

ADOPTED AND RESCINDED POLICIES

1. ACTIVITIES OF MINISTERS, CHURCHES, AND SESSIONS PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL MISSION RELATIONSHIPS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

WHEREAS, the Presbytery of St. Augustine has developed a Mutual Mission partnership with churches in Jamaica known as Jamaica Ecumenical Mutual Mission (JEMM);

WHEREAS, that partnership has been underway since 1979;

WHEREAS, that partnership created a program known as "Hands and Hearts Across the Sea in Mutual Mission";

WHEREAS, that program was approved by this presbytery (formerly known as Suwannee Presbytery) at its May 1980 meeting and by the General Assembly Mission Board at its July 1980 meeting;

WHEREAS, the program is built on the theological concept of mutuality in mission which we understand as follows:

Mutuality of Mission is based on the strong belief that the Christian Community is a World Wide Family. Although celebrating and affirming our uniqueness we are linked by a common Creator and Savior to one another, mutuality consists of contributing to the total well being of the family. Receivers are givers and givers are receivers. Each of us needs the other. Indeed, we only approach wholeness in mutual relationship to one another. All mission is mutual.

WHEREAS, the Mutual Mission is working and relationships abound;

WHEREAS, there is a special trust with this presbytery on the part of the General Assembly Mission Board that allows this presbytery to work in this partnership beyond the normal limits of the Constitution;

WHEREAS, this program functions under certain agreed-upon criteria as follows:

1. "Hearts and Hands" proposals;
2. Memorandum of Agreement with the General Assembly Mission Board;
3. Guidelines for Presbytery Partnerships;
4. Form of Government G-13.0103d;
5. Form of Government G-13.0201c, d, e;
6. Form of Government G-15.0101;
7. Form of Government G-15.0201

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that the Presbytery of St. Augustine adopts the following policy for the activities of ministers and individual churches through their sessions relating to Mutual Mission with churches in Jamaica:

- 1) All correspondence relating to program plans, either proposed or functioning, shall be coordinated through the Mutual Mission Steering Committee;
- 2) All program relationships shall be conducted through presbytery to JEMM. All program planning or execution including transfer of money on the part of individual churches or denominations shall be coordinated through the Mutual Mission Steering Committee;
- 3) Program leaders from Jamaican churches with which the Presbytery of St. Augustine has a partner relationship shall be invited by individual churches for events within the bounds of this presbytery only under the coordination of the Mutual Mission Steering Committee;
- 4) Requests for aid, materials, resources, etc. shall be directed to the Steering Committee by individuals traveling to Jamaica or receiving Jamaican visitors;
- 5) Exchange of money, travelers' checks, or any other instrument of monetary value between individuals from Jamaica and Presbyterians from the Presbytery of St. Augustine is strongly discouraged due to Jamaican law. Money shall be exchanged only through legal entities such as banks, Jamaican airport, and motels/hotels.

Adopted 25 October 1983;

Amended 1 January 2018

2. APPROVAL OF INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The presbytery adopted the following statement as the policy of the presbytery: Upon receipt of a written allegation against a minister member of the presbytery, the Stated Clerk, the Moderator of the presbytery, and the Moderator of the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall be empowered to appoint an investigating committee, according to the provisions of D-10.0201a-c, and that the receipt of the allegation and the membership of the investigating committee be reported to the presbytery at its next stated meeting.

Adopted 12 February 2005

Amended 1 January 2018

3. PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY SUPPORT FUND OFFERING

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The offerings at ordinations and installations of ministers and services of commission for ruling elders commissioned to special pastoral service shall be designated for the Preparation for Ministry Support Fund. The Call Commission may approve disbursement for scholarship support for students pursuing a course of study in preparation for ministry as a teaching elder or to serve as a commissioned ruling elder.

Adopted 29 April 1986

Revised 5 February 2022

4. CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

A Christian Educator, sometimes called a Director of Christian Education, is a trained and/or experienced church professional, called by God to a profession of significant responsibility in the church. The following shall apply to all Certified Christian Educators employed full time and persons currently seeking certification and to their employing churches or church related agencies.

A. Calling Process for Churches Seeking Full Time Certified Educators or Educators in the Process of Certification

Persons seeking positions as Certified Christian Educators shall complete and place on file with the presbytery the Personal Discernment Profile. Every church or church related agency seeking to call a Certified Christian Educator shall notify the Call Commission. Thereupon, a Church Vacancy Consultant will be appointed to work with the church or church related agency search committee, and the Ministry Discernment Profile will be completed. No person shall be called to work in a particular church or church related agency until the Call Commission has granted approval.

B. Recognition of Certified Christian Educators

The Call Commission will include in its report to presbytery the recognition of Certified Christian Educators within the bounds who have recently completed the certification process or of Certified Educators moving into the Presbytery of St. Augustine. The Educator will present to the Presbytery a brief statement of faith and work history.

Every calling session shall recognize the Certified Christian Educator with an appropriate installation ceremony at which a representative of the Call Commission shall be present. This public worship service shall be coordinated with the representative of the Call Commission.

C. Status of Certified Christian Educators within the Presbytery of St. Augustine

A Certified Christian Educator is one who has complied with the procedures outlined above and who is now engaged in Christian Education in a particular church or ministry validated by this presbytery, or who is participating in the life and work of this presbytery, or who is honorably retired. A Certified Christian Educator is granted the privilege of the floor of the presbytery.

The Call Commission will make an annual report to the presbytery on the status of Certified Christian Educators within the bounds of the Presbytery of St. Augustine.

D. Presbytery Meetings

All Certified Christian Educators are expected to attend meetings of the Presbytery of St. Augustine and to participate in the life and work of the presbytery.

E. Oversight and Support

The Mission and Leadership Development Committee will provide events for educators and heads of staff for the opportunity to clarify mutual expectations, to enhance communication, and to develop effective team ministries.

The Call Commission will employ the same procedures and guidelines established for ordained/installed clergy regarding the Certified Christian Educator's inclusion with session visits and exit interviews. The Mission and Leadership Development Committee will provide newly employed Certified Christian Educators a mentor. The Mission and Leadership Development Committee will provide an annual continuing education event for Certified Christian Educators. The Certified Christian Educator will have access to the Mission and Leadership Development Committee for support, advice, resolution of difficulties, and pastoral care. (G-2.1103)

F. Guidelines for Compensation and Benefits

The compensation standards recommended by the Church Vocations Ministry Unit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be used to help determine the compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators.

The minimum salary terms of the Presbytery of St. Augustine established for clergy shall be followed when calling a Certified Christian Educator.

G. Resolution of Difficulties

No church shall dismiss a Certified Christian Educator from its employment without first consulting with the Call Commission. Any Certified Christian Educator with a grievance against his/her employer is encouraged to first consult with the moderator and session and/or personnel committee in an attempt to resolve the problem, but may not be denied the opportunity to consult with and seek advice and counsel from the Call Commission.

H. Non-Certified Christian Educators

While the above guidelines relate to Certified Christian Educators, the Call Commission encourages sessions to apply the same guidelines to non-certified Christian Educators. Non-Certified Christian Educators are encouraged to complete educational requirements and to seek certification under the process provided for such certification.

Adopted 1 May 1990
Amended 14 July 2007
Amended 1 January 2018
Amended October 2025

5. CLERGY COMPENSATION

Presbytery of St. Augustine

A. THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Scripture teaches that those who labor are worthy of their hire. It also teaches that members of the covenant community are under obligation to support one another in their stewardship of gifts and possessions. The Presbytery of St. Augustine accordingly accepts its responsibility to provide these guidelines for the equitable compensation of its pastors.

B. GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MINISTER'S COMPENSATION

A minister is called by God to a particular church and is ordained to this ministry through the action of the presbytery which includes specific financial terms of employment, including basic salary, housing allowance or provision of a manse, payments to the Annuity plan which includes major medical coverage, auto allowance, and continuing education/book allowance.

There are several emerging assumptions towards ministers' compensation:

- 1) compensation which will adequately support the basic family needs of the minister;
- 2) compensation based on education, experience, ability, and special skills;
- 3) compensation based on the relative value of the position which the minister holds.

These guidelines suggest serious study about the nature of the ministry of your church and the compensation schedule for all employed in this ministry.

C. MINIMUM SALARY

The presbytery approves each year a minimum salary for any fulltime minister receiving a new call. This new call will be examined by the Member Preparation and Call Commission for compliance with this minimum. This minimum applies to calls to all churches including associate positions in larger churches. Presbytery's office will furnish this minimum amount to any inquiry. Deviation from this schedule will require action of the presbytery through the Member Preparation and Call Commission.

D. CONSTRUCTION OF A SALARY SCHEDULE PRIOR TO CALLING A MINISTER

1. Adequately Supporting Basic Family Needs of The Minister

This beginning assumption requires serious congregational self analysis. Certainly the church should offer sufficient compensation so as to provide the food, housing, clothes, etc. that the family requires. But beyond that, the church expects (whether or not this has ever been specifically documented in your church) its minister to maintain a lifestyle which is in harmony with the congregation. Generally recognized is the feeling that the minister should not live like the poorest member in the congregation, nor should the minister be expected to live as the wealthiest member. Therefore, there is a middle income figure (median perhaps) for your congregation which might serve as a basis for the first step in the construction of a compensation schedule. Determination of this statistic should not be guesswork, nor should it require information from each member. However, this becomes a delicate but necessary step in determining the financial status of the congregation. Information about family income for your town, county, and region is available to help you in this analysis.

2. Compensation Beyond Basic Needs Based On:

- a) Education
Advanced study is rewarded in almost every profession. A minister should be able to expect the same consideration by the calling church.
- b) Experience
The number of years in ministry is not (per se) a determining factor of financial arrangements (in fact, neither age nor sex can be a basis for salary discrimination in any way). But successful and meaningful experience which would enhance the proposed pastoral relationship should be recognized in the proposed financial arrangements.
- c) Ability
A person of proven ability for ministry and the potential for new growth should be recognized in the starting financial considerations.
- d) Special Skills
The calling congregation should recognize unusual skills in the person being considered and insert a merit increment in the proposed salary schedule.

3. Compensation Based on The Relative Value Which The Minister Holds Within The Church Staff.

The salary schedule, intentionally or not, reflects the relative worth of the position both to the church and the minister. Two positions of equal importance should not be too far apart in stated salaries. And positions of greatest worth to the ministry of the church should enjoy the largest differentials.

E. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE MINISTER'S SALARY SCHEDULE

1. The minister's basic salary has been determined by the congregation's median family income. So find out what has happened this past year to this average figure. To help with this, a cost of living figure should be easily available. Decide whether the minister's salary should be adjusted higher than this average figure. All of this determination should be reflected in the new salary schedule.
2. Remember that your minister has one more year of experience. Evaluate the growth of the minister and the ministry. List new responsibilities that the minister has assumed this past year in the church, the agencies of the church, and the community. Express this meaningful experience in the new salary schedule.
3. Like it or not, the compensation schedule for your minister reflects what you think of his or her ministry. Do not hesitate to reflect your appreciation for ministry in the new salary schedule.
4. Many fringe benefits are available for you to express your approval of ministry through the call. Only your indifference stands in the ways of finding opportunity to express appreciation.

F. ALTERNATIVES FOR CHURCHES WHICH CANNOT MEET THESE GUIDELINES

1. Consider carefully the potential ability of your church to provide money and then institute the promotion of a healthier stewardship program to meet the needs of the ministry.
2. Consider banding together with one or more other churches to issue a joint call.
3. Consider a "tentmaking" ministry: call a person who has a marketable skill (teaching, farming, counseling, computer work, etc.) who would take a halftime church position while working in a suitable occupation or profession.

G. MANSE CONSIDERATIONS

1. Where a Manse Is Not Provided

When a minister provides his or her own housing, the Internal Revenue Service limits the housing allowance to an amount equal to the fair rental value of the house furnished plus the cost of utilities. Presbytery recommends that where an allowance is provided in lieu of a manse, it be comparable to the rental rate in the community to meet the needs of the minister and his/her family.

2. Where a Manse Is Provided

Both the minister and the congregation should recognize that the free use of a manse includes keeping it insured, painted, and in a good state of repair. Utilities should either be provided directly or the salary should be increased accordingly. If not contained in the salary, the value of utilities is includable for reporting for Social Security purposes. To boost retirement pay of their pastor(s) some churches have elected to include the value of utilities in their payments to the annuity fund.

Presbytery reminds both ministers and sessions that the IRS housing allowance may contain the rental value of furnishings, annual purchases of furnishings, and the cost of appurtenances and utilities when the manse is provided. The IRS housing allowance does NOT increase the salary paid. Should the IRS determine that the amount deducted is not "fair" by IRS regulations, the burden of defense is upon the minister who requested it.

3. Shared Housing Equity

In recognition of the need to build an equity fund for housing, the presbytery requires in all new calls and encourages in all existing calls an Equity Fund contribution at a minimum to be determined by the presbytery for ministers required to live in a manse. These are the details of the plan:

a) Rationale

Were a minister given an allowance with which to purchase a house instead of living in the manse, the inflation growth in equity of that property would ultimately benefit the minister. When a manse is provided, such growth in the value of the manse ultimately benefits the church. At retirement, the minister who has to purchase housing has acquired no equity to offset the inflationary rise in real estate.

b) Administration

An amount at least equal to the minimum, subject to annual adjustment by the presbytery, shall be paid on a monthly or quarterly basis by the church treasurer to an account selected by the minister subject to the approval of the Member Preparation and Call Commission. Presbytery shall not be involved in the administration of any Equity Fund. Income produced by the Equity Fund, whether in cash, dividends, stock, or other form, shall be reinvested in that account.

