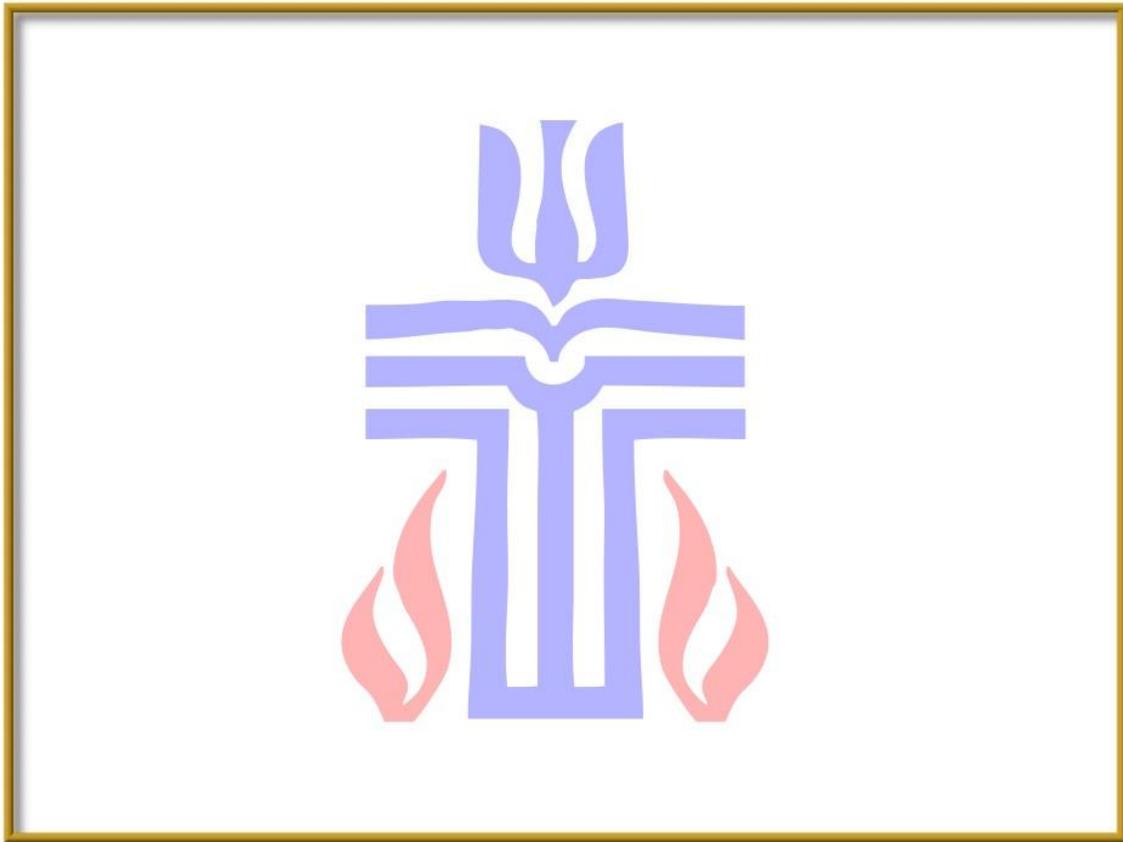


**FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY (FRP)
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY (COM)
PROCEDURAL MANUAL of OPERATIONS (PMO)**



Summary of *FRP COM Procedural Manual of Operations*

"The work of the Committee on Ministry involves concern for personal and corporate integrity, for matching personal leadership skills and commitments to the needs of the Church of Jesus Christ, and for applying the values and norms of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in all circumstances."

(approved by COM on March 14, 2019, with amendments made September 2020, and additional edits made in March and July 2022.)

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INTRODUCTION

The primary responsibility of the Flint River Presbytery (FRP) Committee on Ministry (COM) is to fulfill the constitutional provision in the Form of Government G-3.0307:

“Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations. Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to its pastors, both ministers of Word and Sacrament and ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (also called commissioned pastors or commissioned ruling elders), as well as the certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, pastors, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.”

The responsibilities of the COM are best fulfilled by fostering healthy ministry in the presbytery, attending to the well-being of congregations and their faithfulness in responding to God’s call to them. Healthy ministry in congregational life is not so easily defined. The shape of congregational life varies from one place to another. Churches cannot -- *indeed should not* -- engage in precisely the same forms of worship, educational programs, congregational fellowship, or service to the world beyond the church. The size, location, demographics, and even the “personality” of a particular church are all different in each congregation.

The needs for ministry within the neighborhood around a congregation are different as well. As a result, the marvelous diversity of congregations might prompt us to conclude that healthy ministry can only be known when we see it. However, there are some shared characteristics that are discernible in most healthy congregations.

In all the variety of healthy expressions of ministry, healthy congregations are alike in sharing many of the following characteristics:

- Vibrant faith in our triune God expressed in lively, sincere worship;
- Personal growth in Biblical knowledge, grace, and wisdom;
- Relationships nurtured within the church in an environment of inclusive hospitality;
- Respect for tradition balanced with adaptability and creativity;
- Response to the needs of people outside the church balanced with internal nurture;
- Commitment to engage in ministries of justice and compassion;
- Focus upon mission more than buildings, maintenance and budgets;
- Relationships characterized by respect, accountability, and trust instead of control or secrecy;
- Clear structures of authority and decision-making coupled with open access to structures by all;
- Transparency and openness are balanced by appropriate and respectful confidentiality;
- Respect for the authority of elected leaders is coupled with awareness and use of the gifts of all;
- Congregational self-confidence is balanced with appropriate humility.
- The pastoral relationship is respected and is, historically, long term.

Congregations, like the people who are in them, are gifted and flawed, faithful and faulty, thoroughly human and often messy. However, when congregations are healthy, they are able to devote their best energies to fulfilling God's specific mission for each one.

SOME BASIC THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS

While the Committee on Ministry has responsibility for the ministry of Flint River Presbytery to its congregations, church professionals, and other leaders, that care is not limited merely to issues of wages, hours, and work rules. The needs of the individual person or congregation are related to the needs and mission of the rest of the church. The work of the COM involves concern for personal and corporate integrity, for matching personal leadership skills and commitments to the needs of the Church of Jesus Christ, and for applying the values and norms of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in all circumstances.

Thus, the responsibilities given to the COM are all “theological” responsibilities in the most basic and practical sense. They require the COM to engage consistently with pastors and with churches in reflection, judgment, and discernment of God’s abiding presence and God’s holy will for ministers and churches, not only in particular contexts and geographies, but also in light of the purpose of the larger church.

The work of the Committee will be done best -- most faithfully and creatively -- when it is done in a context of prayer, discernment, and worship. The most important preparation for any encounter is prayer for the individual, the congregation, and the COM in the impending interaction and relationship.

