

WELCOME PACKET

for

FLINT RIVER

PRESBYTERY

(Information for New Members)

*--approved in full by the Committee on Ministry on June 27, 2017—
--Marriage License Laws and Cultural Context added on November 9, 2017*

Welcome to God's Call in Flint River Presbytery

This booklet has been created for **you!** Every presbytery has its unique set of procedures for welcoming Teaching Elders into membership. You may be coming into our bounds as the result of a congregational call, a non-parish based ministry position, or even as an honorably retired member. Whatever the reason, we are delighted that you will be a part of our shared ministry and mission!

Coming into any presbytery is very much like jumping on a moving train because of varied rules, regulations, and policies. Moreover, the pace to accomplish certain details often demands a quick response. We hope this resource will help guide you through your initial steps within our bounds and clarify any questions you may have.

This booklet, out of necessity, will tend to focus on Teaching Elders who have received a call to a congregation. Many sections of this booklet apply to you as well, even if you are coming into this presbytery in a non-parish based ministry position or in an honorably retired status. Whatever your mode of entrance, think of this resource as a road map or a guide book describing what you can expect to “step into” during this next part of your journey. It's not a substitute for the good advice of our Committee on Ministry and our Executive Presbyter, Rev. Debra Bibler, but we hope the information in this handbook will "slow the train" enough so you can jump aboard with ease and confidence.

In these pages, we cover a variety of topics:

- Your initial meeting with the Committee on Ministry and the material you need to prepare and send before this meeting (see page 3)
 - If you haven't already done so, please be sure to complete “ScreenNow” (your authorization for a background check). Complete all boxes except “church representative” and “account number”, and then sign and date. (see Appendix F)
 - Our presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Policy found at www.flintrivepresbytery.org.
 - Click on the “Resources” tab and then scroll down to “Forms and Guidelines”. You'll find this policy located under the “Stated Clerk” materials. Please read it carefully, sign it, and return it to the Committee on Ministry when you come to be examined by this committee.
- *The Pastoral Call Form (Terms of Call)* if you will be installed to your position (see Appendix A)
- Your introduction to the presbytery (page 3)
- The presbytery's *Administrative Commission* form for your ordination and/or installation service (if applicable). Please note that it is helpful to have this prepared prior to the presbytery meeting at which you will be examined. If this seems too hurried, you may also submit this form to the Executive Presbyter prior to the next Advisory Board meeting so this governing council may act on behalf of presbytery. (see Appendix B)
- Administrative Commission Minutes template for an ordination or installation service. Once this service has occurred, this template should be completed and e-mailed to our Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, and Office Manager to ensure that it is included in our presbytery handbook. (see Appendix C)

- Information regarding our presbytery’s “Discovery Retreat” which is offered to all clergy and their families. This retreat generally happens every 12-24 months to ensure that a significant group of new pastors can relax at the beach (without cost!) and learn about our small --remarkable! -- presbytery. (see page 5)
- Information regarding our commitment to vocational assessment (for installed pastors).
- Data base information request. (see Appendix E)

For those of you who are in conversation with a congregation, **you** are the one whom the PNC has felt called to nominate to the congregation! Following the examination by the Committee on Ministry, the vote of the congregation, and the approval of the Presbytery, you will then join us as a Teaching Elder in Flint River Presbytery!

Both you and the Pastor Nominating Committee have been guided by prayer and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the discernment process. There is a wonderful prayer in our *Book of Common Worship* that offers these words to our shared ministry

Eternal God: you called us to be a special people, to preach the gospel and show mercy. Keep your Spirit with us as we meet, so that in every thing, we may do your will. Guide us lest we stumble or be misguided by our own desires. May all we do be done for the reconciling of the world, for the up building of the church, and for the greater glory of Jesus Christ our confidence, guide, and friend. Amen.

May God richly bless your ministry in Flint River Presbytery!