There are tax implications involved in the creation of such a fund. Because tax regulations change from time to time, the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommends that the session and minister consult competent tax counsel prior to creating this fund and on a regular basis thereafter.

Adopted 9 July 1988

Amended 1 January 2018

**6. AUTHORITY GRANTED TO TRANSFER CANDIDATES
BETWEEN MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY
[RESCINDED AND NO LOGNER IN EFFECT]
Presbytery of St. Augustine**

The presbytery grants authority to the Member Preparation and Call Commission to dismiss candidates between meetings of the presbytery, with the provision that all such actions shall be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery [G-10.0103v].

Adopted 28 April 1989
Amended 1 January 2018
Rescinded October 2025

7. COMMUNION AT PRESBYTERY GATHERINGS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

That the presbytery adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Book of Church Order (211-4) states:

“Higher church courts may appoint times for the celebration of the Lord's Supper either during their sessions or in connection with some gathering of believers which is under their control.”

BE IT RESOLVED that the presbytery authorize the orderly celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at presbytery sponsored gatherings of believers; e.g. youth retreats, rallies, WOC functions, etc.

Adopted 30 January 1981

8. COUNSELING GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH PROFESSIONALS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

Support for Individual or Family Counseling

Church professionals are fulfilling vocations that are personally and emotionally demanding. From time to time, the need for counseling arises, and with it the need to find both a capable therapist and financial support for therapy. The presbytery is committed to supporting the mental and spiritual health of its full time church professionals in the following ways:

1. If you think counseling or therapy would be helpful, please feel free to contact your Area Relationship Coordinator, the Relationship Coordination Director, the Leadership Development and Care Committee or Life Renewed Counseling (formerly Pastoral Counseling Services) of Jacksonville. Any of these will assist you in entering the process. All contacts regarding your desire to start counseling or therapy will be kept confidential.
2. You may desire to work with someone other than Life Renewed Counseling. LRC will gladly help you with a referral.
3. You may enter therapy, either with Life Renewed Counseling or with another therapist, confident of the presbytery's financial support. Ordinarily the presbytery will contribute the difference between the amount your insurance provides and the actual cost of each therapy session, up to \$40.00 per session for up to 20 sessions per year. In all cases, you should contact the Board of Pensions concerning the procedure to be followed under your major medical policy.

Support for Career Development

The presbytery supports the career development efforts of our church professionals, believing that learning about ministry skills and gifts is an important way to listen for the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Historically, we have found that the Career and Personal Counseling Center at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg has provided opportunities for such learning. However, we are aware that there may be other such programs that offer equally valuable assistance in other locations.

In providing support for your career development work, the presbytery will reimburse one third of the total cost. Your session should consider reimbursing one-third. You are responsible for the remaining third.

Presbytery's financial assistance shall reimburse one third of the following costs up to \$400.00:

1. The fee for the Career and Personal Counseling Center process, or an amount equal to that fee if work is done at another center.
2. Automobile mileage from your home to St. Petersburg, FL, or an amount equal to that mileage if work is done at another center (miles X \$0.32).
3. Lodging expenses at Eckerd College while working at the Career and Personal Counseling Center, or an amount equal to lodging at Eckerd College if the work is done at another center.

If you or your session has questions about this process, or if special needs arise that are not anticipated in the language of this policy, please contact the Leadership Development and Care Committee or the Relationship Coordination Director.

Adopted 1979

Amended August 1991

Amended November 1991

Amended May 2002

Amended 1 January 2018

9. DISMISSING CONGREGATIONS TO OTHER REFORMED BODIES

“I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with all patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3.

“We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” Nicene Creed, Book of Confessions, 1.3.

“1. All saints being united to Jesus Christ by their Head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others’ gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and the outward man.

2. Saints by their profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Westminster Confession, BoC 6.146-6.147.

“The institutions of the people of God vary as their mission requires in different times and places. The unity of the Church is compatible with a wide variety of forms, but it is hidden and distorted when variant forms are allowed to harden into sectarian divisions, exclusive denominations, and rival factions.” Confession of 1967, BoC 9.34.

“The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down” (Book of Order, F-1.0301).

I. COMMITMENTS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

A. Commitment to the unity of the Church

The Presbytery of St. Augustine is committed to being a visible witness to the unity of the Church.

In its life and in its dealings with its member congregations, the presbytery seeks always to hold high the faith that the unity of the Church resides not in our agreement with each other, but in the fact that the whole Church belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ. It is therefore possible, and at times even desirable, that we may differ from one another in matters of faith and practice while remaining one in Christ.

Nonetheless, the presbytery recognizes that as members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) struggle with matters of faith, they are sometimes polarized. Even in the context of such polarization, the Presbytery of St. Augustine remains firmly committed to unity, diversity, reconciliation, and the management of differences in a way that leads to harmony and co-operation. To break fellowship within the Church is always to wound the Body of Christ.

B. A commitment to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Presbytery of St. Augustine is committed to uphold the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) not in letter alone, but also in spirit.

When faced with the possibility of any kind of organized separation, the Presbytery of St. Augustine is obligated to maintain the integrity of Presbyterian ministry and governance as set forth in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The various congregations and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are organically connected as parts of one body. This connectionalism does not provide for the unilateral separation of one part of the body from the rest of the body.

Not only is the denomination a connectional church in the hierarchical sense: it is also connectional in a historic sense, linking past, present and future. The intentions of Presbyterians now dead must be honored in order to safeguard church life for Presbyterians not yet born. We must not make the assumption that the controversies that divide us in the present age will be the marks of permanent division for all time.

According to the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

All property held by or for a particular church, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a particular church or of a more inclusive governing body or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-4.0203)

This so-called “property trust clause” is meant to reflect the church’s organic unity, in both hierarchical and historical senses. In our polity, the presbytery is charged “to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility” and “to develop a strategy for the mission of the church in its area” (G-3.0303). This places on the presbytery a particular responsibility to see that decisions with regard to church property are made in ways that reflect the best interests of the whole presbytery, as well as those of the particular congregation, and for the future as well as for the present.

The Presbytery has the responsibility:

- To enforce the Constitution, and to exercise discipline and/or take original jurisdiction of Session in order to secure the Constitutional and orderly exercise of governance and ministry.
- To conduct any necessary administrative review to determine if actions of session (and/or trustees, and/or congregation) have conformed to the Constitution
- To protect the ecclesiastical and property interests of the presbytery
- To represent the historic investment of the PC(USA) in the congregation, recognizing that the church is past, present, and future
- To protect the interests and Constitutional rights of loyal PC(USA) members.

Only the presbytery has the power to dismiss a particular church to another Reformed body. The session and/or congregation may not act unilaterally to separate itself from the PC(USA). A congregational meeting for the purpose of voting to withdraw from the denomination is out of order, unless requested by the presbytery (G-1.0503, G-3.0301).

A presbytery is required to consult with the membership of a church to aid it in its discernment about whether or not to dismiss that congregation. Any congregational “votes” are advisory only and have no inherent civil or ecclesiastical force. The presbytery has the right and responsibility to see that any advisory votes are founded on full, fair, and accurate information.

The presbytery, in its sole discretion, may determine such terms and conditions of dismissal as may assure it of the faithful stewardship of the particular church and its property.

C. A commitment to reconciliation and resolution through pastoral process

The Presbytery of St. Augustine is committed to being an agent of pastoral care and reconciliation among its congregations and between congregations and the larger church.

The goal of this presbytery will always be reconciliation and continued engagement in relationship for all congregations within the presbytery without the threat of isolation, estrangement, or blame. The presbytery is to be a servant to the churches God has entrusted to us, encouraging and supporting them toward becoming healthy, growing congregations. This is especially true for those congregations for whom the bonds of unity are stretched and ecclesiastical connections frayed over issues of conscience to the point of considering disaffiliation.

Presbytery and session should work together in good faith towards reaching a mutually agreeable resolution. Working in good faith includes the following commitments:

- a. Both the presbytery and the congregation shall covenant to pray for each other, to bless the work each does for the gospel, and to seek diligently the will of God for the sake of the church’s witness to Jesus Christ.
- b. The presbytery will not initiate ecclesiastical disciplinary action, or assume original jurisdiction of a session, so long as the teaching elders and session are conforming to the Constitution, are able and willing to manage the affairs of the church wisely and effectively, and in the judgment of the presbytery are working in good faith toward a mutually agreeable resolution with the presbytery.
- c. The congregation’s teaching and ruling elders shall be open and honest in all their dealings with the presbytery.
- d. The congregation’s teaching and ruling elders shall provide all requested information and documents to the response team or administrative commission on a timely basis.
- e. The congregation’s teaching and ruling elders shall be willing to protect the rights of those members who desire that the congregation remain loyal to the PC(USA), or who desire to remain congregants of another PC(USA) church.
- f. The congregation’s teaching and ruling elders shall refrain from any unauthorized unilateral changes in the way the congregational assets are held or managed.

II. OUTLINE OF PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN PRESBYTERY AND A CONGREGATION CONSIDERING DISMISSAL

A. Initial Contact and Dialogue

When the leadership of the presbytery becomes aware by any means that a congregation harbors such disagreement with the denomination that it is considering leaving the PC (USA), representatives of the presbytery's Crisis Response Team (CRT) will offer to engage with the session and, as appropriate, with key members of the congregation as it tries to discern God's will for denominational affiliation. This engagement is meant to insure at minimum that the presbytery is fully informed about the nature of the congregation's concerns, and that the congregation is equipped with knowledge of this presbytery's process.

The desired outcome of this engagement will be to determine if resolution of the expressed concerns can be easily achieved so that the fellowship of the congregation with the presbytery remains intact.

B. Prayerful Determination of the Possibility of Reconciliation

When the initial contact indicates that the concerns are deeper than may be quickly resolved, the CRT will participate with session, congregation, and individual members in discussions of possibilities for reconciliation and likely impacts if dismissal is the course decided upon. The CRT engagement with the session and congregation will have the following purposes:

1. To engage either the leaders of the congregation or the congregation as a whole, as circumstances dictate, in a time of prayer and conversation aimed at understanding the issues of the session/congregation that desire that their congregation be dismissed, and also to hear from those congregation members who wish to remain within the PC (USA).
2. To establish a mutually agreeable timeline of talks to be held and proceed to engage in such dialogue, if the team determines that progress can be made toward reconciliation through continued and constructive dialogue.
3. To share with session and congregation implications for a congregation considering leaving the PC (USA).
4. To share with all teaching elders called by or related to the congregation the likely impact on their benefits and ordination status, so that they fully understand the implications of their transfer to another Reformed body, or remaining members of presbytery.
5. To discuss financial, property and other issues, especially in those cases where there is a group that wishes to remain in the PC(USA) and a group wishing to be dismissed, so that both will be as healthy as possible in the aftermath of separation.

If after a period of dialogue, the CRT and the leadership of the congregation are not able to make progress toward reconciliation, and the session determines that it wishes to request dismissal to another Reformed body, the CRT will report this situation to the Stated Clerk and to the Moderator of the Coordinating Council, so that they initiate the process for requesting dismissal.

III. PROCESS FOR REQUESTING DISMISSAL

A congregation may only be dismissed to membership in another Reformed body "whose organization is conformed to the doctrines and order of this church" (*Anderson v. Synod of Florida*, PCUS 1973). This means that a congregation may not be dismissed to independency, or to a denomination that the presbytery determines to be significantly at variance with the theology and/or polity of the PC(USA).

A. Creation of Administrative Commission

Upon receipt of a request for dismissal from a session, the presbytery shall establish an administrative commission upon recommendation of the Moderator of the Coordinating Council or the Stated Clerk to address the request of a congregation to be dismissed to membership in another Reformed body.

In order to avoid unnecessary delays in the process, the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the presbytery, the moderator of Coordinating Council, and the President of the Board of Trustees shall compose a list of persons to be nominated as members of the Administrative Commission, which the presbytery may elect at its next stated meeting. The so-named members of the Commission may begin their work prior to their ratification, but any actions taken by them prior to their ratification as a commission may be reviewed and approved by the presbytery at its next stated meeting.

The following powers may be granted to an administrative commissions dealing with a congregation seeking dismissal to another Reformed body. Powers in section 1 may be granted to a commission prior to presbytery's decision to dismiss a congregation; powers in section 2 are pursuant to presbytery's decision to dismiss a congregation; powers in section 3 are general and consultative in nature and may be granted at any time as presbytery determines the situation to warrant.

1. Powers to be granted the administrative commission prior to presbytery's vote to dismiss a congregation:
 - a. to convene the session and any subsidiary boards or committees of the church.
 - b. to interview the pastor(s) and employed staff.
 - c. to call a congregational meeting and consult with the church's membership about the congregation's future.
 - d. to interview individual members of the congregation.
 - e. to require the production of session minutes, church rolls, financial records and any other documents the commission deems to be relevant in conducting its work.
 - f. to determine if and when a meeting of the congregation is appropriate for the purpose of advising the presbytery concerning the relationship of the congregation to the PC(USA).
 - g. to call that congregational meeting, and provide the moderator and clerk for that meeting;
 - h. to report results of congregational vote to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery and to other appropriate bodies;
 - i. to propose to the presbytery the recommendation for the dissolution or dismissal of the church, including recommendations concerning the disposition of the property held by or for the church, the status or transfer of any teaching elders related to the congregation seeking dismissal, and the transfer of members wishing to remain in the PC(USA) after the dismissal of the congregation.
 - j. to declare what persons, if any, compose a continuing congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) under the authority of the presbytery.
2. Powers to be granted to the administrative commission pursuant to presbytery's vote to dismiss a congregation:
 - k. to dissolve pastoral relationships [G-2.0901, G-3.0109b(5)];
 - l. to assume original jurisdiction in any case it determines the session is unable or unwilling to manage wisely the affairs of its church, providing the due process required in the Book of Order (G-3.0303e);
 - m. to assign members of the dissolved congregation to other congregations in the presbytery, pending action of those sessions to receive them (G-3.0301c);
 - n. to dissolve the congregational corporation and dispose of any remaining legal matters arising from the dissolution of the congregation;
3. Consultative powers to be granted an administrative commission in conducting its work:
 - o. to engage the services of and consult with presbytery staff, the stated clerks of presbytery, synod and/or General Assembly;
 - p. to retain legal counsel;
 - q. to secure and study minutes and records of the presbytery;
 - r. to consult with any appropriate committees of presbytery or its representatives in the process of doing its work and preparing its recommendations;
 - s. to have a budget and to authorize expenditures from those funds up to the limit of that/those accounts to do its work.