As partners in ministry, COM members enter into relationships with an attitude of respect and appreciation for the congregations and individuals they encounter. The COM brings significant authority and important resources to such encounters. The Committee’s authority and assistance are most likely to be accepted if they are offered in a spirit of collegiality and in the context of ongoing relationships of trust and care. If the COM devotes a significant portion of its time, energy, and wisdom to building and nurturing relationships, then when there is a transition, difficulty, crisis, or conflict, the presence of the COM will be welcomed more quickly, and its offer of help will be more readily accepted.

Nothing the COM does is more important than nurturing good relationships with congregations and church professionals.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Committee on Ministry operates under the authority, guidance, and instruction of Flint River Presbytery and within the provisions of the Book of Order (BOO) Form of Government (G) which devotes Chapter 3 to the work of Church Councils; specifically, G-3.03 to the presbytery, and G-3.0307 to the pastoral duties of the presbytery. The procedures outlined in this Procedural Manual of Operations (PMO) for the Committee on Ministry (COM) of Flint River Presbytery (FRP) are subordinate to the constitutional provisions of the BOO. Where these policies and procedures of FRP may be in conflict with the BOO, the latter will always be the final authority.

In keeping with the practice of the Form of Government of the PC(USA) in this PMO for COM:

- 1) SHALL and IS TO BE/ARE TO BE signify practice that is mandated by FRP,
- 2) SHOULD signifies practice that is strongly recommended,
- 3) IS APPROPRIATE signifies practice that is commended as a suitable action,
- 4) MAY signifies practice that is permissible but not required.

POLICY ON CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is crucial to the integrity of the COM. This policy on confidentiality is governed by the constitutional requirements stated in the Book of Order G-4.0301, regarding *pastoral* confidentiality. Matters before the COM are pastorally sensitive and shall be held in confidence unless the welfare of a congregation or the safety of an individual is in question. Even then, the COM should be extremely cautious, sharing information only with those who demonstrate a clearly identified reason for inclusion. Information learned through the COM shall never, under any circumstances, be the subject of casual conversation. All members and former members of the FRP COM shall be expected to abide by this Policy on Confidentiality.

Further, members of the COM shall be expected to excuse themselves from any vote on matters under discussion concerning the congregation in which they work or of which they are members. Avoiding potential conflict of interest may also extend to action on concerns being discussed regarding a church professional or other individual with whom one has an official relationship or with whom one is a close friend.

The COM members should be mindful of both their actual authority and the power they are perceived to have. They should strive to be above reproach in their dealings with confidential matters.

STRUCTURE OF THE FLINT RIVER PRESBYTERY COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Generally, the COM of FRP shall consist of 16 members with an equal number of ruling elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament. Each member shall be elected to a three-year term with the possibility of being elected to an additional term. However, members shall serve no more than six years consecutively on the COM. Members should be selected in equal numbers from the four geographic areas of FRP: the Central Cluster, Northeast (NE) Cluster, Northwest (NW) Cluster, and Southern Cluster. The balance of ruling and Ministers of Word and Sacrament should be maintained as closely as possible in the membership of each cluster.

These clusters of COM members should perform all the duties and activities required in each area which do not require full COM action. Each cluster shall report its activity to the COM regularly and shall make recommendations to the COM regarding actions the whole Committee must consider. It is appropriate for clusters to name a “convener” for their area. Each cluster should be diligent in the generation and maintenance of paperwork to be kept on file and/or admitted to record. All members should be careful to initiate and maintain good communication between clusters, presbytery staff, and the full COM.

The officers of the COM shall be Moderator, Vice-Moderator, and Secretary. Each of these officers shall serve one-year terms. The Moderator and Vice-Moderator may be elected to an additional one-year term but shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. The Secretary may be re-elected to multiple terms. The COM shall recommend to FRP the election of its Moderator at the final presbytery meeting of the year prior to the date the Moderator takes office. The COM shall elect its own Vice-Moderator and Secretary. The FRP COM shall be staffed and resourced by the Executive Presbyter and the Stated Clerk.

The FRP COM should meet generally six times per year (every other month.) These meetings should be scheduled in an effort to maximize as much as possible the timely consideration of its recommendations by the Presbytery. Called meetings of the COM may be necessary from time to time to address urgent issues that cannot be held until the next regular meeting. Cluster groups may set their own meeting times and are encouraged to do their additional work at any time necessary by phone, e-mail, or other formal or informal functional means.

The COM should hold an organizational and goal-setting meeting, called “the annual retreat,” at the beginning of each calendar year to orient new members, review constitutional requirements and provisions of this PMO, and set goals for the year.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY WORK AREAS

The broad areas of work that the FRP COM shall address include the following three areas:

1. Pastoral Leaders(hip)

- a. *Pastoral Care of ministers of Word and Sacrament* -- The COM shall provide for care and nurture of ministers of Word and Sacrament through mentoring new pastors, contact with honorably retired members, review of terms of call, and other means of care.
- b. *Examinations* -- The COM shall exam all minister of Word and Sacrament candidates who seek membership in FRP, both candidates for ordination and transfer candidates.

A brief summary outlining the authority regarding for examination and approval of candidates for pastoral leadership is as follows:

COM examines and approves on behalf of Presbytery:

Minister of Word and Sacrament transfers *from within the Presbytery*

Minister of Word and Sacrament transfers *from outside the Presbytery*

FRP- trained TRE who is being commissioned to a specific congregation

FRP- trained TRE can be examined in a COM cluster and recommended for approval by COM

Presbytery examines and approves:

Candidates for ordination who have examined by CPM and COM

Candidates who are ordained in another denomination with whom FRP is in communion.

- c. *Presbytery Trained and Commissioned Ruling Elders* – the COM shall have oversight of the Gerald L. Voye School for Ruling Elders

2. Counsel Regarding Pastoral Relationships

- The COM shall be creative, proactive and interactive with all congregations so that creative means of acquiring pastoral leadership and/or combining congregational witness may unfold naturally with good hope and sensitivity from within the congregations themselves
- Appoint liaisons to the congregations for the purpose of regular communication and support
- Advise sessions on options for permanent or temporary pastoral leadership
- Guide pastoral nominating committees (PNC) elected by congregations

3. Reframing Challenges and Congregational Health

- The COM shall be vigilant, careful, and proactive in taking cognizance of and responding to issues of conflict within member congregations.
- The COM shall intentionally train, equip and empower its members annually to address issues of conflict.

