

---

A ZOOM PRESBYTERY MEETING/LEADERSHIP SUMMIT RECAP  
FEBRUARY 2021

# The SPARKS

*Flint River Presbytery's E-Newsletter*



## **Deep-Spirited Reflections from our Committee Moderators**

You're in for a treat in this SPARKS edition because you'll get a front-row view of the ruling elders and teaching elders who are so deeply committed to Christ-shaped collaboration!

And that's good news! Although our medium for gathering as a presbytery is different from the past, our responsibilities remain unchanged: to encourage, equip, empower, and engage our congregations and campus ministries.

This pandemic has certainly unleashed creativity, generosity, and flexibility in unexpected ways. I believe this cocooning time – this physical time of separation -- will yield a new church ready to fly. At the same time, it has been a year. We have lost much. May we be attentive to the lessons gleaned around loss and change for the sake of our shared witness. May we also trust that God has given us everything we need. Enter Jesus!

Jesus makes it clear that, as much as we need him, we also need one another. We cannot serve in solitude. Again and again, Jesus gathers people together in community and then sets them loose to serve. So, in the year ahead, let's use our technology for deepening connections -- not flattening them. Let's stay alert to fresh opportunities for connection and collaboration. And let's trust that the more we listen to one another, the more we'll learn from one another. The more we learn from one other, the more likely we'll learn to love one another. And love has the wings which will help us fly.

In Christ's Astounding Hope,  
Deb

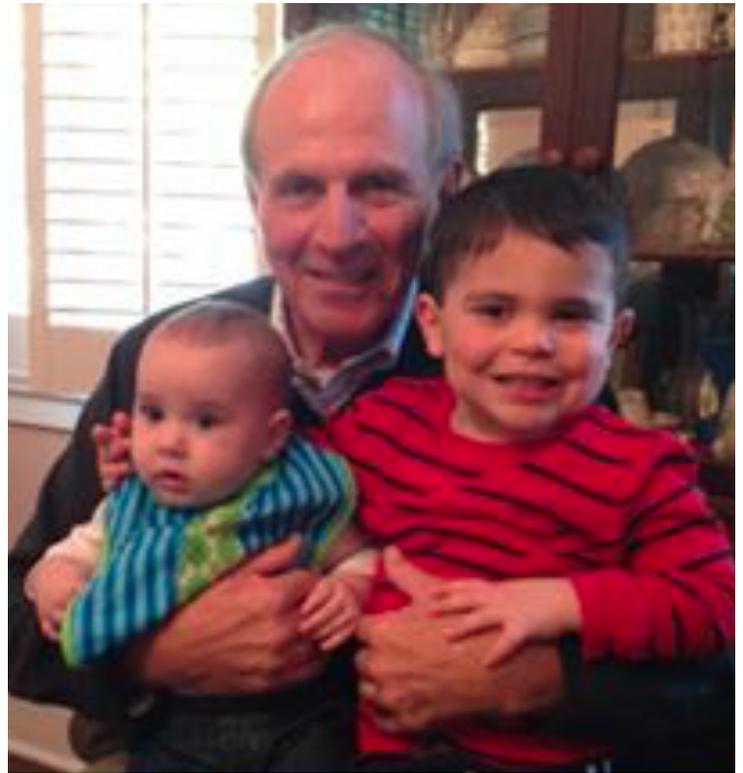
---

## Richard Hawks

Pastor, Cuba & Cuthbert & former Advisory Board Moderator

During my time on the Advisory Board (AB), it has been my observation that the Board is always seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit to adapt to new ways in carrying out its mission in a fast-changing world. A good example of this adaptability has been incorporating new technologies such as Zoom meetings and Google Meets for both committee meetings and presbytery meetings.

AB has become more than a coordinating arm of the presbytery; it is also an effective arm of the Church. **The Advisory Board has never lost sight of its purpose in providing spiritual leadership for the congregations within the presbytery.**



## Annie Garrard

Member of the Committee on Education and Nurture

For the past 30 years, I have been a member of the Committee for Education and Nurture (CEN). We are an active committee that connects individuals from churches within the presbytery, especially youth.

Our committee prepares for national events like Montreat Youth Conference and Triennium. For families, we provide various training classes in all areas of the Christian life. **I've seen lifetime friendships evolve from the work done within the committee.**



---

# Glenda Hollingshead

Pastor, First (Valdosta) & former Committee on Ministry Moderator

I have had the privilege of serving on the Committee on Ministry (COM) for over four years—the last two as Moderator.