B. Transfer of Teaching Elders and Members

1. Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders Commissioned to Pastoral Service, and Certified Educators: The status of teaching elders is governed by the relevant provisions of the Constitution (e.g., G-2.09; G-3.0306). The presbytery shall consult with each teaching elder, ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service, or Certified Christian Educator serving the congregation seeking dismissal and shall ascertain their willingness to remain within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). If the presbytery determines that there is a continuing congregation of the PC(USA), it shall determine whether any of those teaching elders currently in installed or temporary pastoral relationships with the congregation wish to remain in their relationships, and it shall determine whether the continuing congregation can sustain those relationships. If the presbytery determines that there is not a continuing congregation of the PC(USA), all pastoral relationships (installed, temporary, commissioned) shall terminate on or before the dissolution or dismissal of a congregation. The plan for dissolution, dismissal, or continuation shall contain recommendations regarding terms of severance for teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, Certified Christian Educators or other church professionals who desire to remain within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Members of the congregation wishing to remain part of the PC(USA): The administrative commission shall contact each active member of the congregation seeking dismissal and ascertain whether they wish to be dismissed or remain in the PC(USA). If the presbytery determines that there is a continuing congregation of the PC(USA), those members who wish to remain part of that congregation shall be notified that their membership status remains intact. If the presbytery determines that there is not a continuing congregation, those members who wish to remain in the PC(USA) shall be transferred by the administrative commission to a presbytery roll until such time as they determine the PC(USA) congregation that each seeks to join.

IV. PROCESS FOR PRESBYTERY VOTE ON REQUEST

The presbytery must vote to dismiss a congregation to another Reformed body; this power may not be delegated to an administrative commission (*Strong and Bagby v. Synod of the Mid-South*, PCUS 1976, pp.92-96). The vote must be taken at a duly constituted meeting of the presbytery, either a stated meeting or one called expressly to hear and act upon a request for dismissal from a particular congregation.

At least two weeks prior to the meeting of the presbytery at which the request will be considered, the administrative commission shall publish its plan for dismissal to all minister members and elected commissioners.

The presbytery shall hear the report from the administrative commission, including its recommendation to dismiss the congregation under the terms of the proposed plan, and may hear other speakers as the commission wishes to present.

The floor shall be opened for debate, and the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, together with any rules adopted by the presbytery, shall govern the debate.

While the presbytery's right to amend the plan may not be abridged, the presbytery should be aware that alterations in the plan at this final stage run the risk of undermining or destroying months of work on the part of the CRT, the administrative commission, and the session, all of whom have participated in good faith negotiations. Amendments to the plan should only be proposed and adopted for reasons of vital importance.

The decision to dismiss a congregation shall be made by a majority of those commissioners present and voting.

The presbytery may grant to its administrative commission any additional powers needed to execute its decision (see section III.A.2 and 3 above).

Adopted 4 October 2011
Amended 1 January 2018

10. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Presbytery of St. Augustine will make every effort to provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for ministers and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, age, or marital status (see *Book of Order* G-4.0403, G-11.0502g, and G-14.0502). The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall be the body responsible to see that this policy is implemented. In addition the presbytery staff shall encourage each church and other body in the presbytery to adhere to such a policy when filling non-called positions (i.e.: stated supply, interim).

1. Milestones in the calling process at which the commitment to inclusiveness shall be remembered include:

- a. When the PNC is formed. As far as possible, this committee should be composed of people of different ages, sexes, marital conditions, races, talents and abilities.
- b. Obtaining PIF's reading them and deciding who will be given further consideration. Search procedures should be used which will locate and consider for employment persons regardless of race, sex, age, disability or marital status.
 - 1) In the interviewing process, whether by phone or in person, only questions relevant to the position and its stated responsibilities should be asked.
 - 2) Factors deciding which candidate to nominate should have nothing to do with race, age, sex, disability or marital status unless it can be shown that the factors have a significant relationship to a person's ability to perform the job.

2. Guidance offered by the Member Preparation and Call Commission to churches during the calling process:

- a. Congregations without female pastoral leadership should make efforts to invite women to preach, teach, and/or provide worship leadership on at least a yearly basis.
- b. A liaison of the Member Preparation and Call Commission will meet with the PNC at its first meeting to counsel the PNC on its responsibilities and duties with regard to EEO.
- c. The Member Preparation and Call Commission will receive from each PNC, along with the Pastoral Call Form, a completed copy of the equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Questionnaire (See Section #4 below). The Member Preparation and Call Commission will use this response in making its constitutionally required report to the Presbytery. The Member Preparation and Call Commission will not use quotas to measure compliance with EEO policies, but it will review the information provided in light of the specific situation and assess the degree to which the spirit of inclusiveness was present in the search.

3. The EEO Questionnaire to be returned to the The Member Preparation and Call Commission along with the Pastoral Call Form at the end of the search shall include these questions:

- a. Was the Pastor/Associate Pastor Nominating Committee representative of various groups within your congregation (age, gender, marital status, ethnic origin, race)?
- b. For statistical purposes, how many PIF's were considered by your search committee? Of these, how many were women? How many were minority?
- c. Was care taken during interviews to avoid personal questions which had no relationship to the responsibilities of the position to be filled?
- d. Please explain if any of the following factors were deemed by the search committee to be significant issues in a candidate's ability to perform the job and were used in deciding among the candidates: age, gender, marital status, disability, ethnic origin, race?

4. Female ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall be compensated in an equitable manner in comparison to male ministers of the Word and Sacrament in comparable positions.

Adopted 16-October 2007

Amended 1 January 2018

11. EXAMINATION PROCESS OF CANDIDATES & MINISTERS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Call Commission shall be empowered:

1. To conduct any and all parts of examinations for ordination and/or installation for all ministers of Word and Sacrament and candidates seeking admission to the presbytery. The commission shall report to each meeting of the presbytery, and the clerk of the commission shall report to each meeting of the Coordinating Council its actions regarding each minister or candidate seeking admission to the presbytery, i.e., that it:
 - a) Sustains the examination in all its parts and as a whole and declares the minister or candidate approved for ordination and/or installation; or
 - b) Does not sustain part or all of the examination.
2. To enroll ministers into the presbytery and to approve the terms of call for ministers entering the presbytery.
3. To recommend to the Leadership Development and Care Committee that a minister or candidate receive extended supervision, mentoring, or such remedial work as the commission deems necessary and appropriate.

Once the examination is sustained, the ordination and/or installation shall proceed as scheduled by the minister/candidate and the moderator of the presbytery in consultation with the session of the church served or the church where the service will take place. The moderator of the presbytery and the chair of the Call Commission will approve the ordination/installation commission prior to the service.

At the next meeting of presbytery subsequent to actions of the Call Commission, the chair of the commission shall introduce each minister or candidate whom it has approved for ordination and/or installation. A statement of faith and a biographical paragraph written by the minister or candidate shall be included with the presbytery packet. After presentation by the chair of the commission, each minister or candidate shall be given a brief period to make a statement concerning his or her call and Christian experience.

Meetings of the Call Commission shall ordinarily be open, and members of presbytery not on the commission may be accorded the right to address the commission with permission from the chair.

Adopted 10 July 2004

Amended 1 January 2018

Amended 5 February 2022

12. EXECUTIVE ANNUAL AND FIVE-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE REVIEWS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

Our *Manual of Operations* states the following:

There shall be an annual review and a five-year comprehensive review of all professional staff. [2.16]

Pursuant to that end, we are proposing for the Personnel Committee's consideration the following processes for annual and five-year comprehensive reviews for professional staff members.

I. Annual Reviews

1. Purpose: The intent of annual reviews is to help discern God's call for and to enhance the performance and effectiveness of the staff member being reviewed. As such, a season of prayer and listening for God's leading should serve as the context for the annual review process.
2. Responsibility: The Personnel Committee in collaboration with the Coordinating Council shall be responsible for the annual reviews.
3. Timing: The annual review process for professional staff shall take place between March and June each year, thereby permitting adequate time for the reviews before summer and allowing time for consideration of the results to be part of the budgeting process. In those years when a professional staff member is due for the five-year comprehensive review, the requirement of an annual review shall be suspended in favor of the comprehensive review.
4. Documents: The following documents shall be prepared by the Personnel Committee for use in the annual review:
 - i. Professional Self-Appraisal Questionnaire
 - ii. Professional Reference QuestionnaireIn addition, the Committee will make use of the professional staff members' position descriptions as well as their annual goals and objectives.
5. Process: The following steps will be part of the annual review process:
 - i. The Professional Self-Appraisal Questionnaire is to be completed by each staff member and submitted to the Personnel Committee Chair (or his/her designee) two weeks prior to the review interview.
 - ii. The Professional Reference Questionnaire is to be completed by three persons of the staff member's choosing who have worked closely with the staff member and are in a position to give constructive feedback on his/her performance. The Professional Reference Questionnaires are to be submitted to the Personnel Committee Chair (or his/her designee), who will "sanitize" and collate the results, two weeks prior to the review interview. No Questionnaire will be considered which does not bear the name of the person who completed it.
 - iii. No later than two weeks prior to the review interview, the Personnel Committee Chair and a Committee member shall interview other professional and support staff members and invite their comments on the performance of the professional staff member being reviewed.
 - iv. Each staff member being reviewed will submit to the Personnel Committee proposed goals and objectives for the coming year that correspond to the presbytery's vision and mission.
 - v. No later than one week prior to the review interview, the Personnel Committee Chair (or his/her designee), shall prepare a summary of the Professional Reference Questionnaire responses, and any additional input from staff, to share with the staff member at his/her review interview.
 - vi. No later than one week prior to the review interview, a packet containing the Professional Self-Appraisal Questionnaire, the summaries in (v) above, and the proposed goals and objectives for the coming year (iv above) shall be sent to each member of the Personnel Committee; and the staff member being reviewed.
 - vii. The Personnel Committee shall conduct the review interview with the staff member, providing ample time (45 – 60 minutes) to include the following elements:
 - a. discussing the summary of the Professional Reference Questionnaires and additional staff input;
 - b. exploring further any comments from the Professional Self-Appraisal Questionnaire;
 - c. discussing and approving the goals for the coming year; and

- d. making plans for adjustments in job responsibilities if indicated by the review process and conversation.
 - viii. The Personnel Committee Chair (or his/her designee) shall prepare a written report of the results of the review process. The report shall carry the signatures of the staff member reviewed and the Personnel Committee Chair. It shall be placed in the staff member's file in the presbytery office.
 - ix. The Personnel Committee Chair (or his/her designee) shall present either a brief oral or written report to the presbytery indicating that the annual reviews have been completed, and to the extent helpful, indicating staff goals and objectives for the coming year.
6. Expenses: Expenses associated with the annual reviews shall be reimbursable by the presbytery with the prior approval of the Personnel Committee Chair.

8-17-05

PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE
Comprehensive Review

Professional Self-Appraisal Form

- I. Please provide a summary of your major accomplishments during the past five years (noting with one/two examples what part you played and with whom you worked).
- II. Please provide a summary of your continuing education experiences over the past five years and a brief description of their value to you.
- III. Additional Inquiries:
 1. What accomplishments during the past five years (either noted above or others) gave you the greatest sense of achievement/satisfaction?
 2. What frustrations/obstacles have you experienced during the past five years in carrying out your work?
 3. In what ways do your present responsibilities make use/not make use of your skills, interests, training and experience?
 4. In what ways do you feel you have grown personally, professionally and spiritually during the past five years?
 5. What trends, directions and policies of the presbytery seem important/are of concern to you?
 6. How can the Personnel Committee, your staff colleagues and this Review Team be of help in making your ministry more satisfying and rewarding?
 7. In what areas do you perceive a need for continuing education in the next year/five\ years?
 8. Is there anything further you wish to share as a result of your reflections and this comprehensive review?

PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE
Comprehensive Review

Performance Appraisal Form
(Attach additional pages as needed)

1. How long and in what capacity have you known/worked with xxxxx?
2. What do you consider to be the major strengths (personal or professional) that xxxxx brings to his/her work?
3. What areas of presbytery's life do you see needing additional attention from xxxxx in the future? Please specify how xxxxx could address that need(s).
4. What areas of presbytery's life do you see needing less attention from xxxxx in the future?

Please specify and indicate why.

5. What do you perceive to be the major contributions xxxxx has made to the presbytery in the past five years?
6. What areas of personal/professional growth would strengthen xxxx's performance?
7. What other comments would you make regarding xxxx's performance??

Date

Name (please print)

Adopted 18 October 2005

Amended 1 January 2018

13. GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGIAL RELATIONS AMONG MINISTERS

[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT]

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The rules of ministerial relationships have, for the most part, been unwritten. These guidelines are presented for the purpose of maintaining integrity in the practice of ministry.