In summary, the above work areas constitute the broad outline of what follows in more specificity in the remainder of this Procedural Manual.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

- ***Overview***

The Flint River Presbytery Committee on Ministry will spend a large majority of its time educating, encouraging, and empowering the pastoral relationship formed between its member Ministers of Word and Sacrament and the congregations they serve. This includes determining the types of pastoral leadership available and advising congregations on the choices they have for such leadership. In addition, the FRP COM will be directly involved in the life of a congregation which experiences a vacancy in its pastoral leadership, including conducting exit interviews, counseling the session on the options for temporary or interim leadership, overseeing the pastoral search process, and taking cognizance of potential issues and difficulties that may arise in any particular pastoral relationship.

Types of Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral relationships are addressed in the Form of Government at G-2.05 *Ministers of the Word and Sacrament: The Ministry of Teaching and Pastoral Care*. Specifically, the BOO FG describes the constitutional provisions for pastoral relationships at G-2.0504 *Pastoral Relationships*. They are of two types- installed pastoral relationships, G-2.0504a, and temporary pastoral relationships, G-2.0504b. General guidelines for each are provided in these sections. **Installed pastoral relationships are clearly defined by the BOO FG as 1) pastor, 2) co-pastor, and 3) associate pastor.**

- ***Co-pastor***

In addition to the provisions of the BOO FG governing this installed pastoral relationship, it shall be the policy of the FRP COM that this pastoral relationship shall not ordinarily be used in place of conducting a pastoral search following the announcement of the intended retirement of the installed pastor of the congregation and prior to the installed pastor's departure. This prohibition does not apply if the congregation is currently using the co-pastor model and that model has been in place for a minimum of three years and the congregation chooses to continue that model.

- ***Associate Pastor***

As stated in the BOO FG the official relationship of an associate pastor to a church is not dependent upon that of a pastor, and an associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor in a church served as associate pastor except as provided by a three-fourths vote of FRP (G-2.0504a & c.). An associate pastor shall not be called to serve as co-pastor of the same church, except in churches that currently have a co-pastor model in place which has been in effect for at least three years and the congregation desires to continue such a model. An associate pastor shall be directed in his or her work by the pastor in consultation with the session.

The title and term of service for temporary pastoral relationships are to be determined by each presbytery (G-2.0504b.)

The types of temporary pastoral relationships recognized and authorized by Flint River Presbytery are as follows:

- ***Stated Supply***

A minister appointed by Flint River Presbytery through its COM, after consultation with the session, to perform the functions of pastor in a church. The relationship shall be established by the COM acting on behalf of the presbytery and shall extend for a period not to exceed twelve months at a time. Reappointment shall be at the discretion of the FRP COM after reviewing the effectiveness of the stated supply. A stated supply may be appointed by the COM to serve as moderator of the session.

- ***Temporary Supply***

A minister, candidate, ruling elder, or commissioned ruling elder secured by the session to conduct services when there is no pastor, or the pastor is unable to perform such functions. The session shall seek the counsel of FRP through the COM before securing a temporary supply. FRP COM shall have the authority to approve a minister as temporary supply and shall report such action to the next meeting of FRP. A temporary supply may be appointed by the COM to serve as moderator of the session.

- ***Interim Pastor***

A minister secured by the session of a church without an installed pastor to preach, administer the sacraments, and fulfill pastoral duties for a specified period not to exceed twelve months at a time while the church is actively seeking a pastor. The session shall consult with the FRP COM prior to securing or dissolving a relationship with an interim pastor. FRP COM shall have the authority to approve a minister as interim and shall report such action to the next meeting of FRP. An interim pastor may be appointed by the COM to serve as moderator of the session. Anyone in a temporary pastoral relationship may not be called as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor except as provided by a three-fourths vote of FRP (G-2.0504a & c.).

- ***Organizing Pastor***

A minister called by FRP to serve as pastor to a group of people who are in the process of organizing a new Presbyterian congregation. The relationship shall terminate when the new church is formally organized by FRP. At that time the new church may, with approval by the FRP COM and FRP, call the organizing pastor to be its installed pastor without being required to elect a pastor nominating committee and to conduct a pastoral search. The church may choose to elect a pastor nominating committee and conduct a pastoral search as provided in the BOO FG and in this FRP COM PMO.

- ***Parish Associate***

A minister who is retired, or a member-at-large, or serving in a validated ministry other than the local congregation, but who wishes to maintain a relationship with a particular congregation of FRP. The relationship shall be established upon nomination by the pastor of the particular congregation, election by the session, and approval by the FRP COM. FRP COM shall have the authority to approve a minister as a parish associate and shall report such action to the next meeting of FRP. A parish associate may not be called to be the next installed pastor or associate pastor of that particular congregation. The FRP COM may dissolve the relationship with the parish associate upon the recommendation of the Session.

- ***Designated Pastor***

A designated pastoral relationship is a call to a minister established by FRP for a term of not less than two years and not more than four years. The minister and the congregation shall have agreed to be considered for a designated relationship. The congregation's pastoral nominating committee shall nominate to the congregation for its consideration and vote only from among those ministers designated to it by the FRP COM. The minister is installed by the presbytery and is the moderator of the session. The call approved by FRP is renewable anytime during the last six months of the term and cannot be reduced or dissolved except by consent of FRP. The designated pastor may be called as the next installed pastor of the congregation, but only within the last year of the contracted relationship, after a pastor nominating committee has been elected, and a pastor search has been conducted, during which the designated pastor may be considered as a candidate.

Special Categories of Ministerial Membership

Minister members of Flint River Presbytery who are not serving congregations or in a validated ministry within the bounds of the presbytery may fall into one of three other categories of membership. They are 1) members-at-large (G-2.0503b), 2) honorably retired (G-2.0503c), or 3) ministers laboring outside the bounds.

Members-at-large are generally unemployed. They may be between calls. They may have moved to the area because the job change of a spouse forced a relocation, and they are looking for a call in the area. They may be experiencing grief over the loss, frustration in seeking a call, anger due to relocation, or depression related to one or more difficulties. The FRP COM should be aware of these concerns, make an effort to support the minister, and refer him/her for pastoral counseling if needed. The COM shall receive annual reports from each member-at-large with specific attention to the ways in which he/she is in compliance with the criteria of G-2.0503a.

Honorably retired members of FRP should be accorded the pastoral care of the presbytery through the COM when and where needed. COM should make every effort to contact retired members on a regular basis, offer collegial support, and advise them on opportunities to serve within the presbytery as they are able. Honorably retired members shall not be required to attend meetings of the presbytery, but their membership shall be considered in the formula for participation of teaching and ruling elders in meetings of the presbytery.

Minister members of Flint River Presbytery who are **laboring outside the bounds (LOB)** of the presbytery shall be approved for such service by action of the FRP COM, such action being reported to the next stated meeting of FRP. The COM shall require an annual written report from minister members who are LOB, which shall be filed in the minister's confidential file at the presbytery office.