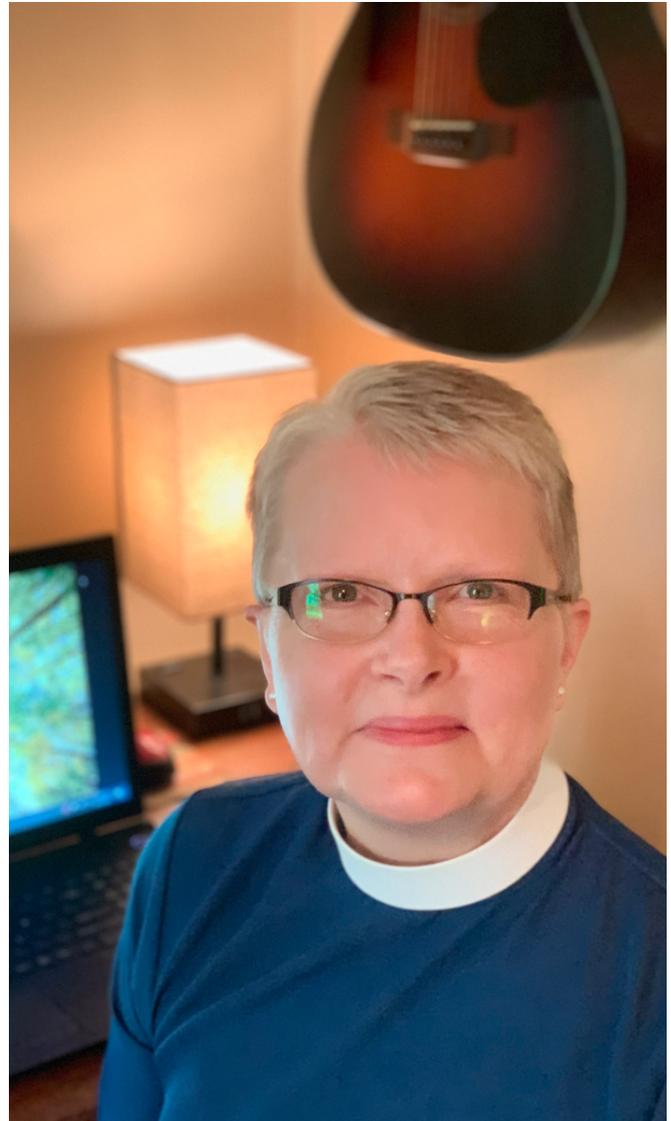
When Lamar Cole, a precious saint of First (Valdosta), invited me to serve, it seemed a good fit, and I was glad to join the fun!

When we had meetings, it was generally my job to drive to Albany, and it was Lamar's job to tell stories. Spending time with Lamar on the drive to and from Albany --well, it was food for my soul.

Good stories are important to us—especially those of us who are believers, because we are part of the greatest story—the story of Christ's love for the church.

**In my experience, love for the church and love for the church's ministries are driving forces behind the work of COM.**

When we meet together, it is a privilege to learn of the happenings in our congregations. Sometimes there are challenges to be shared. Sometimes there are visions of new ministries on the horizon. No matter what is going on, our presbytery is blessed to have the teaching elders and ruling elders of COM—ready and eager to do the necessary work: to offer encouragement, support, resources, and prayer.



Being a part of COM gives me hope for the future of the church. While the love of Christ remains the same, we are ever-changing—ever evolving—ever reformed and being reformed. **We are a part of a story that is greater than ourselves—a story that unites us whenever and however we happen to meet to do the work of our presbytery. And it's a story that goes with us whenever we make that trek back home.**

---

## Fay Isele & Ken Johnson

Members of Fort Gaines Presbyterian, recipients of Walter Flint Fund Grant

We would like to the Flint River Presbytery for helping to pay for the salary of our wonderful commissioned lay pastor, Wade Spooner. As most of your know, Ft. Gaines is a small church, and we were walloped financially during 2019 with the necessity of a new HVAC system and repairs to our manse in order for it to be used by Mercer Medical. as a remote site.

Providing the manse to Mercer Medical interns and students working in the new clinic in Fort Gaines is a win-win for the church and the community. Without the grant to pay Wade, we would have struggled to finish the necessary repairs.

**We are working hard to serve our community.** For example, this past year, we hosted a drive-through COVID-19 testing site in our portico and held an open house for the community after our Christmas parade. These events were in addition to the use of our Fellowship Hall by the Garden Club, women's yoga classes, and the Historical Society.

All of our hard work is bearing fruit. Over the past several years, we've watched our membership decline. This year, we are actually expecting an increase in membership! Thanks to the Walter Flint Fund, we are making very positive steps forward.



---

# J.D. Sumner

Moderator, Personnel Committee

I've been privileged to serve as moderator of the Personnel Committee. Although I'm unsure why I ended up in such an honorable place, I realize that, throughout the Gospels, Jesus often puts unexpected people in unexpected places. So, I'm just going to go with it. In our committee, we often deal with pretty heavy topics, and it's through God's boundless grace and the moving of the Spirit among our incredible team that we're able to discuss sensitive topics with a Christ-like lens. **Our job is to ensure that presbytery staff is cared for with a holistic approach. When necessary, we provide feedback on job performance, compensation, and more.**

I am extremely grateful for our Personnel team. Experienced committee members like John Carlton and Meda Krenson bring thoughtful insights to the table that often move and inspire me. And I also owe a huge debt to my predecessor Jay Smith for setting a great example for me to follow. Together, the heavy lifts that are often part of the personnel committee's job are made easier through the committee members' work and our incredible staff.



# Ginny Sanders

Moderator, Finance Committee

A few years ago, I began serving on the Finance Committee. Before this time, I was aware of our presbytery's presence but not its function. One of my biggest surprises was that our presbytery is here to help our churches wherever and however it can.

Speaking specifically about finance, the presbytery wants to ensure our churches' livelihood by offering grants, scholarships, and other financial assistance.

Before serving, I often thought the work of the Lord was done in obvious places - like soup kitchens and homeless shelters. **I've discovered the Lord's work is also very much done at computers and desks. Jesus can be found in the numbers and spreadsheets, too.**

It has been a blessing to serve and see how our committee has helped churches throughout our presbytery.



# Rita Montgomery

Moderator, Committee on Mission and Evangelism

The Committee on Mission and Evangelism (CME) is the BEST committee to work on because we get to work with our Campus Ministries, the "Stop Hunger Now" campaign, international missions, and distribute Walter Flint Fund grant recipients.

We get to see first hand all the incredible ways the congregations throughout our presbytery are serving. I've been awed at how far-reaching and creative those efforts are!

**I am constantly humbled and inspired by our churches' efforts to reach into their communities and be the hands and feet of Jesus.** These actions call to mind a quotation attributed to Mother Teresa, "We can do no one great thing; only small things with great love." That sentiment is reflected in our committee's ministry.