1. Speech And Conduct: Like all Christians, ministers should try to shape their speech and conduct so that it is patterned after Paul's counsel to think about whatever is honorable, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise. Acting as God's Servants, they should speak the truth in love. They should use understanding, tact, and discretion, with a sense of respect for all people, a spirit of fairness and decency, and a concern for the Christian community. Their motives should be honest and sincere in desiring to build up the body of Christ. In speaking of fellow ministers, it should be remembered that making disparaging statements is destructive of the peace, unity, and purity of the Church. At all times, Ministers of the Word and Sacrament should strive to share faith, hope, and love in all their relationships.
2. Services For Members Of Another Church: A minister who is called upon to officiate at a wedding, funeral, or baptism for families who are not members of one's own congregation, should ascertain whether they are members of a different church. If they are members of another congregation, they should be urged to procure the services of their own pastor. If that effort fails, the minister should seek to inform their pastor regarding this request and explain the circumstances prior to acting.
3. Calling On Members Of Neighboring Churches: The first responsibility of pastors is to their own flock, and they should concentrate in their calling on the members of their own congregation. They should not call upon persons who are members of another church unless the initiative and interest shown by such persons require it as a courtesy.
4. Multiple Staff Relationships: In staff relationships, as in all intra-church relationships, the objective is to work together with a spirit of cooperation in building up the whole Church. To this end, the ministers should be understanding for one another, accept each other as persons, respect each other's competencies, offer constructive suggestions to one another, forgive misunderstandings, and be tolerant of differences of opinion and style of operation.

A staff person should not aspire to succeed any other person on the staff. Innuendo and gossip should be avoided. Staff members should be encouraged to speak openly and frankly to each other about their differences. Loyal support between members of the staff is a tremendous help toward building a good team. This is as true for parish associates as for other staff.
5. When A Minister Leaves A Parish: When the relationship between a minister and a church is dissolved, the minister should publicly announce that he or she will no longer be available for pastoral services to the members of that church. Thereafter, the minister should fulfill that announced intention by resolutely declining all requests from members of that church to conduct baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other pastoral offices for them. A former pastor, associate pastor, or interim pastor may be called upon for services upon invitation of the present pastor; however, they should not seek or encourage such invitation, but should seek instead to strengthen the ties between the former flock and their present shepherd. During the interim before a pastor is called, they may be called upon to conduct ministerial services. If there is an interim pastor, the same courtesies should be accorded to the interim pastor as to a new pastor. If there is no interim pastor the former pastor may serve as called upon and as approved by the Session. Upon leaving a church they should exercise care in influencing their former congregation either by conversation, correspondence, or other action. They shall seek to be supportive of the new pastor and of the program, policies, and activities of the former church.
6. The Interim Pastor: The purpose of an interim pastor is to prepare a particular congregation for the coming of a new pastor. Interim pastors will not seek to mold loyalties to themselves, but rather to the pastoral office, and, above all, loyalties to Christ and to the Church.
7. Relations To One's Successor in Ministry: When a pastor is called to another parish or retires, due care should be exercised not to influence either by direction or indirection, either by spoken or written word, the selection of the ministerial successor or the successor's ministerial policies. If a minister visits a former parish special discretion is required. It would be proper, in such instances, to pay one's respects to one's successor in ministry. Frequent visits to one's former parish are to be avoided.

8. Relations To One's Predecessor In Ministry: Successors also have a responsibility to be courteous to their predecessors. Moreover, wise pastors might strengthen the acceptability of their own ministry among the people by seeking appropriate occasions in which the former minister(s) can be included.

Nevertheless, the burden of responsibility between predecessors and successors, though mutual, is not entirely commensurate. It is the present pastor who now carries the load, but it is the former pastor who, in most instances, enjoys the longer ties of loyalty. Therefore, though the obligation of courtesy rests equally on both, the obligation of self-restraint rests more heavily upon the former pastor than on the incumbent.

9. The Minister And Retirement: Retired ministers and spouses who remain in the community of their last parish bear an especially heavy obligation of self-restraint in the matters expressed in the four preceding articles of these guidelines. Retired ministers and their spouses shall ordinarily seek congregations other than the congregation of their last active service in which to worship for a period of not less than two years following retirement.

10. At-Large Ministers: All at-large ministers should respect the position of the parish pastors regarding all ministerial functions within the community. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms should not be accepted by the at-large minister unless an invitation has been given by the pastor of the church involved. At-large ministers ordinarily should not counsel with nor advise former members concerning problems in their churches but should encourage them to seek the counsel of their pastors.

Adopted 4 February 1983
Amended 1 February 1985
Amended 14 July 2007
Rescinded October 2024

14. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDELINES FOR LEADERS OF PRESBYTERY WORSHIP EVENTS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

INTRODUCTION

Worship enables us together to glorify and enjoy God.

The ways we describe our experiences as Christians and the ways we talk about the Holy in our worship life are dynamic expressions of our life of faith. In the past decade considerable thought and attention have been given to the way we image the fullness of God and the fullness of the life of faith. Because corporate worship is central in shaping religious consciousness, and because the use of language is the central way we describe who God is to us and what we mean to one another, the language we use in worship holds a special power. Language shapes our religious imagination, commitment, and sensibilities - it shapes us as people of God.

These guidelines for the use of gender inclusive language in worship are especially developed to assist those who are planning services of worship for committee meetings, educational events, and other gatherings beyond the local church. When we gather together as Christians to develop ecumenical or even denominational identities, unique opportunities arise for exploring new ways of strengthening and expressing our faith. The use of inclusive language at such gatherings opens possibilities for new respect, transformed perceptions, vitalized understandings, and changed lives. Christian worship which encourages the fullest expression of human and divine possibility is worship which empowers God's people to carry out the fullness of God's claim on our lives.

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Lively worship grows out of careful, collaborative, prayerful planning.

The importance of the preparatory process cannot be emphasized too strongly. Anticipating the various elements constituting the setting, content, and leadership of worship will have crucial impact on the worship experience. The longer your lead time for preparing, and the greater your attention to anticipating the detail which constitute that event, the stronger the likelihood that your efforts will result in a cohesive, spirit-filled, regenerating experience of worship.

Planning group: Whenever possible worship should be planned by two or more persons; a planning group of five to eight persons is optimal. Insofar as possible, the composition of the planning group should reflect the composition of the participants: race, age, single, married, clergy, lay, female, male. If possible, include in the planning group someone with previous experience in planning inclusive worship.

The planning group should keep in mind the following factors:

- ** Purpose of the gathering (e.g., committee meeting, continuing education)
- ** Size of the group
- ** Length of time allocated for worship and its place in the meeting agenda
- ** Space in which the worshipping body will gather
- ** Cultural biases of participants regarding issues of gender, race, class, age, denomination, nation
- ** Receptivity of participants to changes in traditional language and worship style

As you develop the content of worship and assign specific tasks to particular people, remember that who says something is often as important as what is being said. For example, a white male minister having sole responsibility for all spoken portions of carefully prepared inclusive worship contradicts the intent of creating a worship experience in which all participants experience themselves as included.

CONTENT OF WORSHIP

**** Unison prayers**

Examine prayers which you use for examples of male dominance or exclusiveness. More frequent use of alternative images of God, biblical images, and themes which are common to women's and men's everyday experiences will add dimensions to unison prayer and to our common religious life which are often neglected. Illustration and metaphor are important devices in building such prayers. Suggestions for writing and using inclusive unison prayers include:

- a. In describing the action and purposes of the Holy, use images of transformation, healing, creation, justice, mercy, peace.
- b. When invoking the Spirit of God, the coming of the Kingdom, or the gifts of grace and wisdom, consider the range experiences and perspectives of persons in the gathered body.

- c. If using a variety of unison prayers during a series of meetings (e.g., the prayer of St. Frances, prayers of Thomas Merton, the prayer of the United Farm Workers), use the Lord's Prayer at least once.
- d. In confessing sin, remember that different experiences of power and powerlessness create different expressions of sinfulness; for example, for some the will to power might represent sinful arrogance and narcissism; for others the refusal to seek power might represent the refusal to participate in a loving struggle for justice and liberation from Pharaoh.

**** Pastoral Prayers**

When preparing the pastoral prayer, consider a range of images from the Old and New Testaments, church and cultural history, and contemporary experience.

**** Scripture**

Whenever possible, consistent with a legitimate exegetical understanding of the text, utilize the wide range of imagery of the Scripture in reference to God and make every effort to follow the scriptural inclusiveness in its language about God and to be sensitive to the use of terminology (particularly "He", "His", and "Him") which can be heard as exclusive.

Biblical language makes quite clear the recognition that God is beyond sexual definition though the Biblical writers used masculine, feminine, and neuter terminology in seeking to communicate divine reality. Any image that could express God's love and concern in a given circumstance was valid from the Biblical writers' point of view. By choosing imagery well-known to the people and chose especially to remind people of the personal nature of God, the Biblical writers were able to proclaim the compassion, power, grace, and faithfulness of God. Though this imagery was never totally adequate to the task at hand, nonetheless God has continued to use this diverse variety of metaphors to address us to reveal the divine purpose in our world. God exceeds sexual limitation. (This is the language adopted by the 119th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church US and commended to the churches.)

For further guidance see the Addendum offered by the presbytery's Committee on Women's Issues and Concerns.

**** Sermons**

Both women and men experience stereotypes as destructive and inhibiting. Yet the tendency persists to associate certain qualities exclusively with only one sex (e.g., softness, weakness, and vulnerability as feminine; aggressiveness, strength, and competence as masculine).

Examine your sermon topics, illustrations, and metaphors for reflections of subtle male dominance, or exclusiveness, or reinforcement of cultural stereotypes. Include material drawn from the particular experience of women, as well as from the everyday experience shared by both men and women. Avoid reference to God exclusively in male terms (or exclusively in female terms, for that matter) both in the use of pronouns and relational/metaphorical language. Explore alternate images of God drawn from both the Old and New Testaments.

**** Hymns**

Read the words of a hymn carefully before making your selection. When feasible, substitute inclusive words (e.g., all for men; God for he)

ADDENDUM

A few suggestions to aid worship leaders in their selection and preparation of prayers, hymns, litanies, affirmations of faith, and sermons:

- a. Substituting such terms as "humanity", "humankind", "human beings", "humans", "persons", "people", etc. for "man" in the generic sense.
- b. Avoiding masculine pronouns to refer to men and women together by using "he and she", "hers and his", or by shifting to the plural form.
- c. Avoiding the use of male-dominant phrases where all the people of God are to be included. Such shifts as the following are helpful:
 "Sons of God" to "children of God"; "faith of our fathers" to "faith of our forebearers, ancestors, or forerunners"; "pray, brothers and sisters".

Adopted 5 February 1983

Amended 14 May 1985

Amended 16 October 2007

15. INVESTMENT POLICY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The purpose of the Investment Policy (the Policy) is to establish policy for investing various investment funds of the Presbytery of St. Augustine (the Presbytery).

The Administration Committee (the Committee) shall be responsible for investment strategy, asset allocation and the disbursement of Presbytery investment funds in accordance with the following investment guidelines:

A. Cash/Short-Term Investments

1. All cash funds are to be invested only in federally insured institutions, except where is prudent to use funds to secure loans.
2. Short-term investments are investments of one year or less and may be invested in checking accounts, certificates of deposit, various high quality instruments, the US Federal Government or agencies of the US Federal Government.

B. Long-Term Investments

1. The Committee shall select investment management services such as, but not limited to, a foundation related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or other non-profit organizations.
2. With professional advice, asset allocations and fund selections will be determined by the Committee and shall be monitored quarterly. Asset allocation and fund selection adjustments shall be made anytime the committee deems necessary. Funds shall ordinarily be invested in common stocks, preferred stocks, corporate bonds or commercial paper rated AA or AAA by Moody's and/or Standard & Poor's, U.S. Treasury securities or agencies of the U.S. government, mutual funds of similar types, or in cash equivalent money market funds. The Committee's choice of investment vehicles will be guided by socially responsible investment principles.
3. If an investment account has been established for the purpose of paying out an amount on a periodic basis for a specific purpose, the Committee shall monitor that account on a regular basis to make sure its rate of return meets or exceeds investment expectations for which it was established.

C. Gifts of Securities

1. Any securities given to the Presbytery may be sold at the discretion of the Committee and the cash invested as directed above in paragraphs A and B.

D. Accountability

1. The Committee shall be accountable to the Presbytery and shall provide financial reports at stated meetings of the Presbytery, one of which shall be an annual investment report.

Adopted 9 July 1985
Replaced 6 October 2015
Amended 1 January 2018

16. LOAN GUARANTEE AND PROPERTY SALES APPROVAL BETWEEN PRESBYTERY MEETINGS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Trustees are empowered to act on congregational requests to sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber real property. At its option, the Trustees may forward to the Presbytery a loan guarantee request that might benefit from the consideration and vote of the Presbytery.

Approved 22 October 1985

Amended 14 July 2007

17. MENTORING POLICY FOR INCOMING CLERGY

[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT AS A GENERAL PRESBYTERY POLICY-REMAINS AS AN INTERNAL POLICY OF THE CALL COMMISSION]

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Presbytery of St. Augustine uses mentors as a way of welcoming, introducing, and orienting new clergy to the life and work of the presbytery. It is meant to supplement the New Ministers' Orientation event led by the presbytery staff.

Mentors are fellow clergy who are experienced members of the presbytery, familiar with its staff, procedures, policies, and resources. They are persons willing and able to share their wisdom and information with newcomers in ways that are supportive and constructive to a new member. They are also persons who are friendly, outgoing, and ready to be helpful to a new colleague. Mentors are selected and appointed by the Member Preparation and Call Commission at the time of the reception of an incoming new member.

The mentoring relationship is expected to last at least six months in the case of experienced incoming ministers, and one year in the case of first-call ministers.