Validated Ministries in Flint River Presbytery

Ministries in the bounds of Flint River Presbytery will be validated against the following criteria:

- 1. The ministry reflects well upon the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Flint River Presbytery;*
- 2. The ministry conforms with Reformed Theology;*
- 3. The minister of Word and Sacrament engaging in the ministry will be an active participant in a local congregation of this presbytery, either as a Parish Associate or in another informal capacity, in a manner which can be reported on, in writing, to the COM on an annual basis;*
- 4. The minister of Word and Sacrament engaging in this ministry will be an active member of presbytery, working with and supporting his/her brothers and sisters throughout our bounds*
- 5. The Session annually affirms the minister of the Word and Sacrament's active participation in the congregation;*
- 6. The minister of Word and Sacrament will submit an annual report, and request for continuation of the validated ministry.*

Other Validated Ministries Outside Congregations

The Flint River Presbytery COM shall also have oversight of minister members in leadership relationships within the bounds of the presbytery which are not in member congregations. These shall be governed constitutionally by the provisions of BOO FG at G-2.0503a *Engaged in a Validated Ministry*. The criteria stated in that section shall be the official guidance for the process of validating a ministry within FRP. The COM, acting on behalf of Presbytery, shall annually determine the merits of each leadership relationship on a case-by-case basis using these criteria and shall report to FRP at a regularly stated or called meeting that a particular ministry is validated. These relationships may include, but are not limited to campus ministry; hospital, prison, or military chaplaincies; or pastoral care positions in non-congregational based organizations.

Failure to Engage in Validated Ministry

As provided in the BOO at G-2.0508 *Failure to Engage in Validated Ministry*, the FRP COM shall be responsible for determining whether any one of its minister members is at risk of falling into this situation. Every effort will be made by COM to direct the minister away from this risk and into some validated ministry. It shall be the FRP COM which shall make recommendation to FRP that action be taken against such minister, and which shall monitor the status of any minister against whom the FRP has taken this action. At the time the three-year limit is reached, upon recommendation of the COM, the presbytery may choose to delete that person's name from the roll of membership.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

- *Examinations*

The COM of FRP considers one of its most solemn duties to be the examination of those ministers of Word and Sacrament who apply for membership in the presbytery. The Book of Order (BOO) provides guidance to the church in Chapter Two, *Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification*. More specifically the following warrant for this duty is found in G-2.0104b

"Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibility of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates."

Further warrant is given in G-3.0306:

"Each presbytery determines the Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds." (G-2.0503a).

"The presbytery shall examine each teaching elder or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church. Every Minister of Word and Sacrament shall ordinarily be a member of the presbytery where his or her work is situated or of the presbytery where she or he resides."

Additional guidance for the FRP COM is found in *G-2.06 Preparation for Ministry* (especially G-2.0607), *G-2.07 Ordination* (especially G-2.0702), and *G-2.08 Call and Installation* (especially G-2.0803, G-2.0804, and G-2.0805).

Examinations are about the person being examined, rather than individual COM members. Exams should be occasions for genuine interest in the candidate or minister of Word and Sacrament. Questions should be designed to reveal helpful insights about the person and his or her gifts for ministry. COM members do well to be courteous, kind, thoughtful, and fair in conducting examinations, remembering that the person being examined is likely to become a colleague.

The FRP COM will conduct these types of examinations:

- Candidates for ordination *before being examined by presbytery*
- Previously ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament who are transferring into FRP as a member *will be examined on behalf of presbytery*

Candidates for Ordination

Candidates for ordination called to serve congregations in FRP shall be examined by the COM in regard to Christian faith and sense of call to ministry in general as well as sense of call to the specific work in the particular church or other validated ministry. In addition, the candidate shall be examined on knowledge and views in the areas of theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church, as well as in Bible (see G-2.0607b, c, d). *which should be furnished in large measure by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry*).

Following approval by the COM and the call process described elsewhere in this PMO (Pastoral Leaders), the candidate shall be presented before FRP for a floor examination, led by the COM. This floor examination shall cover the same areas as the COM exam. It is intended to give the FRP an introduction to the candidate's faith and talents and is not intended to be as exhaustive as the COM exam. Provision shall be made during this exam for questions from the floor. Following an affirmative vote by the presbytery, the calling body shall present terms of call for approval by FRP. A commission to ordain and install the candidate shall be named by FRP. Only after this vote of FRP shall the candidate be given permission to move on the field.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament Transferring Membership

Previously ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament who are to be nominated by a PNC or other calling body shall be examined by the COM for approval to begin the process for becoming a member of FRP. This exam shall review the minister of Word and Sacrament's Christian faith and sense of call to the specific work in the particular church or other validated ministry. In addition, the minister of Word and Sacrament shall be examined only on views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church as well as in Bible. Upon satisfactory completion of this exam by the COM and after completing the call process described elsewhere in this PMO (Pastoral Leaders), the minister of Word and Sacrament-elect shall be presented to FRP for introduction. A commission to install the minister shall be named by FRP.

In the case of both types of examinations described above, preparation shall be made by each candidate or minister of Word and Sacrament by submitting to COM two one-page written documents: a Statement of Faith and a Biographical Statement. These documents should be sent to the COM Moderator and Executive Presbytery but no later than 7 days prior to the examination.

Other Types of Examinations

Other types of examinations the COM conducts include the following:

- 1) ministers from other denominations (G-2.0505); (*see p. 21-22)
- 2) honorably retired ministers of Word and Sacrament moving their membership from another presbytery; (*see p. 23)
- 3) members-at-large and inactive members from another presbytery; (*see p. 23)
- 4) ministers of Word and Sacrament seeking re-admission after release from ministry (G-2.0507); (*see p.24)
- 5) ministers of other Christian churches who are serving temporarily in a validated ministry of this church or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (G-2.0506); (*see p. 24-25)
- 6) interim ministers of other presbyteries laboring within but not becoming members of FRP; (*see p. 25-26)
- 7) minister of Word and Sacrament members of FRP moving to a new installed position in FRP; (*see p. 26)
- 8) commissioned ruling elders (see section entitled *Presbytery Trained and Commissioned Ruling Elders, see pages 31-32*)

Ministers from Other Denominations Seeking Full Membership

Ministers of other denominations (including Formula Partners) who wish to become PC(USA) ministers must meet the requirements of the Form of Government, G-2.0505, *Transfer of Ministers of Other Denominations*. This section of the PMO applies to all situations described in G-2.0505, including immigrant fellowship ministers and other Reformed church ministers (being considered as "exceptional circumstances"). FRP shall recognize the minister's previous ordination to ministry after the constitutional conditions have been satisfied.

