

Reformed and Always Being Reformed

Exploring the Presbyterian Church (USA) with Young People

While some young people in your group may be “cradle Presbyterians” who have attended since birth, others may be new to the Presbyterian denomination or church altogether. Similarly, some may have experienced Confirmation classes while others have not. To that end, the ideas included below may be beneficial to a young person’s understanding of things such as Congregational Meetings, Book of Confessions, Elders, and Sacraments. Hopefully young persons in your group will also learn from each other, as some may be more familiar with certain elements of the PC (USA) than others.

This I Believe Distribute copies of the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed¹ to the group and ask the following questions:

- Which creed, if either, sounds most familiar to you?
- What are the primary differences between the creeds?
- Which feels more comfortable to read or speak?
- Where do you hear elements of Scripture in both creeds?

What’s the Point? List the Six Great Ends of the Church² on newsprint and divide the group into six different groups. (If you have a smaller youth group, assign each group multiple Great Ends). Provide markers, magazines, newsprint, scissors, and glue and ask each group to draw, make a collage, or create a skit that embodies what their specific Great End means to young people in the church today. Once each group has had time to create, invite all groups to share their Great End.

Phone a Friend Invite an Elder and/or Deacon (depending on whether or not your congregation has both) to share what they do in their role, how they came to have an ordained leadership position in the church, etc. Allow young people to ask them questions about their role. If your congregation has elders or deacons that are young (youth or young adult) invite them to share this same information with the group. If your church does not yet ordain young people as Elders and Deacons, this is a great time to begin (or continue) that conversation with your congregation and session members.

1. Both creeds may be found in the PC (USA) *Book of Confessions*.
2. The Six Great Ends of the Church may be found in the PC (USA) *Book of Order*.

Twenty Questions Invite young people to list twenty questions they have for the Head of Staff/Pastor at your congregation about the Presbyterian Church (USA), your congregation, etc. Then, invite your Head of Staff/Pastor to attend youth group and answer the questions. Allow young people to ask the questions and be creative, such as making it the questions into a game show.

Say You're Sorry Read the unison Prayer of Confession from your most recent Sunday bulletin together as a group and ask the following questions:

- Why is it important to confess our sins to God if God already knows them?
- How do you feel when confessing your sins aloud with other people?
- Is it more comfortable to pray aloud or pray silently in worship?

Following the Prayer of Confession is the Assurance of Pardon/Forgiveness, where the worship leader declares that all are forgiven and reminds that Christ is the only person in a position to condemn. Ask a participant to read Romans 8:31-39 aloud. Then, invite the group to create their own Assurance of Pardon/Forgiveness to represent God's grace and love to one another. This may be a phrase and/or gesture to represent the joy of knowing God keeps no record of sins.

Remember Your Baptism (?) Ask the group what they remember of their baptisms. Those who were baptized as infants, will likely know stories from their baptism, but not actually remember it themselves. For those who were baptized later in life, they may recall more details of what led to their getting baptized and how the water felt during the baptism. Then, ask the group what they remember about recent sacraments of baptism in your congregation. Share the baptismal vows made by the family and the congregation³ and ask the following questions:

- How does it feel to know that people have (or will, in the cases of those not yet baptized) made these promises on your behalf?
- How does it feel to make these promises on behalf of young children in the congregation?
- What sense of responsibility do you feel to the younger generation?

Breaking Bread Read Luke 24:13-33 aloud and discuss how the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread. Invite youth to reflect upon their most meaningful communion experience or most meaningful meal they have experienced. Ask the following questions prior to each participant sharing their reflections with the group:

- Where were you and who was with you?
- What made that meal so meaningful to you?
- Are you more comfortable being a guest at a meal or serving others at a meal?

3. Baptismal Vows may be found in the PC (USA) *Book of Common Worship*.