Mentoring consists of the following tasks:

1. *Welcoming* – The mentor is expected to find ways to welcome the incoming minister into the fellowship of the presbytery. Such ways may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Calling the new minister within 7 days of being asked to serve as a mentor
- b. Making appointments for lunch or dinner and conversation; it is especially welcoming to include the incoming minister's spouse in some of these invitations
- c. Arranging to share transportation to and/or sitting next to the incoming minister at the next meeting of presbytery, and introducing him/her to others at the meeting
- d. Writing a short note to the incoming minister, expressing welcome
- e. Checking in with the incoming minister periodically to see if there are questions or concerns

2. *Shared Study and Resources* – Particularly in the case of first-call clergy, the mentor can help continue the learning process of theological education by selecting a recent book on the practice of ministry for shared study and conversation. The presbytery resource center maintains a large collection of such works, and the Alban Institute provides a significant bibliography of excellent works in this area. Presbytery will provide up to \$50.00 per mentor/incoming minister pair in support of book purchases.

Mentors may also find it helpful to introduce the incoming minister to prayer groups or lectionary study groups of which the mentor is part.

At the very least, the mentor should make opportunities to discuss the ministry context of the incoming minister, and to suggest such resources from the presbytery as may be helpful.

3. *Encouragement* – The early months of a new parish are at once the most exciting and the most daunting. One of the primary functions of the mentor is to offer a listening ear, patient encouragement, and reliable support to the incoming minister.

If the mentor detects issues of larger concern, such as mental health concerns, conflict in the church, or family adjustment concerns, the mentor should ask the permission of the incoming minister to share these concerns with presbytery staff, or should encourage the incoming minister to share them with staff directly.

4. *Reporting* – The mentor is expected to make two reports to the Member Preparation and Call Commission during the mentoring period, indicating what activities were shared with the incoming minister, and sharing any concerns the mentor has. Reports to the Member Preparation and Call Commission will ordinarily remain confidential within the committee.

Adopted 10 July 2004

Amended 1 January 2018

Rescinded October 2024

**18. MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL FOR INSTALLED TEACHING ELDERS AND
CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS (FULL-TIME)**

Presbytery of St. Augustine

As of January 1, 2027, the minimum effective salary in the Presbytery of St. Augustine is \$56,000.

Sample Terms of Call:

A. Personal Compensation

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | Annual cash salary | \$36,000 |
| 2. | Housing allowance (if no manse) | |
| | or | |
| | Manse amount (30% of total cash salary) | \$20,000 |
| 3. | Utilities allowance (if applicable)* | |
| 4. | Total effective salary | \$56,000 |

B. Expenses

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 5. | Reimbursable professional expenses | |
| | a. auto expenses (at current IRS rate)** | \$3,000 |
| | (OR provision of auto w/ full expenses) | |
| 6. | Continuing education allowance | \$1,000 |
| 7. | Total expenses | \$4,000 |

C. Required benefits

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--|
| 8. | Major medical | |
| 9. | Pension | |
| | Total lines 8 & 9 | |
| 10. | REQUIRED 50% SECA Reimbursement*** | |
| | (7.65% of effective salary line 4) | |
| 11. | Total Benefits | |

TOTAL PACKAGE	\$60,000
----------------------	-----------------

D. Vacation and Leave*

Vacation (4 weeks)
Study leave (2 weeks)
Paid Family Medical Leave (G-2.0804) (up to 12 weeks)

* *Only applies if a manse is provided*

** *This amount should be considered for budgeting purposes but not considered as a cap on mileage reimbursements*

*** *Any amount paid above 7.65% must be included as Other Income*

**** *Vacation and study leave are to be taken as blocks, to include Sundays*

PERSONAL COMPENSATION TO MINISTER

The Presbytery of St. Augustine shall annually set and adjust the minimum terms of call expected for Teaching Elders and Certified Christian Educators, taking into account factors that affect the ministry of the persons and congregations affected. In addition, the presbytery has certain expectations about leave time and reimbursable compensation as noted below. The new minimums will be posted on the presbytery website as soon as they are amended.

1. Effective Salary = salary + housing allowance

- a. Cash Salary
- b. Housing Allowance

Housing costs should be addressed in one of two ways:

- a. the free use of church-provided housing with manse equity

The value of such housing shall be based on the fair rental value of the property (including furnishings) plus the cost of utilities. A written appraisal for determining fair rental value should be obtained from a real estate professional at least once every five years. For purposes of calculating Board of Pensions effective salary, the value shall not be less than 30% of the total of salary and housing.

- b. housing allowance

2. SECA (Self-employment) tax compensation

Salary + Housing allowance x 7.65%

Ministers are, for the purposes of Social Security, considered self-employed. Thus, they pay Social Security under the terms of the Self-Employment Contributions Act (SECA) at the rate of 15.3% of taxable salary. Our presbytery requires that churches pay to the minister a portion of the SECA tax equal to that paid by an employer for an employee under the provisions of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA); that portion equals 7.65% of the taxable salary. This amount is not treated as part of the total effective salary and does not enter into the calculations of the medical and pension dues. It is, however, reportable for income and self-employment tax purposes.

EXPENSES

Reimbursable Business and Professional Expenses no less than \$3,000

Churches should establish Business and Professional Expense Reimbursement Plans with ministers, specifying which expenses shall be reimbursed and what supporting documentation is required for reimbursement. Such expense reimbursement plans shall include at least the following:

- a. Automobile expenses.
- b. Books and subscriptions for business or professional purposes
- c. Dues, if applicable, for membership in organizations important to the performance of the minister's work.

It is not necessary to identify each element of the plan separately with dollar amounts. By combining them under one plan, there is flexibility for underspending in one category and overspending in another. The figure \$3,000 is provided here as an estimate of minimum value of this reimbursement plan; actual expenses may be higher. Congregations must meet legitimate travel and professional costs, even if they exceed \$3,000.

Total Reimbursable Expenses no less than \$3,000

REQUIRED BENEFITS

- 4. Major medical
- 5. Pension
- 6. Continuing Education allowance no less than \$1,000 (accruable up to three years)

- 7. Vacation 4 weeks to include 4 Sundays
- 8. Study Leave 2 weeks to include 2 Sundays (accruable up to three years)
- 9. Paid Family Medical Leave up to 12 weeks
- 10. Moving expenses

Annual review of adequacy of terms of call. The Book of Order requires that the session review annually the adequacy of compensation of the minister (and all other staff and employees).

Consideration shall be given to a pastoral sabbatical during reviews of the current terms (see #29, Policy regarding Sabbatical Leave).

Adopted Policies

Revised 8/18/2026

Revised 6/18/2024

Revised 10/5/2021

Revised 10/8/2020

Revised ??/?/2019

Revised 10/2/2018

Revised 2/7/2015

Revised 10/2/2012

Amended November 1998

Amended November 1999

Amended October 2002

Amended October 2006

19. MISSION STUDY TASK GROUP: Member Preparation and Call Commission

It is the purpose of this policy to improve the mission study process in congregations searching for a pastor and to insure that critical questions of congregational preparedness to call a pastor are answered early in the interim

1. Congregational “town meeting”: As soon as is practical after the arrival of the interim pastor, the session will host a congregational gathering to discuss the congregation’s sense of itself and its challenges. The discussion will be facilitated by a team from the Member Preparation and Call Commission. It will focus on the following questions:
 - How prepared financially is the congregation to assume the burden of the cost for a new pastor?
 - How well does the present congregational structure work? What changes, if any, in the session structure need to be made?
 - Are there conflicts within the congregation, either open or beneath the surface, that affect the ability of the congregation to move forward?
 - What staffing configuration will best suit the needs of the congregation’s ministry
 - What is the vision of the congregation for the next five years?
 - What two things most need to be accomplished in the first year of the new pastor’s tenure?

Answers to these questions will be recorded and summarized, and the summary shared with the following persons or groups:

- Member Preparation and Call Commission
 - Session
 - Interim Pastor
 - Pastor Nominating Committee, for consideration in drafting the CIF
 - Presbytery Staff, who will share them with candidates for the pastoral position.
2. Mission Study as part of Interim Contract: After adoption of this policy, the Member Preparation and Call Commission will approve no contract for interim pastoral services that does not include a specific requirement that the interim pastor lead the session and congregation in a mission study, with particular focus on the issues identified in the town meeting summary.

Adopted 2 May 2006
Amended 14 July 2007
Amended 1 January 2018

**20. NOMINATING PROCESS FOR
ELECTION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONERS**
Presbytery of St. Augustine

I. THE PLAN

All Teaching and Ruling Elders and young adults meeting the General Assembly's eligibility requirements are eligible to make application to be a commissioner or advisory delegate to a meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). All applications must be in the hands of the Nominating and Representation Teams no later than the date designated by the Teams. The application must be in writing on the form provided by the Teams and available upon request from the presbytery office or on the presbytery website. Applications must be submitted for each General Assembly and do not carry over.

II. THE RATIONALE

The Presbytery of St. Augustine wishes to send effective and qualified commissioners to the General Assembly in a fair and equitable system. This plan represents a system which promotes competency and fairness in the representation of the presbytery in its selection of commissioners and young adult advisory delegates.

Any Ruling Elder or young adult who wishes to be a commissioner or advisory delegate to a meeting of the General Assembly must make application to attend. This will assure that the commissioner will be interested and motivated to serve.

III. THE CRITERIA

A. The Nominating Team will be guided in its selection process to meet the following criteria for full representation in any six year period, as nearly as possible:

1. Alternate young adult advisory delegates between male and female.
2. Nominate an equal number of male and female Ruling Elder commissioners.
3. Nominate at least one racial ethnic person to serve as commissioner to every other General Assembly. (Serious attention will be given to the inclusion of racial ethnic clergy in the delegation.)
4. Provide fair representation to churches of every size.
5. Provide fair representation to persons of every age.
6. Restrict commissioners to service only one time in any ten year period.
7. Take into account the date the churches were last represented and the date ministers last attended as a commissioner.
8. Take into account the years that a Teaching Elder has been ordained and has been a member of the presbytery, with longevity considered as a positive factor, particularly if the teaching elder has never before served as a commissioner.

B. The following qualifying criteria will be used by the Team for the selection of persons to be commissioners and young adult advisory delegates:

1. Active commitment to, and involvement in, the work of the presbytery through committee, commission or task force work, attendance, and support of its goals and objectives.
2. Knowledge of issues and skills in procedures as shown in their functioning in church governing bodies.
3. Willingness to accept the responsibilities involved - attendance at preparatory meetings, attendance and participation at the Assembly, effective reporting in the presbytery upon return, and willingness to continue service in the presbytery.

IV. THE STEPS

A. The steps for electing General Assembly commissioners

1. The Nominating Team will correspond with Clerks of Sessions and ministers, informing them of the following:
 - a. The dates and location of the next Assembly
 - b. Copy of the criteria and present status toward meeting them
 - c. Application forms
2. The Nominating Team will present the slate at the Fall meeting of the presbytery:
 - a. Two Teaching Elders and at least two Teaching Elder alternates
 - b. Two Ruling Elders and at least two Ruling Elder alternates
 - c. One young adult advisory delegate and at least one young adult alternate
3. The Session from which the elders and young adult are elected will be advised of the election and asked to hold a service of recognition.
4. The commissioners will be expected to report to the presbytery and to continue to serve in the life of the presbytery.

Adopted July 1987
Amended 14 July 2007
Amended 5 May 2015
Amended 1 January 2018

21. NOMINATING PROCESS FOR ELECTION OF SYNOD COMMISSIONERS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

I. THE PLAN

All Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders meeting the Synod's eligibility requirements are eligible to make application to be a commissioner to the Synod of the South Atlantic. All applications must be in the hands of the Nominating and Representation Teams no later than the date designated by the Teams. The application must be in writing on the form provided by the Teams and available upon request from the presbytery office or on the presbytery website. Applications will not carry over from year to year.

II. THE RATIONALE

The Presbytery of St. Augustine wishes to send effective and qualified commissioners to the synod in a fair and equitable system. This plan represents a system which promotes competency and fairness in the representation of the presbytery in its selection.

III. THE CRITERIA

A. The Nominating Team will be guided in its selection process to meet the following criteria for full representation:

1. Respond to the extent possible to the Synod's request for male/female and Teaching/Ruling Elders, in order to assist the Synod in achieving balanced representation.
2. Fair representation will be given to churches of every size.
3. Fair representation will be given to persons of every age.
4. Fair representation will be given to all geographic areas.
5. The Team will take into account the date the churches were last represented and the date Teaching Elders last attended as a commissioner.
6. The Team will take into account the years that a Teaching Elder has been ordained and has been a member of the presbytery, with longevity considered as a positive factor, particularly if the Teaching Elder has never before served as a commissioner.

B. The following qualifying criteria will be used by the Nominating Team:

1. Active commitment to and involvement in the work of the presbytery through committee, commission, or task force work, attendance, and support of its goals and objectives.
2. Knowledge of issues and skills in procedures as shown in their functioning in church governing bodies.
3. Willingness to accept the responsibilities involved - attendance at preparatory meetings, attendance and participation at the synod, effective reporting in the presbytery upon return, and willingness to continue service in the presbytery.

IV. THE STEPS

A. The steps for electing synod commissioners

1. The Team will correspond with clerks of sessions and ministers, informing them of the following:
 - a. Dates and locations of future synod meetings
 - b. Copy of the criteria and present status toward meeting them
 - c. Application forms
2. The Nominating Team will present its slate at the appropriate meeting.

3. The commissioners will be expected to report to the presbytery the work of the Synod at the meetings that the commissioners have attended.

Adopted 4 February 1989

Amended 14 July 2007

Amended 6 October 2015

Amended 1 January 2018

22. OVERTURES PRESENTED TO PRESBYTERY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

I Definition of an Overture

An overture is the official way which session, presbytery, or synod presents a concern to a higher governing body.

