbyterian History*. Volume 59, Number 2, Summer 1981, pages 131-158.

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Schaefer, Thomas A. "The Beginnings of Confessional Subscription in the Presbyterian Church." *McCormick Quarterly*. Volume XIX, Number 2, January 1966, pages 102-119.

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Armstrong, Maurice W., Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson, editors. *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956.

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