Your Initial Meeting with the Committee on Ministry (COM)

As a part of the process, our Executive Presbyter will give the COM copies of your PIF as well as copies of your Biographical Information and Statement of Faith. Please be sure to e-mail these materials to her *at least 1 week prior to your examination*. (FYI the biography generally includes a brief outline of pastoral experiences, your educational background and ecclesiastical status, as well as information about your upbringing and sense of call to ministry.)

In your meeting, the committee will be asking you a variety of questions revolving around your sense of call, your experience of ministry, your Biographical Information, and your Statement of Faith. Although the committee will be asking you many questions, *please understand that this is a marvelous opportunity for you to ask questions of us as well*. Feel free to ask about the committee’s perception of the congregation, its potential for growth and/or conflict, and its participation in the life of our presbytery. It is this committee that offers a recommendation regarding your approval, so please prepare thoroughly and thoughtfully! When the examination is successful, these presented materials appear in our presbytery handbook as part of the COM’s report.

You will find your COM Liaison, who has worked closely with your congregation's PNC and our Executive Presbyter, to be helpful in sorting out any questions you may have. Don't hesitate to make contact at any time. Our presbytery's website at www.flintriverpresbytery.org will give you all the contact information you need. One financial item of significance: out-of-state vehicles will be charged "ad valorem" tax when you move into the state. Be sure to research this as you prepare to move as this may be considered a legitimate moving expense.

The Pastoral Call Form (Terms of Call) and the Congregational Action Which Follows

Appendix A is the official document we use to receive pastoral terms of call. This document should be brought to your COM examination by members of the PNC so that we can be sure that your terms meet our presbytery's minimum salary requirements.

After COM has approved your examination, a congregational meeting may be held so that the congregation can endorse the PNC's decision. Please note carefully: we do *not* encourage any initial interaction nor do we require or encourage "trial sermons" prior to the congregational meeting. As a presbytery, we rely upon -- and *deeply trust* -- the work of the PNC to provide all the information the congregation needs so we may make a deliberate and prayerful decision regarding your call.

Your Introduction to the Presbytery

Flint River Presbytery meets three times a year in the months of February, June, and October. These regular, stated meetings always occur on Saturdays to facilitate our ruling elders and teaching elders whose schedules do not allow flexibility during the week. Because the Committee on Ministry (COM) endorses a call on behalf of the entire presbytery, your introduction to the presbytery will be one of joyful welcome.

Finally, as part of your introduction and welcome to our presbytery, we will introduce you to our presbytery with a brief story in our monthly *Sparks* newsletter. Feel free to submit a recent picture to our office manager, June Denney, for use in the *Sparks*. At this important juncture, please remember to remove your PIF from the CLC if you have not already done so.

Planning your Installation

An Administrative Commission will be established on the day you are received by our presbytery and will be authorized to conduct the Service of Installation. *Remember to bring a completed copy of Appendix B with you, if possible, and give it to our Stated Clerk so it may be presented to the presbytery.* Please note that your ordination and/or installation *is a worship service of the presbytery.* Our presbytery policy states that services of ordination and/or installation shall not be scheduled to begin prior to 2:00 p.m.

The commission membership must include at least five persons - divided as equally as possible between teaching elders and ruling elders. In addition, teaching and/or ruling elders should come from a variety of churches in your congregation's geographic cluster. (The 4 geographic clusters of our presbytery are as follows: NE, NW, Central and South. More details about these clusters are in the following pages.)

You may have additional individuals participate in your ordination and/or installation who are not part of this presbytery; however, they may not to be considered as official members of the presbytery's administrative commission. Thus, any expenses incurred must be covered by you and/or the participants from beyond our bounds.

Don't forget to use the "Commission Minutes" Form (see Appendix C) for this service. Once the service of worship is over and the form is complete, be sure to send it to our office manager, June Denney, via "snail mail", fax, or e-mail.