The following must be satisfied:

- Furnish credentials and evidence of good standing (G-2.0505a);
- Furnish transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades from an accredited college or university (G-2.0607b);
- Furnish a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to FRP (G-2.0607c);
- Satisfactory completion of the PC(USA) Standard Ordination Exams (G-2.0607d);
- Sufficient evidence of wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G-2.0607a);
- Affirmation of the ordination questions in W-4.4003.

Upon formal request to the FRP COM from a minister of another denomination and following a preliminary interview before the COM, which shall review all the forgoing requirements, the minister shall affirm his or her willingness to satisfy these requirements. Upon approval to proceed by the COM, the minister shall be referred to the FRP Committee on Preparation for Ministry which shall supervise and monitor the minister's progress on those requirements that need to be completed.

In the preliminary interview, if a minister seeks admission under the any of the constitutional provisions for exceptions, G-2.0505a(1) or G-2.20505a(2) or G-2.0610, the COM shall counsel with the minister on the details of these exceptions that apply, and shall determine which, if any, exception shall be recommended to FRP. The COM shall examine the minister and, if the way be clear, recommend to FRP approval of the exception by the constitutionally required vote, which is 3/4. Upon approval by FRP the COM shall supervise the minister's enrollment as a member and counsel with the minister regarding the seeking of a call and installation in a church or validated ministry of FRP.

Honorably Retired Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Honorably retired ministers of Word and Sacrament may seek membership in Flint River Presbytery and those who do so shall be examined by FRP COM. If the examination is sustained, the COM shall vote on approving the minister's membership in the presbytery. Anticipating the minister's potential service to congregations of the presbytery as pulpit supply, interim pastor, parish associate, or in other temporary relationships, the COM shall examine the minister's experience of grace, sense of call to ministry, and views only in the constitutional areas of theology, the Sacraments, polity of this church, and Bible. Following approval by the FRP COM, this action shall be reported to the next stated meeting of FRP and the newly admitted minister shall be formally introduced at that meeting.

Members-at-large of Other Presbyteries

A minister of Word and Sacrament who is an at-large member of another presbytery may seek membership in Flint River Presbytery if circumstances (position or residence) warrant it. One who does so shall be examined by FRP COM, and if the examination is sustained, the COM shall vote on approving the minister's membership in the presbytery. Anticipating the minister's potential service to congregations of the presbytery as pulpit supply, interim pastor, parish associate, or in other temporary relationships, the COM shall examine the minister's experience of grace, sense of call to ministry, and views in the constitutional areas of theology, the Sacraments, polity of this church, and Bible. In addition, for the care and well-being of these ministers, the COM should ask about the circumstances leading to their at-large status. COM should encourage them to set goals for working toward active status and shall both work with them and monitor their progress toward these goals. Following approval by the FRP COM this action shall be reported to the next stated meeting of FRP and the newly admitted minister shall be formally introduced at that meeting.

Readmission of Those Previously Released from Ministry

Any minister of Word and Sacrament previously released from ministry by FRP who desires to be restored to the ordered ministry following that release may apply to the FRP COM for such restoration according to the following:

- The release must not have been due to an inquiry "initiated pursuant to D-10.0101 and D-10.0201";
- The restoration is sought by one "against whom no charges have been filed";
- The applicant for restoration is otherwise in good standing;
- Application for restoration must be made through FRP, the council which granted the release;
- Applicant must reaffirm the ordination questions and have resumed a ministry that qualifies him/her for membership in the presbytery. (See G-2.0507)

Having met all the steps outlined above to the satisfaction of the FRP COM, recommendation may be made to FRP for restoration to the ordered ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament without re-ordination.

Ministers of Other Christian Churches Serving Temporarily or Under the *Formula of Agreement*

The Form of Government provides for enrollment of ministers of other Christian churches serving within the bounds of the presbytery in a temporary position, according to G-2.0506:

"A presbytery may enroll a minister of another Christian church who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (BOO, Appendix C; G-5.0202), when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery's own rule."

FRP has no obligation to allow other denomination's ministers (including those of churches in full communion or in correspondence with the PC(USA)) to serve their churches. However, if permitted in particular circumstances, the FRP COM shall examine ministers under this rule prior to the minister's being presented for approval to the contracting or calling body. The COM shall determine that the minister has met the requirements for preparation for such service.

The examination shall include the minister's experience of grace, sense of call to the particular service, and views only in the areas of theology, the Sacraments, polity of this church, and Bible.

Following the approval of the COM the minister shall be presented to FRP for a floor examination which shall include the same areas covered in the COM exam and shall provide for questions from the floor. Having reviewed and approved the terms of call and the provision for installation, the COM shall recommend, and the presbytery shall vote on approving the call, terms of call, and provision for installation. Following affirmative vote of FRP the minister shall be enrolled as a member of the presbytery on a temporary basis for a term specified in the call. Renewal of the term shall be subject to approval by the COM and FRP.

Interim Ministers Laboring Within FRP

A minister of Word and Sacrament who is hired by a congregation to serve as an interim pastor may seek membership in Flint River Presbytery and should be encouraged to do so. Those who choose to do so shall be examined by FRP COM, and if the examination is sustained, the COM shall vote on approving the minister's membership in the presbytery. The COM shall examine the minister's experience of grace, sense of call to ministry in general and on the sense of call to the specific interim ministry for which he/she is being hired, and views only in the constitutional areas of theology, the Sacraments, polity of this church, and Bible. The COM shall also vote on approving the terms of contract for the services of the interim minister. Following approval by the FRP COM this action shall be reported to the next stated meeting of FRP, and the newly admitted minister shall be formally introduced at that meeting.

Ministers who are members of another presbytery, hired by a member congregation of FRP, and who do not seek membership in FRP shall be examined by the COM. If the examination is sustained the COM shall vote on approving the interim relationship and the terms of the contract for services.

The examination shall include experience of grace and sense of call to the specific work for which the minister's services are being sought. The COM and the contract shall state the specific term of the contract, with renewal subject to approval by the church and the COM.

Members of FRP Moving to a Different Position in FRP

A minister of Word and Sacrament member of Flint River Presbytery who is to be nominated to a different position within FRP shall be examined by FRP COM prior to the vote of the calling body. If the examination is sustained, the COM shall vote on approving the minister's move within the presbytery. The COM shall examine the minister's sense of call to the specific work in the particular church or other validated ministry. The COM shall also vote to approve the terms of call and shall, on behalf of the FRP, approve the installation commission to install the minister (G-3.0109b(3)). Following approval by the FRP COM these actions shall be reported to the next stated meeting of FRP, and the minister's new work shall be formally announced at that meeting.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

- ***Care of Ministers of Word and Sacrament***

The FRP COM is well aware of the stresses of ministry and the ways those stresses are visible in church professionals and in the congregations they serve. Stress in ministry has multiple causes, some the result of external changes in the larger culture, some the result of the individual's lifestyle choices, and some caused by conflicts in the congregations. While the COM will not be able to address all causes of stress, it does have the opportunity and responsibility to be aware of pastors under excessive stress and to help address the isolation and loneliness that often intensifies stress. The FRP COM needs to be visibly and explicitly concerned for the care and support of its minister members and their families, as well as all other church professionals within its bounds. To that end it shall be a specific goal of the FRP COM to visit ministers regularly.