From the Book of Order G-10.0102o(6) - [Responsibilities and powers of a session] - Proposing to the presbytery, and through it, to the synod and General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church.

G-11.0103t - [Responsibilities and powers of a presbytery] - ...proposing to the synod or the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church.

G-12.0102o [Responsibilities and powers of a synod] - ...proposing to the synod or the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church.

II Format

The format for an overture includes a set of statements about the data, facts, and/or views regarding a particular situation, idea, or concern. These statements generally begin with the words "wherefore" or "whereas". The concluding paragraph is the resolution proposed by the makers, ordinarily beginning with "therefore". In adopting an overture, only the concluding statement is operative; the earlier portion is only explanatory.

III Timelines

Once the overture has been adopted by a session, it is sent to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery ordinarily at least 45 days prior to the stated meetings of the presbytery.

Ordinarily the presbytery meets on the First Saturday of February, the first Tuesday of May, and the first Tuesday of October.

IV Assignment

The Stated Clerk has the responsibility to refer the overture to the Coordinating Council which will study it and recommend action to the presbytery. The Coordinating Council may seek advice concerning the overture to a committee of presbytery with expertise and responsibility for the issues addressed by the overture.

V Study of the overture

The Coordinating Council may invite representatives from the session which submitted the overture to present their case for passage of it. It may also seek other sources of information and background material.

VI Action at the presbytery meeting

The Coordinating Council will present the overture to the presbytery with the council's recommendation regarding its passage. This recommendation may be for approval, for disapproval, or for approval in a changed form. If the council recommendation is for disapproval, it shall provide for a full presentation at the presbytery meeting by the session presenting the overture.

VII Action on approved overtures

If the overture is to be sent to a higher governing body, the Stated Clerk is responsible to see that it is communicated to the Stated Clerk of that governing body. If the overture concerns this presbytery, the Stated Clerk is responsible to take appropriate action.

Adopted 25 April 1989
Amended 1 January 2018

23. PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

Parental leave may be used by non exempt employees of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, Inc. in the event of either the birth or adoption of a child. Exempt staff members are governed by presbytery's policy on "Clergy/Educator Parental Leave." This policy is also intended to serve as a model for sessions in developing their own parental leave policies for non-exempt staff.

- 1) Parental leave shall be for up to six (6) weeks with full compensation for female employees of the presbytery in the final days of pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum. Two (2) weeks shall be extended to male employees upon the birth or adoption of children in their immediate families.
- 2) Vacation time may be used to supplement parental leave at the discretion of the employee and in consultation with the Personnel Committee.
- 3) Because circumstances surrounding each birth differ, the presbytery will remain as flexible as possible in assisting the employee in planning work during pregnancy and in the early months following the birth, including permitting work to be done at home or by electronic means.
- 4) The employee herself shall take primary responsibility during her pregnancy to inform the Personnel Committee regarding her changing needs and availability to serve the presbytery.
- 5) The employee shall ordinarily submit to the Personnel Committee a written request for parental leave not less than thirty (30) prior to the beginning of the leave, stating her intentions regarding returning to employment.
- 6) Written notification of the date for reinstatement shall ordinarily be offered to the Personnel Committee not less than two (2) weeks prior to the conclusion of the leave.
- 7) If the employee is unable to return to work at the end of the agreed-upon leave, the Personnel Committee may take action to terminate employment.
- 8) In the case of partial incapacity, Personnel Committee may adjust the duties and compensation of the minister/educator.

Adopted 16 May 2000

Amended 7 May 2002

Amended 1 January 2018

24. POLICY FOR GIVING

Presbytery of St. Augustine

As a portion of the people of God, known as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are a community of faith. We have the responsibility to support our community of faith financially. Since the community cannot tax, we as Christians must accept the responsibility to support the work of our community of faith with our tithes of our current income from living donors.

The financial mission of church members is to support their congregation by least a tithe of 10 % before any other designated giving or special causes.

Likewise, the financial mission of the congregations is to support their larger church by the gift of at least a tithe to the budget of the presbytery before any other designated giving or special causes.

The work and ministry of the presbytery parallels the work and ministry of the congregation:

There are 57 “family units” that need caring for – these are the congregations that are served by pastors and their families who are in need of care.

Just as in the congregation there are some members who have more resources and some who have less, this is true for our congregations. Smaller churches need the help and resources that larger churches can share.

Just as the congregation has programs designed to help it grow, so it is true in the presbytery as it develops new churches in order to help the presbytery grow.

Just as church sessions plan for and implement a Christian education program, so it is true at the presbytery as it trains leaders for congregations’ education programs.

And just as congregations support the presbytery through their benevolences, in turn the presbytery supports the synod and General Assembly through its benevolences.

Each governing body of the Presbyterian Church has a vital and necessary ministry and work. All aim at helping congregations, the point of mission, be vital in making a witness for Jesus Christ.

The Presbytery of St. Augustine commits itself to supporting the work of the Synod of South Atlantic and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), employing the principle of “fair share” proportional giving. This principle holds that the contributions of the presbytery to the work of the larger church shall rise or fall in direct and proportional relationship to its own receipts. The Presbytery of St. Augustine understands its annual “fair share” to be no less than 10% of the total undesignated receipts from its congregations for the previous year. When the contributions of the presbytery to the work of the larger church reach or exceed 10% of its prior year’s receipts, the presbytery will seek to increase its giving by 1 %.

The Presbytery of St. Augustine also urges and encourages all its sessions to employ this same principal of “fair share” proportional giving in their acceptances for the work of the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. A “fair share” acceptance is understood to be no less than 10% of the congregation’s receipts as represented on line 20 of the session’s annual statistical report.

Session may find that attaining the goal of a “fair share” acceptance is more than it can accomplish in a single year. When this is the case, the presbytery urges and encourages the session to set a goal of increasing by at least 1% per year its acceptance until it reaches the 10% “fair share” acceptance, and to announce that goal to the congregation..

There are some congregations which are blessed with greater resources, and who are already meeting the “fair share” acceptance. The presbytery urges and encourages these sessions to accept the challenge to increase their annual acceptance by 1% from the previous year, so that the fruits of God’s goodness may be shared by the whole community of faith.

Adopted 10 February 2007

Amended 14 July 2007

25. PRESBYTERY-WIDE ANNUAL OFFERINGS FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUTSIDE ENTITIES

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Presbytery of St. Augustine establishes the following as its policy regarding requests for annual offerings to be collected within the presbytery for the benefit of persons, groups, or entities outside the presbytery.

- This policy shall **not** apply to annual offerings approved and conducted by the General Assembly or the Synod of South Atlantic, since such offerings and campaigns shall already have met with the approval of a higher governing body of the church. Special annual offerings exempt from this policy under this exception are:
 - One Great Hour of Sharing
 - Pentecost Offering
 - Presbyterian Women's Birthday Offering/Thank Offering
 - Christmas Joy Gift
 - Peacemaking Offering
 - Thornwell Home and School Offering
 - Theological Education Fund
 - Candidate's Support Fund
- This policy shall **not** be taken to imply any limitation on the right of sessions to authorize participation in one-time or annual offerings within a particular congregation.

A. Requirements:

- The offering to be received must be for the support of causes or efforts consistent with the mission and ministry of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, as determined by the Coordinating Council.
- An annual offering to be received shall not duplicate offerings already approved and received within the presbytery.
- The offering to be received shall not be accomplished at such a time or in such a manner as to be deleterious to the giving of congregations to the mission of the larger church, as determined by the Administration Committee.
- The entity requesting the offering shall agree to abide by the proposal, process, and reporting requirements outlined in this policy.

B. Proposal

Each annual offering proposed for consideration shall be accompanied by a written proposal indicating the following:

- Beneficiary: To the work of what person, group, or agency is the offering or campaign collection to be donated? What is the nature of that work? Under whose supervision or auspices does the person, group, or agency work?
- Name of Requesting Entity if different from the Beneficiary.
- Collection Date: When will the offering be received? How much flexibility is there for congregations to adapt the date to suit their program schedules?
- Supporting materials: Attach a copy of any supporting materials (flyers, bulletin inserts, special envelopes, etc.) to be disseminated within the presbytery.
- Agenda time: Does the requesting entity wish to have any time on the Coordinating Council agenda, and how much?
- Deadline: Proposals for the collection of annual offerings must be submitted to the presbytery office no later than four months prior to the proposed collection date.

C. Approval Process:

- The requesting entity shall provide the proposal and any supporting materials to the presbytery office no later than the deadline date.
- The proposal will be circulated to Administration Committee for advice and consent.

- Coordinating Council, having heard the proposal and any advice of the committee, shall recommend to the presbytery that the offering be received/not received.
- If presbytery approves the offering or campaign, the stated clerk shall communicate this approval to the requesting entity, along with permission to circulate its request and supporting materials to sessions.

D. Collection, Disbursement, and Reporting:

- Individuals write checks to local church; church remits total to presbytery.
- Proceeds from any approved offering shall be remitted to the office of the presbytery.
- The Treasurer of the presbytery shall receive, record, and disburse all proceeds from an annual offering to the stated beneficiary, and shall note such disbursement in the financial records of the presbytery. The Treasurer shall also report the disbursal of the proceeds to the requesting entity.
- The requesting entity for an annual offering shall report to the presbytery office on the use by the beneficiary of all funds collected through the offering. This may consist of year-end financials, to be submitted as soon as possible after the end of year in which the offering was received.

Adopted 03 May 2005
Amended 1 January 2018

26. PURCHASE AND SALE OF PROPERTY FOR NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

- A. The presbytery empowers the Coordinating Council to:
 - 1. Select sites for new churches or for relocated churches
 - 2. Negotiate for the purchase of such property including the price, terms of purchase, interest rate, and terms of payment
 - 3. Arrange financing including mortgage
 - 4. Numbers two and three are subject to the approval of the Trustees of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, Inc. on price, interest rate, terms of payment, length of mortgage, and legal requirements.
- B. The presbytery empowers the Trustees of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, Inc. to:
 - 1. Act for the presbytery to review the purchase or sale of all properties for church development, new or relocated, including the price to be paid, the interest rate, terms of purchase and mortgage terms
 - 2. Review the legal requirements of the purchase or sale of any property for church development
 - 3. To act for the presbytery to complete the purchase or to sell such property.
 - 4. No agreement by the Coordinating Council to purchase property is binding until it is approved by the Trustees of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, Inc.
- C. The above powers would be subject to the following limitations:
 - 1. The Coordinating Council shall use only funds in hand for down payments and/or binder payments in the purchase of property for church development.
 - 2. The Coordinating Council may not obligate the presbytery for future annual payments in excess of 90% of the amount allocated to new church development and redevelopment of existing churches within the budget approved by the presbytery for the year in which the purchase is made.
 - 3. Payment for future land acquisitions must be made within five years from the date of purchase.
 - 4. None of the above limitations may be exceeded without the approval of the presbytery in a stated meeting.
 - 5. At each meeting of the presbytery, all prior action of the Coordinating Council regarding the purchase of property for new church development shall be reported to the presbytery.

Adopted 30 January 1981

Amended 1 January 2018

27. Policy Regarding Relationships between Congregations of the Presbytery of St. Augustine and The Fellowship of Presbyterians or A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one. As you, Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe you have sent me” (Jesus, in prayer with and for his disciples,” (John 17:20-21).

Because in Christ the Church is one, it strives to be one. To be one with Christ is to be joined with all those whom Christ calls into relationship with him. To be thus joined with one another is to become priests for one another, praying for the world and for one another and sharing the various gifts God has given to each Christian for the benefit of the whole community. Division into different denominations obscures but does not destroy unity in Christ. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity, and is willing to seek and to deepen communion with all other churches within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church (F-1.0302a).

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels seeks to manifest more visibly the unity of the body of Christ and will be open to opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and action with other ecclesiastical groups. It will seek to initiate, maintain, and strengthen relations with other Reformed and Christian entities. (G-5.0101).

I. The Occasion and Scope of this Policy

The Presbytery of St Augustine recognizes its calling in Christ to the unity of the Church, the body of Christ. At the same time, it acknowledges in the existence of various denominations the continued obscurity of the unity of that body. It is committed, as the Book of Order maintains, “to the reduction of that obscurity, and ...to seek and deepen communion with all other churches in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

Recent developments within the church have led to the formation of two groups. One is The Fellowship of Presbyterians (“Fellowship”), an affinity group composed of teaching elders, ruling elders, and individuals. The other is A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (“ECO”), a new denomination, separate from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but with which some PC(USA) congregations may seek to form relationships.

This policy is specific to relationships with the Fellowship, and between congregations of the presbytery and those in ECO. However, elements of this policy – in particular in sections III B and C below – may be of use to the presbytery in guiding its establishment of joint congregational witness with congregations of other Christian bodies, subject to the provisions of G-5.05 of the Book of Order.

This policy is intended to deal with requests to enter into formal relationships between congregations of the presbytery and other Christian bodies or denominations. It is not intended to apply to agreements between congregations of this and other Christian bodies to address shared needs or pursue commonly perceived mission causes (e.g. community food banks, neighborhood youth programs, etc). These remain within the discretion of the session to develop and administer.

II. The Fellowship and ECO

The Presbytery of St. Augustine understands the Fellowship to be an affinity organization unregulated by the church’s Constitution. As such, it is similar to other organizations in which individuals and sessions have participated in recent years (e.g., Presbyterians for Renewal, or the Covenant Network of Presbyterians). Sessions and individual members of congregations of the Presbytery of St. Augustine are free to express themselves and their opinions through participation in the Fellowship, provided that their actions do not violate the Constitution of this church.