The Service of Installation

The structure of the Installation portion of the worship service should include the following elements of worship. For a more detailed outline of the portions to be included, be sure to refer to W-4.4006.

- Litany of Celebration
- Presentation of the Candidate
- The Constitutional Questions to the candidate and the congregation
- The Prayer of Installation
- The Declaration of Installation and Welcome
- The Charge to the Pastor
- The Charge to the Congregation

The participants in the service should be named as a ruling elder or teaching elder (and their congregation listed). An offering should be taken with the clear understanding that an installation is an act of the presbytery. To that end, an offering should be taken which supports one of our presbytery's vital ministries. Often, the offering is designated to help candidates for ministry who are currently in the ordination process through our presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry; however, this is not required. Be sure to connect intentionally with our Executive Presbyter about key ministries most in need of support.

BEING A PART OF THE FAMILY OF FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY

Discovery Retreat and Additional Support Resources

The Discovery Retreat is an opportunity to orient and assimilate new clergy members into our presbytery. The retreats are scheduled every 12-24 months. New clergy in the presbytery attend to be introduced to available resources, opportunities for involvement, and be made aware of our structure and order that shapes our shared ministry. This retreat is our presbytery's response to the Book of Order requirement that every call to a candidate shall be accompanied by a description of the presbytery's plan for the integration of new ministers into the life and work of the presbytery. We hope this relaxing and informative time with new colleagues will help you become a part of our presbytery's shared mission!

If you are a pastor in your first seven years of ministry or a graduate of a PC(USA) seminary, and will be serving one of our small churches (defined as 150 or fewer members, with a budget of less than \$250,000), you may be eligible for a four-year Board of Pensions grant up to \$6000 to assist in seminary debt. An additional grant of \$4,000 may be awarded from our presbytery as well.

Vocational Assessment Counseling

In our continuing commitment to help you enhance your God-given gifts, the following policy has been adopted.

- 1. A minister received into our presbytery to serve a church or on presbytery's professional staff who has had Vocational Assessment within the last seven years, shall provide a copy of his/her profile to the Executive Presbyter as one of the documents required for membership.*
- 2. If the minister received into the presbytery called to serve a church or on presbytery's professional staff has not had a Vocational Assessment within the last seven years, he or she shall be required to make use of the resources noted below.*

Please note: the purpose of this vocational assessment is to offer incoming pastors the intentional gift of growing self-awareness for the sake of fruitful ministry. This process is not about determining ministerial fitness! Rather, this assessment is designed to help already-proven servants of God to reflect upon their own vocational satisfaction and set personally-defined goals for their own vocational growth and spiritual maturity. *Ideally and ordinarily*, these tests will be administered in the second half of a pastor's first year of ministry in FRP. Steve Hines, a well-respected vocational coach for the PC(USA), will administer both the (MBTI, Step 2) Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and the (SSII) Strong Interest Inventory. He will then accompany the pastor through a personalized and engaging process of discernment and goal-setting.

To arrange for your assessment, please contact Steve Hines at 404.323.0601 or JobGuru@aol.com. When contacting Steve, please be clear that you are asking for the 2 specific assessments noted above and that this is through Flint River Presbytery, because he does give a substantial fee reduction when the testing occurs through the presbytery. The cost will be \$75.00 per test and \$95.00 per hour for counseling. The presbytery will pay for both tests and one half of the cost of the first counseling session. Pastors may continue to use Steve for additional sessions as interest and professional expenses allow. Job satisfaction, setting professional goals, retirement planning and financial assessment, general health and balance, etc. are some the general topics that Steve focuses upon, when directed by your need/interest. (Although

Steve's office is in ATL, he often works in Columbus and will work to accommodate your needs by connecting through video conferencing or phone calls so that travel is optional and not required. Upon completion, the results of both tests plus a brief evaluation should be sent to our Executive Presbyter so that she may offer support and prayers and place this in your professional file.