This visitation may take a variety of forms and be accomplished through different types of interaction between ministers and COM, FRP staff, and colleagues.

New Members

New members of Flint River Presbytery shall be afforded special attention by the FRP COM through the provisions of the packet entitled *Welcome to God's Call in Flint River Presbytery*. The COM is responsible for maintaining the provisions of this packet, planning those things such as Discovery Retreats and Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training which are part of a new Minister of Word and Sacrament's integration into the Presbytery. The COM shall appoint liaisons for new minister members and shall oversee the relationship between these individuals. Those newly ordained shall be appointed a liaison to serve a minimum of two years. Those previously ordained before joining FRP shall have a liaison appointed for a minimum of one year.

Liaisons shall be a member the COM or former member of the COM in this or in another presbytery.

Assignment of liaisons shall be by the moderator of the COM in consultation with the EP.

Responsibilities of liaisons are as follows:

- to meet face to face with the minister at least three times/year to discussing opportunities and challenges
- to offer a sympathetic ear,
- to suggest resources for assistance when needed,
- to assure the minister of the continuing care and concern of the COM
- to inform the EP and/or COM moderator if there are issues that may need attention

Clergy Cluster Gatherings

The FRP COM, through the FRP staff, shall provide regularly scheduled "clergy cluster gatherings" to insure opportunity is available to all serving ministers of Word and Sacrament and CREs to gather with colleagues for fellowship, conversation, and mutual support. The time, place, form, and content of such gatherings shall be at the discretion of those members within the cluster, in consultation with the EP.

Professional Development and Sabbatical Leave

The COM believes that professional development is critical not only to the competency of its minister of Word and Sacrament members, but also to both the personal and professional wellness of ministers of Word and Sacrament. The FRP COM strongly encourages a program of regular continuing education for all its minister of Word and Sacrament members and expects those who serve in member congregations or other validated ministries to report to the church the type of continuing education and its relevance to ministry in the local congregation or validated ministry.

The FRP COM strongly encourages its member churches to include sabbatical leave in every installed pastor's terms of call.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training and Certification

In partnership with the Stated Clerk, the COM shall require Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training for all Ministers of Word and Sacrament admitted to FRP every three years as well as for all continuing members of FRP, including all TREs, CREs, certified Christian Educators, and campus ministry and youth directors. COM shall oversee the records of such training and insure that those who are required to complete such training have done so. The FRP Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy is available on our web site under “Forms and Guidelines”.

Vacation

The FRP COM shall be mindful of the vacation provision in the terms of call of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament and diligent in encouraging ministers to take the full vacation time allotted to them.

Compensation for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Presbyterian churches promise to pay their pastors fairly and to provide for their welfare as they work among the people of the congregation. The session of each congregation is constitutionally required to review annually the Terms of Call of the pastor (G-2.0804) and make recommendation to the congregation regarding any changes. Because the adequacy of compensation could vary widely depending on regional differences in cost of living, it is the responsibility of Flint River Presbytery through its Committee on Ministry to oversee compensation packages, included in the Terms of Call (TOC), for minister members. To this end FRP shall require of its member congregations an adherence to the minimum compensation requirements, which shall, upon recommendation from the COM, be set annually by FRP. The minimum compensation requirements can also be found at our website under “Forms and Guidelines” for COM.

Honorably Retired Members

The FRP COM should be especially careful with the honorably retired ministers of Word and Sacrament who reside within the bounds of FRP and are members of it. It shall be the duty of the FRP COM to receive requests for honorable retirement (HR) and to make recommendation to FRP for action on such requests. Further, upon the action of FRP to grant HR status to any minister of Word and Sacrament, it shall be the duty of the COM to prepare a resolution for presentation to FRP to be read in the presence of the minister of Word and Sacrament to be retired and the presbytery, and the resolution shall be admitted to the record of FRP. This resolution and its presentation shall be done with great care and integrity commensurate with the solemnity of the occasion. The FRP COM should maintain regular contact with all honorably retired ministers of Word and Sacrament within its bounds. It is appropriate for the COM to encourage its retired members to engage, if able, in continuing service to the presbytery and the ministries within its bounds, although regular participation in meetings of FRP is not required of those who are honorably retired.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

- *Presbytery Trained and Commissioned Ruling Elders*

Flint River Presbytery promotes the ministry of ruling elders through the Gerald L. Voye School for Ruling Elders. A Presbytery Trained Ruling Elder (TRE) is one who has satisfactorily completed a course of study which shall be prescribed by FRP through the School for Ruling Elders. A Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) is a TRE who has been commissioned to pastoral service in a particular church or other validated ministry of FRP. In its program of ministry through Presbytery Trained Ruling Elders, FRP shall be governed by the provisions of BOO G-2.10 *Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service*.

The course of study for each class is carefully planned by the Gerald L. Voye School for Ruling Elders team and approved by COM. Care is taken to change curriculum to reflect the changing needs of the church. Once each candidate has completed the prescribed study to the satisfaction of team, the COM shall examine all candidates in order to be designated as TREs. Those TREs who request commissioning to a particular ministry shall be examined by a COM cluster, or COM as a whole, and shall include a brief biography, a statement of faith, and motives for seeking the commission. A contract for pastoral services between the TRE and congregation or ministry shall be presented for approval by COM. This form is available on found on our presbytery web site under the *Resources* tab of “Forms and Guidelines”, COM section. When a TRE’s commission is approved by COM, the CRE shall be introduced at the next Presbytery meeting by the COM Moderator, with a brief biography and statement of faith to be included in the FRP packet. A commissioning service shall follow, noting the BOO provisions in W-4.04 *Ordination, Installation, and Commissioning*.

It is appropriate for a Commissioned Ruling Elder to be authorized to moderate the session of the congregation to which (s)he is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at weddings as permitted by the laws of the state of Georgia. COM shall specify in its approval which, if any, of these functions are authorized, and the contract with the CRE shall so state. All CREs shall have voice and vote during meetings of FRP.

Any TRE who is not commissioned to a particular ministry may apply to the COM to be approved for inclusion on the pulpit supply list and preach in congregations of FRP when invited to do so. Any TRE who is not commissioned shall not be authorized to perform the functions stated in the previous paragraph.