The Presbytery of St. Augustine understands ECO to be a denomination, or church. It sees in the declared Draft of the Theology and Draft of the Polity all the earmarks of denominational life:

- ECO has declared a theological and doctrinal basis in its Draft Theology
- ECO has defined certain theological claims to which it requires member congregations and Ruling or Teaching Elders to subscribe
- ECO has described a polity that includes:
 - a hierarchical structure
 - a process for organizing congregations and receiving members into those congregations
 - a process for conducting congregational and presbytery business
 - standards for ordination and installation
 - statements about property either belonging to or in the trust of entities within the ECO

- regulations regarding relationships between ECO and congregations of other churches

Because ECO is a denomination, a PC(USA) congregation's relationship to ECO may only come in the form of a joint congregational witness under the terms of G-5.05 of the Book of Order. The Book of Order does not permit a congregation to hold simultaneous membership in two denominations, except as part of a union presbytery or through a joint congregational witness (see G-5.04, 5.05).

III. Relationships between Congregations and ECO

A. Requirements of the Book of Order Governing Joint Congregational Witness

The Book of Order provides for joint congregational witness in G-5.05. This section requires the following conditions for establishing a joint congregational witness:

1. That the joint witness is necessary to the strategy for mission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine.
2. That the joint witness be between at least one congregation of this denomination and at least one congregation of ECO.
3. That the joint witness be subject to the constitutions of both the PC(USA) and ECO. Wherever the constitutions differ, the mandatory provisions of one apply in all cases where the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions, the session petitions the Presbytery of St. Augustine and the presbytery of ECO of which the congregation is a member to resolve the conflict.
4. That the joint congregational witness be established according to a plan approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of each congregation entering into the joint witness at duly called congregational meetings of the congregations. The plan is also subject to the approval of both the Presbytery of St. Augustine and the presbytery of ECO of which the congregation is a member.

B. Process of the Presbytery of St. Augustine for Establishing Joint Congregational Witness

The Presbytery of St. Augustine will be guided by the following process when reviewing requests by congregations to establish joint congregational witness with a congregation of ECO, with variations as necessary or prudent:

1. The session of the congregation desiring to enter joint congregational witness shall make its desires known in writing to the Stated Clerk, including in this communication the name of the ECO congregation with which it wishes to share joint witness.
2. The Stated Clerk shall notify both the Relationship Coordination Committee and the Presbytery Coordinating Council of the request, and shall place the request on the docket of the next meeting of the presbytery.
3. The Relationship Coordination Committee and/or the Presbytery Coordinating Council may recommend action on the request, if they deem it appropriate to do so.
4. The presbytery may, if it deems it appropriate and expeditious, form an administrative commission to draft a plan for joint witness. If an acceptable plan accompanies the session's request, the presbytery may also act directly to approve the plan, subject to the presbytery's right to amend the plan as it deems necessary.
5. The presbytery (or administrative commission, if applicable) will coordinate preparation of the plan with the ECO presbytery, and its approval will be pending receipt of approval by the ECO presbytery. The plan will be approved only when both presbyteries agree to its terms.
6. The presbytery shall approve, in consultation with the sessions of the joining congregations and the ECO presbytery, an occasion for celebrating the beginning of the joint witness.

C. Plan for Joint Congregational Witness

The plan for joint congregational witness must include the following matters:

1. Names and locations of the joining congregations and the joint congregation.
2. The purpose of the joint witness.
3. A statement that the joint congregation is subject to the constitution of each denomination.
4. The formation of a corporation, which shall include in its charter its purpose, name, and statement that it is subject to each constitution.
5. A provision for review of records annually and when requested by each governing presbytery.

6. A provision regarding the relationships and effective dates of teaching elders, their membership in each presbytery, their participation in at least one church's benefit plans, and the requirement that they be subject to discipline under the constitutions of both denominations.
7. The following statements regarding membership: (a) membership consists of members of the forming churches and others received by the session of the joint congregation; and (b) an equal share of the total membership shall be to each presbytery and the highest governing body of the denomination.
8. The following statements regarding ruling elders and deacons: (a) the ruling elders and deacons of the forming churches shall initially serve in the joint congregation; (b) at the first annual meeting, new classes of ruling elders and deacons shall be elected.
9. A provision for the trustees of the joint congregation that is in harmony with civil law.
10. A provision that addresses the property (real and personal) of the joint congregation, its liabilities, and any trusts or trust obligations connected to the congregations.
11. A provision for equal division of per capita assessments to both presbyteries and that the session shall consider the causes of both churches when making decisions as to denominational giving.
12. A statement that wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases where the others are permissive. Where the mandatory provisions conflict, the session of the joint congregation shall petition the presbyteries to overture to their highest councils to resolve the conflict.
13. A provision that the teaching elders are subject to the discipline of both presbyteries and that the presbytery where the action is begun shall invite a committee of the other to join in formulating and prosecuting the charges. In the event that an appeal is taken and finally decided, that decision shall be equally binding on the other presbytery.
14. A provision for how the joint congregational witness may be dissolved.
15. A provision for the procedure to request dismissal from a denomination.

Adopted 2 October 2012
Amended 1 January 2018

**28. RESOLUTION CLARIFYING AND REAFFIRMING THE PRESBYTERY'S COMMITMENT
TO THE PASTORAL COUNSELING CENTER**

[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT]

Presbytery of St. Augustine

I. Findings The Presbytery of St. Augustine hereby finds:

- A. The Presbytery of Suwannee began the Pastoral Counseling Center in 1971 as a ministry to the people of northeast Florida without regard to one's capacity to pay; it was also the intention of the presbytery to provide educational and training opportunities for church professionals at affordable rates.
- B. It was understood in the original decision to begin the Pastoral Counseling Center that a continued subsidy would be necessary if the Center were to continue as a ministry to all persons including those of limited means, and to continue to provide training and educational opportunities for church professionals as a affordable rates. A goal was set for the Center to reach a level where 67% of its income was generated by fees and 33% was received as subsidy. At the present time the Center is generating about 80% of its income through fees and about 20% comes from subsidy.
- C. Through continued efforts by the Center and despite inflation, the presbytery was able from 1971 through 1978 steadily to reduce the amount of its subsidy to the Center. By 1979 the Center had reached the maximum of efficiency and the rock-bottom in its need for subsidy; it has therefore requested the same level of funding plus a small increase to cover inflation.
- D. The presbytery now has two partners in its sponsorship and subsidy of the Center: The Jacksonville United Methodist Mission Board (JUMMBO) and St. Mark's Episcopal Church. These two bodies joined the presbytery in order to expand the service of the Pastoral Counseling Center. They have been steadily giving inflationary increases in subsidy and manifest and expectation and determination to continue.
- E. The presbytery has determined that 1982 will have to be a year of financial stringency for all of its programs and services so that its budget processes can be reorganized on a firm basis. Therefore the Division of Corporate and Social Ministries has recommended that the Pastoral Counseling Center be given no inflationary increase for 1982, but that it be funded at the same level as 1981. Nevertheless, the presbytery is appreciative of the fact that at this time it appears that its two partners (JUMMBO and St. Marks) will provide an inflationary increase.

II. Declaration of Policy It is the commitment and intention of Presbytery of St. Augustine:

- A. To continue its witness by its sponsorship of the Pastoral Counseling Center as a ministry to all persons regardless of their level of income and as a provider of educational and training opportunities to church professionals at affordable costs;
- B. To encourage the Pastoral Counseling Center to continue its endeavor to establish sponsorship with other Christian ecumenical bodies with the goal of achieving parity in funding;
- C. To declare its policy that so long as the same conditions prevail, and the goals of the Pastoral Counseling Center concur with those of the presbytery, and if the way be clear, that the presbytery shall continue to provide funding for the Pastoral Counseling Center at the same base level (\$18,200) with an increase annually to accommodate inflation after 1982;
- D. That the Goals and Priorities Task Force of the presbytery be instructed to include as part of its studies of goals for the future, the place of the Pastoral Counseling Center in the presbytery's on-going goals;
- E. That this statement of presbytery policy be transmitted to the Board of Directors of the Pastoral Counseling Center.

Adopted 27 October 1981

Rescinded October 2024

29. POLICY REGARDING SABBATICAL LEAVE FOR PARISH PASTORS, ASSOCIATES, EDUCATORS, AND EXECUTIVE STAFF OF THE PRESBYTERY

The Presbytery of St. Augustine adopts the following guidelines for sabbatical leave and assigns to the Member Preparation and Call Commission the responsibility for encouraging congregations to participate in this practice. It shall become a mandatory part of the minimum terms of call presented to the presbytery through the Member Preparation and Call after 1 January 2008.

1. Ordinarily, the pastor/associate pastor/educators/executive staff of the presbytery shall have completed at least seven years of consecutive service in the particular church that is being served and in the particular office to which the person has been called.
2. A written plan of study with identified goals should be approved by the governing body after consultation with its personnel committee. This should be completed and approved at least six months before anticipated departure.
3. Sabbatical leave with full pay will not, ordinarily, exceed three months. However, it may be taken in conjunction with earned vacation and study leave. Additional time without pay may be approved provided the total time away does not exceed six months.
4. It is very important to consider the financial implications for the pastor/educator when taking a sabbatical. It does little good to offer the time but no financial resources to help make use of the time. Ordinarily, the funds would come in one of two ways - from special gifts that people contribute to this specific cause or out of the annual budget of the church.
5. Sabbatical leave shall not be terminal leave. If the pastor/associate pastor/educators/executive staff chooses to leave that particular ministry within the period of one year after the completion of a sabbatical, the salary attributable to the sabbatical should be refunded to the church or presbytery.
6. It should be understood that no more than one professional member of the staff of a congregation/presbytery would have sabbatical leave at any one period of time and within any one calendar year.
7. Sabbatical leaves would not be considered substitutes for annual study leaves. The two serve different functions. Annual study leave may normally be accumulated for a period of up to three years without loss. This policy does not pertain to sabbaticals. It is the purpose of the sabbatical to intervene in the vocational process of the minister/educator/staff person in a timely manner. Its purpose in addition to enrichment and new insights also has the major focus to serve as a "change of pace" time that can provide relaxation.

In churches served by one pastor, and especially for smaller churches, the following are guidelines for how to fill the leadership needs of the church during the three-month period that the pastor is on sabbatical:

- a. Be sure that the sabbatical leave is planned at least a year in advance so that the leadership needs can be covered.
- b. We have many retired ministers living within our bounds. The Presbytery office can provide names of these persons who live in your area. You might be able to find such a retired person who could work part time in the pastor's absence, i.e., preaching on Sundays and visiting the sick and moderating the Session meetings. The Session would negotiate an appropriate honorarium for these services.
- c. There have been experiences in the past whereby staff members from the General Assembly are given a leave of absence from their responsibilities and they come and serve a parish for this limited period of time at no salary cost to the church, expenses only. Such an exchange might be negotiated with the help of the Presbytery staff.
- d. The elders might consider taking extra leadership responsibilities to cover the various administrative and ministerial tasks of the pastor, including rotating the preaching.
- e. The above but the preaching might be done by the use of Presbytery staff and other denominational officials. This could be a time in which the particular congregation becomes better acquainted with the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly.
- f. Our denomination now has trained interim pastors. Generally these specialists serve churches who are seeking a full-time pastor for a period of one year. Sometimes some of these persons are not able to move from one such twelve month experience right into the next one, and need a "bridge" job of two or three months. Most often the Presbytery office is aware of such persons and their availability.

Adopted by the Presbytery of St. Augustine (2/10/96)

Amended 14 July 2007

Amended 1 January 2018

**30. SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING
THROUGH THE GAINESVILLE COUNSELING SUPPORT FUND**

[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT]

Presbytery of St. Augustine

As a result of a designated gift, funds are available on an annual basis for support of Presbyterians seeking crisis-counseling services in Gainesville. "Crisis counseling" may be taken to include a wide variety of mental and spiritual health needs, but does not extend to premarital counseling or career counseling services. The funds may be accessed by the following procedure:

1. Must have a written referral for counseling signed by PC(USA) minister.
2. Must obtain from the counselor a statement of the approximate cost of treatment.
3. Minister's referral, treatment plan, and cost estimate should be submitted to Ms. Nancy T. Brown, Presbytery of St. Augustine, 1937 University Blvd. West, Jacksonville, FL, 32217.
4. Funds are available to cover the cost of no more than three crisis-counseling sessions.

All applicants submitting required documentation will receive consideration on a first-come, first-serve basis until funds are exhausted for the year.

Adopted May 2001

Rescinded October 2024

31. POLICY ON SEMINARY INDEBTEDNESS
[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT]
Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Presbytery of St. Augustine believes that the burden of indebtedness carried by many recent seminary graduates seriously impairs their ability to function responsibly in ministry and threatens the freedom with which they can hear and follow the call of God's Spirit in the service of the Church. Toward that end, it adopts the following policy on seminary indebtedness for both its own candidates and those recent seminary graduates whom it receives and installs into first calls.

For Those in Preparation for Ministry within the Presbytery

The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall:

- 1) Strongly encourage all inquirers and/or candidates to participate in at least one "Fiscal Fitness" seminar sponsored by the Board of Pensions during their seminary career, or to meet with a regional representative of the Board of Pensions or other financial planner to assess net worth and to begin developing financial plans to pay seminary costs.
- 2) Inquire in each annual consultation or candidacy review about the inquirer/candidate's level of indebtedness. If the level of indebtedness exceeds 40% of the denominational median pastoral salary as reported by the Board of Pensions, the inquirer/candidate will be referred to financial counseling to develop a plan for dealing with the debt.
- 3) Make available as requested by candidates or inquirers a list of options for pursuing grants and interest free loans and other funding such as is available through the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and through the seminary financial aid office.
- 4) Inform the congregation of which the inquirer/candidate is a member and other congregations as appropriate, when the inquirer/candidate has incurred a high degree of indebtedness and advocate the generation of greater financial support for the candidate.