Database & Five Part Form (Appendix E)

Remember: we can't communicate with you regularly and effectively until we have all the required information from you! Please complete the information requested on this form and return it, along with Appendix B, to our Office Manager, June Denney, on the day that you are examined before presbytery. If you do not have some of the required information available (such as your new home address), simply leave this blank until a later time.

Clergy Cluster Groups based on Geography

Flint River Presbytery is divided into four major geographical areas:

1. The Northeast (NE) is centered around the Warner-Robins and Macon area.
2. The Northwest (NW) is centered around the Columbus area,
3. The Central geographical area stretches across the center of our presbytery from the Alabama State line to the Cordele and includes major towns such as Americus and Albany.
4. The Southern geographical area stretched across the southern portion of our presbytery and includes Valdosta, Thomasville, Donalsonville, and Bainbridge.
 - a. At times, we divide this area into SW to include the Donalsonville and Bainbridge areas and the SE to include the Thomasville and Valdosta areas.

These clergy clusters generally meet quarterly for 2 hours for lunch, prayer, and reflection. Each cluster chooses a topic/book/focus point to shape their time together each year.

Service to the Presbytery

The presbytery's Nominating Committee will invite you to serve on a committee or a ministry team once you have had some time to "settle into" your new responsibilities. If you have an area of interest which you would like to explore in terms of service and/or interest, please communicate this to our Executive Presbyter and our COM so that this information may be shared with our Nominating Committee.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy

Finally, the Flint River Presbytery has developed a sexual misconduct prevention policy with two components:

- Component #1: You are required to read and sign-off on our most current Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy. Go to www.flintriverpresbytery.org and click on “Resources” and then “Forms and Guidelines” until you find the “Sexual Misconduct Policy”. *Please bring these completed documents with you to your COM examination.*
 - Please note that this policy applies to all who are ordained to the office of Teaching Elder. It is essential that all who are subject to this policy and its procedures both read and understand the policy, acknowledge that they have done so, and formally consent to being bound by the presbytery's discipline in this matter. Please sign the acknowledgment of receipt and give forms listed as Exhibit A-D to the Executive Presbyter at your COM examination.
- Component #2: You must attend a presbytery-sponsored workshop aimed at preventing sexual misconduct in the church. While we trust that you have already attended workshops like ours, we hope you understand that both our presbytery policy and our insurance carrier require that you attend *Flint River Presbytery* workshops once every 3 years. Your attendance record becomes part of your permanent record in this presbytery. As you consider becoming a member of this presbytery, please understand this requirement to attend such workshops as binding and non-negotiable.

A Good Work Completed

Know that your sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ wish you a long and fruitful ministry within our bounds. You need not feel isolated or alone. You have wonderful companions for this journey! Feel free to contact our executive presbyter as well as any member of the Committee on Ministry with questions or concerns so that you may find the support, resources, and prayer required!

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

PASTORAL CALL

The _____, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
(Name of Church)

of _____ belonging to Flint River Presbytery being well satisfied with your
(City/State)

qualifications for ministry and confident that we have been led to you by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual interests of our church and fruitful for the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly calls you,

(Name)

to undertake the office of

of this congregation, beginning _____, promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement, and allegiance in the Lord.

That you may be free to devote full-time (part-time) to the ministry of the Word among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to pay you the following (those agreed upon are to be filled in):

Annual Salary (in regular monthly payments)	Reimbursable Professional Expenses totaling (or)	\$ _____
	Automobile Expenses	\$ _____
Use of Manse (or)	Continuing Education	\$ _____
Housing Allowance	Book Expenses	\$ _____
	Personal Business Expense	\$ _____
Utilities Allowance	Moving Costs	\$ _____
SECA offset (7.65% of salary and housing)	Other (Specify)	

Vacation of _____
(Time Period)

Study Leave of _____
(Time Period)

and we will pay regularly in advance to the board responsible for Benefits a sum equal to that requisite percent of your salary which may be fixed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for participation in the Benefits Plan of the P.C.(U.S.A.) including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly, during the time of your being and continuing in the pastoral relationship set forth in this call to this church. We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation. In addition, we promise to provide:

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this _____ day of _____ A.D. ____

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to _____ for ministerial services, I do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the Form of Government, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the _____ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

(Signed) _____

Flint River Presbytery Form for Installation or Ordination/Installation of Minister

Please complete and give to the Stated Clerk prior to the Presbytery meeting.