A minister member of FRP will be assigned to each CRE to serve as a mentor. Guidelines for the mentoring of CREs are available on our website under the *Resources* tab of “Forms and Guidelines”. Each CRE shall submit to COM an annual report in consultation with their Session. The CRE Annual Report can also be found under the *Resources* tab as well. The A commission shall be in effect for a maximum term of three years and may be renewed by the COM at the request of the Session.

Through its geographical clusters, the COM shall receive an annual report from each TRE. Each TRE is encouraged to participate in a course of continuing education. The annual reports will remain in Presbytery files.

COUNSEL REGARDING PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS: PASTORAL

VACANCIES

- *The Process of Ending Well*

When a pastoral relationship is dissolved by FRP due to the departure or retirement of a minister, the COM shall respond in one or more of several ways. An exit interview shall be set up with the departing minister and a separate interview with the session, conducted by the Executive Presbyter (EP). The EP shall arrange to lead worship and preach at that church on a date as soon after the minister's departure as is practical. The COM shall appoint a moderator for the session who shall report periodically to the COM on the status of and any concern about the church's continuing ministry and decisions about future pastoral leadership. The COM shall encourage a mission study be done by the session which shall include provision for input from the congregation. The session shall be advised by the COM through contacts with the EP regarding options for pastoral leadership, including, but not limited to, temporary supply or interim ministry. If and when the session is ready to recommend the call of a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee (PNC), the COM shall appoint one of its members (or a former member of the FRP COM) as liaison to the PNC.

In conclusion, both the *Book of Order* and the *FRP COM Procedural Manual of Operations* clearly indicate that a *vacancy precipitates* the establishment of a PNC. While there are many reasons for a vacancy in pastoral leadership to occur, the procedures developed under our polity and in our interpretation should be followed as closely as possible for fairness sake, while acknowledging that unique situations may occur which still conform to our polity but require special prayer and discernment by FRP and the COM as to how to proceed. Generally, a vacancy in pastoral leadership should occur before a Pastor Nominating Committee is elected.

A session may determine that a congregational mission study be done prior to the departure of the minister in order to prepare for the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee when elected.

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews shall ordinarily be conducted with a departing pastor and with the session, generally by the Executive Presbyter (EP). The interviews help all parties begin to disengage and begin the process of moving forward into the future. This is true whether the person leaving is an interim pastor who has served the church for a short time or a long-term installed pastor who is leaving after many years of service. These interviews shall be arranged as soon after the dissolution of the pastoral relationship as is practical. The EP, on behalf of the presbytery and COM, shall be invited to preach and lead worship on a Sunday as soon after the pastor's departure as is practical. The EP shall review with the session during the exit interview the options for temporary pastoral leadership. The EP will also ordinarily advise the session, on behalf of the COM, regarding various tools and resources available to aid in the transition process and to assist a future pastor nominating committee

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

The authority to dissolve any installed pastoral relationship is reserved constitutionally to the presbytery (G-2.0901). The procedures and steps for dissolution are outlined in the BOO FG at G-2.09 *Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships*. These steps shall be carefully followed by the FRP COM in consulting with and advising both pastor and congregation seeking dissolution. When there is concurrence between the pastor and the congregation that the pastoral relationship should be dissolved, FRP authorizes the COM to dissolve the pastoral relationship. When there is disagreement about the continuance or dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the COM shall proceed by guidelines adopted by FRP. In addition, a separation agreement shall be negotiated by the parties under the supervision of the FRP COM. Both of these documents can be found at our website under "Forms and Guidelines".

Regarding Dissolution due to Retirement

It is most appropriate for the entire presbytery to be involved in the approval of the retirement date of a minister member. The authorization and celebration of this significant life event is best done at the stated meeting of presbytery closest to the proposed retirement date.

Statement of Ethics Governing Actions Following Dissolution

In accord with the BOO FG and the stated policies of FRP, the actions of pastor and congregation following dissolution are strictly prescribed. "Former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of the session" (G-2.0905). In addition, the policy of FRP called "Guidelines for Leaving a Congregation (Separation Ethics)" will be shared with departing pastors and active sessions. This document can be found under "Forms and Guidelines" on our presbytery website. The FRP COM shall make clear the following guidelines in communication with the departing pastor:

- the departing pastor bears primary responsibility for helping members of his/her former congregation understand that it is no longer appropriate for him/her to officiate at services for them
- the former pastor and family will be encouraged to absent themselves from the congregation to avoid complicating the transition for the congregation as they seek both temporary and/or installed pastoral leadership
- the former pastor should wait an appropriate amount of time before re-entering the congregation, and then only after a careful conversation with the new pastor about his/her wishes in the matter
- the former pastor should avoid all conversation about what happens in the congregation after his/her departure, especially avoiding the expression of disapproval or criticism of the decisions or leadership of the interim pastor or newly installed pastor.

Dismissal to a Different Presbytery

The FRP COM shall have authority granted by the presbytery to dismiss minister members to a different presbytery. Such action by the COM shall be reported to the next stated meeting of FRP.

The Process of Beginning Well

Appointment of Moderator of Session

The COM shall appoint a moderator, who shall be a member in good standing of the FRP, of the session of the church. This temporary moderator of the session is encouraged to report regularly to the COM on the status of the church's ministry and especially on any actions regarding the progress toward securing temporary or installed pastoral leadership.

Pastoral Nominating Process (In Brief)

The constitutional provisions for calling and installing a new pastoral leader in a congregation are outlined in the BOO FG at G-2.08, *Call and Installation*. As provided in G-2.0803, reference is made to the process set by the presbytery for pastor nominating committees. The following paragraphs outline that process as set by FRP.

The session shall notify the FRP COM of the intent to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). [It should be noted that reference throughout these provisions to the "PNC" also applies to committees elected to nominate associate pastors, co-pastor(s), and designated pastors.] The FRP COM shall appoint a liaison to work with the PNC throughout its tenure in service to the congregation. That liaison shall be an active member of the FRP COM, or in lieu of that, a former member of the FRP COM.

The EP and liaison shall meet with the PNC at its first meeting and the presbytery representatives shall conduct an orientation for the PNC. Orientation shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the distribution of written materials outlining the process set by FRP, a copy or copies of the PC(USA) resource "On Calling a Pastor," copies of the Ministry Information Form (MIF), copies of the form and guidelines for Terms of Call, information on reference checks, requirements and restrictions governing communication with the congregation, guidelines for doing mission studies, a listing of Bible studies helpful to PNCs, information about Church Leadership Connection (CLC) of the PC(USA) and the computer matching process, etc.

