

NEW Confirmation Curriculum

“Commissioned to Change the World: Confirmation for the Matthew 25 Congregation” by Mark D. Hinds is a superb new curriculum that should be a top consideration for any congregation, whether or not it has officially enrolled as a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Matthew 25 Congregation. Especially for congregations that have made that commitment, this curriculum provides legs for living into that commitment that will bear good fruit for years to come. Like any first-rate confirmation curriculum, “Commissioned” provides granular step by step detail from the beginning to the end of a six-month confirmation process for church youth.

Its map is crystal clear step by step and includes a wide range of resources that engage multiple learning modes. To sum up, it is pedagogically superb. But that’s not all. It is revolutionary in its approach, recasting confirmation from the classic modality of preparing youth for church membership (which in most cases paradoxically leads confirmands to disengage from the church following confirmation).

Instead, it presupposes that confirmands are already church members by virtue of their baptism and seeks to prepare them not for institutional membership but for missional engagement with the world. It seeks to launch confirmands into joining the church’s mission rather than the church’s membership.

The difference is profound. It presumes that youth are capable of far more than mere institutional affiliation, and that in fact they will be far more likely to stay engaged with outward-oriented mission work than to pursue ongoing institutional participation.

Instead of frontloading mentorship as part of preparation for the confirmation retreat, it casts mentorship as companionship for at least six months following the confirmation retreat, as a companionship in service in the world. The focus is less on how we think our faith than on how we live our faith. And this makes all the difference. Confirmands and mentors begin doing something in the world to make a difference, taking cues from Matthew 25 as to what it means to serve Jesus Christ.

I believe that youth who participate in this curriculum will be far more likely to make a lifetime commitment to following Jesus in his mission of healing a broken world. Raising the bar of discipleship higher will strengthen, rather than diminish, young people’s commitment to following Jesus.

General Minister to Pittsburgh Presbytery Sheldon Sorge