The Commission must have at least five members (Ministers and Elders *of our Presbytery*, in numbers as nearly equal as possible, and not more than one Elder from any one church.)

Ordination Installation service for _____

to be held on _____ at _____ at _____ o'clock*.
Date *Location* *Minister Name* *Time*

Teaching Elder:	Ruling Elder (Name & Church)
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____

People from beyond the Presbytery may be invited to participate (at no cost to the Presbytery).

1. _____
2. _____

Assigned parts of the service:

1. Moderate and propound Constitutional questions to the pastor -

2. Preach the sermon -

3. Propound Constitutional questions to the congregation -

4. Charge the pastor -

5. Charge the congregation -

*By action of the Presbytery, all services of Ordination and/or Installation shall not be scheduled to begin before 2 p.m. so that other Ministers and Elders can attend this worship service of the presbytery.

Flint River Presbytery Minutes of Commission Form

Ordination Installation service for _____
Minister's Name

as _____ of _____
Calling Organization

held on _____ at _____ at _____ o'clock.
Date Location Time

The following members of the Commission appointed by Flint River Presbytery were present:

Teaching Elders:	Ruling Elders (Name & Church)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

The meeting was opened with prayer by _____

Elected Clerk of the Commission _____

In conformity with the *Book of Order* the following was part of the service:

1. Sermon was preached by _____ from the text _____
entitled _____
2. The Moderator, _____ stated the proceedings of the presbytery.
3. The Constitutional questions were proposed to the minister by _____
and to the congregation by _____
4. A charge to the minister was given by _____ and to the congregation
by _____
5. The benediction was pronounced by _____

The commission met following the services, the minutes were approved, and the meeting was closed with prayer by _____

_____, Clerk of the Commission

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I _____ having been called to
a pastoral relationship within the bounds of Flint River Presbytery, hereby

- request that a copy of my tests and brief evaluation conducted by Steve Hines be marked confidential and forwarded to Flint River Presbytery, attention Executive Presbyter, 826 Liberty Expressway, SE, Albany, GA, 31705.

OR

- request that a copy of my evaluation and brief reflection conducted by _____ on ____ 20__ be marked confidential and forwarded to Flint River Presbytery, attention Executive Presbyter, 826 Liberty Expressway, SE, Albany, GA, 31705.

Signature

Date

REQUEST FOR DATABASE & FIVE PART INFORMATION MINISTER MEMBERS FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY

*Please complete the following information and return, as soon as possible to:
June Denney, Flint River Presbytery, 826 Liberty Expressway, SE, Albany, GA 31705 or
idenney@flintriverpresbytery.org*

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Social Security #: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Month/Day/Year

Spouse's Name: _____

Ordination Date: _____ Ordaining Body: _____
Month/Year

Graduation Date: _____ Degree: _____ Institution: _____
Year

Date Last Attended: General Assembly: _____ Synod: _____
Year Year

Home Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Preferred Mailing Address: _____
(If different from above) Street City State Zip

Home Phone: () _____ Work Phone: () _____

Fax: () _____ Email: _____

Transferring from: _____
Presbytery

Calling Church/Organization: _____
Name/City

Date to begin Work: _____
Month/Day/Year

ScreenNow
Background Request Form

Personal Information...Print capital letters in the boxes. Try not to touch the sides of the boxes.