The COM liaison shall meet occasionally with the PNC, and especially when any candidates are interviewed. The liaison shall be informed throughout the process by email, telephone calls, and PNC minutes of the progress of the PNC. As soon as the PNC notifies the liaison that they have a candidate, the candidate shall be given the packet "Welcome to God's Call in Flint River Presbytery" (found on our website under the *Resources* tab in Forms and Guidelines/COM section) and shall be requested to accomplish all required actions as soon as possible. A one-page statement of faith and a one-page biography shall be provided to COM prior to the examination by COM. The candidate shall also be given the FRP Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy and shall be required to complete the forms accompanying the policy. This policy can be found in the same location on our website as "Welcome to God's Call".

Under no circumstances shall a candidate be named to the session or the congregation until that candidate has been examined by the FRP COM, with representatives of the PNC present for that examination. Once approval is given for a candidate by the COM, the PNC may share information with

Session only regarding the candidate, as PNC deems appropriate in order to call a congregational meeting to hear the report of the PNC and to vote on the nominee.

Affirmation of Equal Opportunity in Calling Pastoral Leaders

Flint River Presbytery affirms and intends to follow the PC(USA) provisions for inclusivity and diversity in offering opportunity for service in pastoral leadership roles within the bounds of the presbytery.

Those constitutional provisions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- from *A Brief Statement of Faith*:

"We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The same Spirit...calls women and men to all ministries of the Church."

- from *The Form of Government, Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification, G-3.0103*:

"The Councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church's membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices. In fulfilling this commitment councils shall give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and the right of the people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F-3.0106)."

REFRAMING CHALLENGES AND CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

- ***Congregational Conflict***

In fulfilling the task of settling "difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient," the Flint River Presbytery has wide latitude in creating entities and delegating its authority as it determines.

The FRP COM shall be the primary body which acts at the request of FRP and on behalf of FRP to take cognizance of and address conflict in its member congregations. FRP COM is authorized to inquire into reported difficulties. It may also undertake inquiries at the request of sessions and church

leaders. Through its cluster organization and the work of FRP staff among the churches, the FRP COM shall be the first line of response and defense regarding destructive conflict.

The FRP COM shall make recommendations to FRP for the appointment of commissions and/or teams intended to address destructive conflict.

Although church members and leaders are often disturbed by conflict in congregational life, conflict is a universal experience and can be both normal and healthy. In fact, the ability to disagree openly and engage in creative conflict is one of the indicators of a healthy organization. Whenever there are disagreements, wherever opinions are divided, wherever a church wrestles with alternatives in mission, conflict will be present. It is healthy as long as its energy is focused on issues rather than personalities; on equitable solutions rather than winning; on seeking what God is calling the church to do rather than what is desired for an individual or group within the church.

When conflict becomes destructive, enormous energy is expended that takes away from the mission of the church. When the FRP COM becomes aware of and involved in addressing destructive conflict, it shall do so with an approach that recognizes the systems dynamics of the congregation and will avoid focusing on one person or another as the cause of the conflict. It shall be the practice of the FRP COM to identify and seek training for leaders on the COM and in FRP who may be especially equipped to assist with conflict management intervention. No one in FRP shall become involved with or invited to assist with destructive conflict management within any congregation without the knowledge of the FRP COM. Further, such intervention shall always be handled by an intervention team authorized by COM (never by any one individual).

To that end the FRP COM shall commit to the following:

- serve as an instrument of FRP for promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations between ministers and churches. Its purpose shall be to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that the difficulties may be corrected by the session of the church if possible, that the welfare of the particular church may be strengthened, and that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest;
- exercise wise discretion in determining when to take cognizance of information concerning difficulties within a church, proceeding with the following steps:
 - it may take the initiative to bring the information which has come to it to the attention of the session of the church involved, counseling with the session as to the appropriate actions to be taken in correcting the reported difficulties;
 - it may offer its help as a mediator in case the session either finds itself unable to settle the problems peaceably or takes no steps toward settlement;
 - it may act to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the parties concerned, or if this authority is granted by the presbytery for the specific case; when so doing, the committee shall always hold hearings which afford procedural safeguards as in cases of process, following the procedures outlined in the Rules of Discipline
- when prudent, recommend to FRP to assume original jurisdiction in any case in which it is determined that a session cannot exercise its authority; the FRP COM shall in such situations proceed as follows:

- whenever, after a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session in question, FRP through the COM shall determine that the session of a particular church is unable or unwilling to manage wisely the affairs of its church, FRP may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of a session; this commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.

When there is a conflict in a congregation, the COM should remember its charge to provide pastoral care for congregations and church professionals, and to approach their work with a pastoral attitude. Care for all parties in the conflict is essential. If the pastor has a family, they may well be among those who suffer most acutely from the conflict, but with little ability to affect the outcome. Attention to the needs of the family of church professionals and other church staff is always appropriate.

- ***Ministerial Misconduct***

The engagement of minister in misconduct is extremely damaging to everyone involved. Dealing with the aftermath of ministerial misconduct is inevitably difficult, painful, and time-consuming. Misconduct is behavior that is unethical, possibly illegal, and damaging to the ministry. Misconduct is behavior that usually falls into one of the following categories:

- sexual misconduct
- alcohol or other drug abuse
- misuse or misappropriation of church funds
- misuse of power, role, or position.

Church professionals have significant role power. They are often seen as interpreters of right and wrong and of God's will. The trust of people is a sacred responsibility given to church professionals. Nonetheless, they are subject to temptations and self-centered behavior, as are all human beings.

When misconduct occurs, the COM finds itself in the position of having responsibility for the congregation that is deeply wounded, for the church professional suffering shame and loss, and for the person's family. The FRP COM has two responsibilities when there has been misconduct or malfeasance. The first is to deal with immediate situations of misconduct as they arise. The second is to help church professionals and congregations develop as healthy individuals and restore healthy relationships. There is no quick fix, and the restoration may take years.

Once any formal allegations are made in the form of a complaint, the Rules of Discipline apply and are clearly delineated. The COM has no formal role at this point in the judicial process. The COM and the Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) shall remain in communication when permitted by the constitutional process. The COM will defer to the judgment of the PJC as to when it is appropriate for the COM to re-enter a church or re-engage with the pastor.

Ministering to congregations following a judicial proceeding or the removal of a pastor for reasons of malfeasance must be a high priority. Whenever possible the congregation should be informed about the nature of the misconduct and the legal and ecclesiastical ramifications. Members should be given the opportunity to ask questions and expect FRP through the COM to provide opportunities to promote healing. Open communication and listening are crucial.

May this manual of operations serve as a way to foster trust and build community among our congregations so that together our witness to the love of Jesus Christ may be full of integrity and intentionality.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

– Romans 15:13