Alphabet grid from A to Z

First Name input box

Middle Name input box

Last Name input box

Previous Legal Name input box

Year Changed input box

Current Street Address input box

City input box

State input box

Zip input box

Previous Street Addresses...Most Recent First Street Address

Previous Street Address input box

City input box

State input box

Zip input box

Street Address

Street Address input box

City input box

State input box

Zip input box

Social Security Number

Social Security Number input box

Date of Birth (month-day-year)

Date of Birth input box

Driver's License Number

Driver's License Number input box

State input box

Church Representative

Church Representative input box

Account Number

Account Number input box

Searching for: National Criminal Search [radio] Sex Offender [radio] Credit [radio]

I hereby authorize any investigator of [Name of Church Employer] bearing this release to verify and obtain any information from schools, residential management agents, former and current employers, religious bodies, criminal justice agencies and individuals relating to my activities. This information may include, but it is not limited to, academic, residential, achievement, performance, attendance, personal history, disciplinary, criminal conviction records, and any judicial or ecclesiastical proceedings involving me as a defendant. I hereby direct and authorize you to release such information upon request to the bearer. I hereby release [Name of Church Employer], and any individual or group, including record custodians, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Marriage license laws and requirements vary from state to state.

Here is a summary of what you need to know to officiate a wedding Georgia.

State of Georgia Marriage License Requirements

- Applicants can apply for a marriage license in any county [Probate Court](#) in Georgia, provided at least one of the applicants is a resident of the State of Georgia.
- If neither applicant is a resident of the State of Georgia, the couple must apply in the county in which the ceremony is to be performed.
- Both applicants must be 18 years of age or older to apply for a marriage license without parental consent.
- Premarital blood tests are no longer required under Georgia law.
- There is no waiting period for getting married in Georgia.
- The Georgia marriage license does not have an expiration date
- There is a reduction of cost for the marriage license if 6 hours of marriage counseling is conducted.

Does the State of Georgia Permit the following?

Proxy Marriages: No.

Cousin Marriages: Yes.

Under 18:

- Both applicants must be 18 years of age or older to apply for a marriage license without parental consent. [Proof of age](#) must be presented by every applicant who does not appear to the judge or clerk to be at least 25 years of age.
- If either applicant is 16 or 17 years of age, a license may be issued only with the written consent of the parent or parents of the underage applicant. No license may be issued if either applicant is under the age of 16.
- As of July 1, 2006, the pregnancy of a female applicant no longer authorizes the issuance of a license to a 16 or 17-year-old without consent.

Officiants in Georgia:

Licensed or ordained ministers, clergymen, or pastors of recognized religious societies, and justices of the peace.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

You will want to learn as much as you can about your church and your community as quickly as you can. Local clergy-members of Flint River and members of other denominations can be some of your best sources of information. Meet for lunch or coffee and ask questions. This also gives you a great reason to make connections early in your ministry.

Helpful Questions include:

Are there local funeral customs? This includes favorite hymns and scriptures. Also, is it customary for families to ask clergy of close family members to assist?

Ask for their assessment of the local funeral home(s). How do they work with clergy?

Ask about any local wedding customs.

Ask about local florists. How do they work with churches and clergy for weddings and funerals?

Ask about community worship services and joint worship services. These can be around Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, an Annual Revival, Fourth of July, or other events on church or civic calendars.

Some questions to ask of leaders in your church

Are there annual events (community, cultural, and/or faith based) such as Homecoming, Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, an Annual Revival, Halloween/Harvest Festival, and Fourth of July that take place in your church?

Is there any type of policy? Is it written or understood? (For community events, there may a pattern of rotating hosts/preachers.)

For events in the church, what is the policy-both written and unwritten?

In cases where policies and guidelines are understood and unwritten, we encourage you have them placed in writing.

If your church has a cemetery, ask if there is a written cemetery policy. If one is not in place it may be wise to create one.