For Those Ordained to First Calls within the Presbytery

Member Preparation and Call Commission shall:

- 1) Require that any minister who is installed in a first call and who carries educational indebtedness greater than 40% of the median pastoral salary as reported by the Board of Pensions show evidence of having attended a financial planning workshop, such as the Fiscal Fitness workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions; or to attend such a workshop within the first year of ministry; expenses for the workshop including registration fees, accommodation, and travel to such a workshop shall be considered legitimate reimbursable expenses from study leave allowance.
- 2) Encourage calling congregations to utilize further debt reduction as a part of the salary package for a prospective pastor who is a recent seminary graduate. Information about seminary indebtedness, including this policy and the Board of Pensions Seminary Debt Assistance Program, shall be included with the material given to each PNC during its orientation.

Adopted 03 May 2005

Amended 1 January 2018

Rescinded October 2024

**32. SERVICES OF INSTALLATION/ORDINATION
FOR A MINISTER OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT
THE PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE**

“Ordination, installation, and commissioning may take place during the Service for the Lord’s Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word. Ordination, installation, and Commissioning may also take place in a special service that focuses on Jesus Christ, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the mission and ministry of the Church, and which includes the proclamation of the Word and may also include the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The ordination and/or installation of a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall take place at a time that enables substantial participation of the presbytery.” (Book of Order, W-4.0402)

1. The service of ordination and/or installation of a minister is an act of presbytery.
2. The service of ordination and/or installation of a minister in the Presbytery of St. Augustine shall take place at a time that allows for substantial participation on the part of the minister members of the presbytery.
3. The minister being ordained and/or installed, together with the session of the church, shall coordinate with the Moderators of the Call Commission and of the Presbytery in scheduling the service.
4. The presbytery office will publish an invitation to all minister members of the presbytery to the service. This will be done by e-mail to each minister member.
5. The commission for ordination and/or installation shall conform to the requirements of the *Book of Order* (G-3.0109). The Moderator of the presbytery or his/her designee shall moderate the commission.
6. The service of ordination and/or installation shall conform to the requirements of the *Book of Order* (W-4.04) and shall use some or all of the resources of the Services of Ordination and Installation in *The Book of Occasional Services*. The Member Preparation and Call Commission Moderator, Stated Clerk, or Relationship Coordination Director shall be available to assist the minister being ordained and/or installed to plan the service.
7. The date of the Service shall be listed on the calendar of the Presbytery of St. Augustine.
8. An offering shall be received at each service of ordination and/or installation for the benefit of the presbytery’s Candidate Support Fund.

Adopted 02 February 2010

Amended 1 January 2018

Amended October 2024

33. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR USE BY THE PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

I. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Presbytery of St. Augustine that all minister members, commissioned ruling elders, certified Christian educators, inquirers and candidates for ministry under the presbytery's care, staff members, members of commissions/committees and teams, volunteers, and entities of the presbytery are to assume high ethical and moral standards in all of life, including all expressions of sexual behavior. It is never permissible or acceptable to engage in sexual misconduct. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationships. Sexual misconduct breaks our relationships of trust and violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm, including children and adults who do not have the capacity to consent. No matter who initiates or invites sexual conduct into the relationship, those covered by this policy have a responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and boundaries and to prevent actions constituting sexual misconduct. Our commitment is to model the example of Christ, and to be rooted in the love of Christ in all relationships.

Individual congregations are not covered by this policy; however, churches within the presbytery are required by the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to adopt and implement their own sexual misconduct policies and child and youth protection policies.

This policy shall be posted on the presbytery's website, included in the compilation of presbytery policies, and provided by full copy or link to each minister member, commissioned ruling elder, certified Christian educator, inquirer and candidate for ministry under the presbytery's care, staff member, member of commissions/committees and teams, volunteer, and entity of the presbytery. Periodic training shall take place as designated by the Call Commission.

II. DEFINITION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

For the purposes of this policy "Sexual Misconduct" is intended to include the following categories of sexual conduct:

- A. Sexual abuse, which is an offense to a child under 18 years of age, or anyone without the mental capacity to consent, or to any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position. *Book of Order*, "D- 7.0901"
- B. Sexual harassment, which is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct based on sex or of a sexual nature.
- C. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
- D. Sexual conduct such as offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unwelcome touching or fondling, or unacceptable visual contact.

- E. Misuse of technology that results in sexual harassment or abuse of another person, such as texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to another person.
- F. Sexual Malfeasance or sexual activities within a professional or ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the relationship.

III. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Any person subject to this policy who believes that he or she has experienced, witnessed, or otherwise learned of sexual misconduct is required to immediately report such misconduct in accordance with this policy. Retaliation against anyone for reporting sexual misconduct, assisting in making a sexual misconduct complaint, or cooperating in a sexual misconduct investigation, is strictly prohibited. To the fullest extent practical and permitted by the needs of any investigation and/or any remedial or corrective action, confidentiality will be preserved in connection with all reports and investigations of sexual misconduct.

- A. **Response to Report**: Accusations of sexual misconduct shall never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the accuser/alleged victim, the accused, and the presbytery.

Sexual misconduct must be reported to the Stated Clerk, the Lead Presbyter, the Chair of the Coordinating Council, or the Moderator of the presbytery. (If another person receives the report, he/she should report it to one of these individuals immediately.) The person making the report and (if not that person) any alleged victim will be informed as to the processes of the Principles of Church Discipline. If the alleged victim or the accused is a minister member or commissioned ruling elder currently commissioned to a church or ministry, sexual misconduct charges must be reported to Presbytery leadership using the process above. If the alleged victim or accused is a ruling elder or church member, the matter must be referred to the individual's local session. If the alleged victim or accused is the Moderator of Session then the matter must be reported to the presbytery leadership as described above. The Principles of Church Discipline shall be followed.

If an accusation is not filed under the Principles of Church Discipline, the Stated Clerk, the Lead Presbyter, the Chair of the Coordinating Council, and the Moderator of the presbytery will decide how to proceed in accordance with the objectives of this policy. If any of these individuals is the subject of the accusation, then he/she shall not participate in this role.

In any event, if a criminal act requiring or otherwise appropriate for reporting to authorities is the basis of any allegation or complaint, a report shall be made to the proper authorities.

If the person accused or the person making the accusation is a member of the presbytery staff (or both), then the provisions of the Employee Handbook will be followed. In the case of any inconsistency with this or any other policy and the *Book of Order*, the provisions of the *Book of Order* will govern.

- B. **In Cases of Children or Adults Lacking Mental Capacity:** It is mandatory that knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity be reported to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities when 1) information is gained outside of a confidential communication, as defined in the *Book of Order*, G-4.0301, 2) when informant is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law and 3) when informant reasonably believes there is risk of future physical harm or abuse, G-4.0302. All persons must comply with any state and local laws that mandate incidents of actual or suspected child sexual abuse be reported to civil authorities.

IV. PRINCIPLES IN RESPONDING TO ACCUSATIONS

In responding to accusations of sexual misconduct, the church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible and consistent with this policy, the privacy of persons should be respected. The *Book of Order* assures all persons of fair procedures in the disciplinary process, and all persons involved should be informed of these procedures at the outset.

Those persons affected by accusations of sexual misconduct (including both the accuser/alleged victim and the accused) often need support and/or counsel of various kinds, including therapeutic, pastoral, and spiritual. If an investigation confirms sexual misconduct or a violation of this policy occurred, appropriate corrective or remedial action shall be taken.

V. RESPONSE GROUP: THE PRESBYTERY SUPPORT TEAM

The person or persons receiving the accusation of sexual misconduct will ensure that the person making the accusation, the accused, and other affected parties have access to the assistance of the Presbytery Support Team, or a group designated by the Coordinating Council. Communications concerning an accusation shall be directed to the Chair of the team. The Chair of the team will appoint a small group of three members of the team as support for the persons involved in the process. (The Chair may appoint persons who are not members of the team as needed in particular situations due to the nature of the matter, the persons involved, the experience and skills needed, etc.)

The small group appointed will notify the affected persons of their formation, assess the needs of the affected persons, and offer and/or facilitate the appropriate pastoral, therapeutic, and spiritual support. This group is limited to providing support only and will not serve any investigatory or adjudicatory function.

Adopted February 1996
Amended October 1997
Amended January 2018
Amended February 2024

34. TITLE TRANSFER OF NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT SITES

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Presbytery of St. Augustine grants authority to the Trustees of the corporation to issue an appropriate deed to new church development sites held in the name of the presbytery when a newly organized church is ready to build its first unit and after the Coordinating Council has given its approval to such building.

Adopted 7 February 1987

Amended 1 October 2018

35. VALIDATING THE MINISTRY OF CONTINUING MEMBERS

[RESCINDED AND NO LONGER IN EFFECT AS A GENERAL PRESBYTERY POLICY-REMAINS AS AN INTERNAL POLICY OF THE CALL COMMISSION]

Presbytery of St. Augustine

Presbytery of St. Augustine

NOTE: THE NEW OPERATIONS MANUAL SUPERCEDES THIS POLICY IN ALLOWING THE MEMBER PREPARATION AND CALL COMMISSION TO APPROVE VALIDATED MINISTRIES RATHER THAN RECOMMENDING THEM TO THE PRESBYTERY.

Preamble

The *Book of Order* requires that presbyteries develop written criteria for validating the ministries of continuing members. The principles that shape these criteria are drawn from the description of the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and the description of the presbytery's responsibility for validating ministries:

While the ministry is one, specific forms of ministry may emphasize special tasks and skills and the ordering of the offices of ministry shall reflect this variety. There may be forms of ministry in which primary emphasis is given to proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, forms that stress deeds of love and mercy, forms that are primarily educational, administrative, legislative, or judicial, and forms that are primarily prophetic (G-6.0104)

When ministers are designated as educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, partners in mission, evangelists, administrators, social workers, consultants, or in other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church, they shall evidence a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible and shall seek to fulfill their ministry by serving Christ and their fellow men and women, strengthening the church and equipping it for concern and service to the life of the human community. In addition to fulfilling the particular responsibilities to which they are called, they shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships, and shall be eligible for election to the higher governing bodies of the church and to the boards and agencies of those governing bodies. (G-6/0203)

A presbytery shall determine the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200 and the following standards:

- a. The ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order* of this church.
- b. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.
- c. The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0402.
- d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions.
- e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation. (G-11.0403)

In addition to these references, the presbytery's own Mission and Values Statements shape its consideration of valid ministries within its bounds:

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine is to serve Jesus Christ by strengthening our congregations in their ministries and enabling us to accomplish together what none could accomplish alone.

VALUES STATEMENT

In these early years of the 21st Century, the priorities of the Presbytery of St. Augustine are:

- Spreading the Gospel and founding new churches
- Educating people for discipleship
- Working for justice, righteousness, inclusiveness, and reconciliation

- Nurturing spiritual growth with theological integrity
- Developing creative forms of ministry while valuing our Reformed heritage
- Holding ourselves accountable to and responsible for one another
- Respecting our differences without sacrificing our unity in Christ. (*Manual of Operations*, Presbytery of St. Augustine)

I. Validation and Review of Ministries within Congregations

The approval by the Member Preparation and Call of a call to a valid ministry within a congregation (G-11.0409) shall be considered validation of that ministry.

The annual report of Member Preparation and Call Commission of the type of work and salary compensation of each minister in congregational service (G-11.0502, 11.0103n) shall serve as the annual review of the service of each minister so engaged.

The presbytery, acting through its triennial visit process, shall review the character and conduct of ministers engaged in service within congregations. Results of the triennial visit process are reported to the Member Preparation and Call Commission upon completion of the visit. The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall, at its discretion, recommend actions to the presbytery arising from the triennial visit report or other interactions undertaken in the execution of Member Preparation and Call Commission responsibilities (G-11.0502).

II. Validation and Review of Ministries in Other Service of the Church

The approval of a call to other service of the church, either as extended by the presbytery for service on its staff or recommended by the Member Preparation and Call Commission and consistent with the terms of G-11.0410, shall be considered validation of that ministry.

The annual report of Member Preparation and Call Commission of the type of work and salary compensation of each minister in other service of the church (G-11.0502, 11.0103n) shall serve as the annual review of the service of each minister so engaged.

For minister members of the presbytery staff, the annual and five-year reviews called for in the *Manual of Operations* and conducted by the Personnel Committee shall serve as annual and major reviews of the validation of that ministry.

III. Criteria for Validating Ministries Beyond the Jurisdiction of the Church

The standards of G-11.0403a-e shall serve as broad criteria for the validation of ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church. In considering an application for validation of such a ministry, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall determine whether or not these standards have been met. Applicants for validation shall demonstrate the validity of proposed ministries in the following specific ways:

A. Demonstrable conformity with the mission of God's people in the world, as set forth in Holy Scripture, the Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order.

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay describing the ways in which the ministry proposed for validation is consistent with and/or embodies the mission and values of the Presbytery of St. Augustine as outlined in the Mission and Values Statements of the *Manual of Operations*. In addition, the ministry so described shall be assessed by the Member Preparation and Call Commission as to its consistency with Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

B. Service and/or aid to others, or enables the ministry of others

"The primary thrust of the work being validated is toward serving people. Conversely, it implies that its primary thrust is not toward profit-making activities. This does not suggest that a person in a profit-making position cannot perform ministry; many lay persons do. Nor does it imply that the minister cannot be employed in a profit-making enterprise. The primary functions of one's work, however, should relate to the service of people rather than to the production of goods or of profits." (PCUSA Handbook)

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay describing the nature of the ministry for which validation is sought (or by the submission of a job description in which the responsibilities of the ministry are detailed). The essay shall make clear the specific aspects of the ministry through which others are served and/or encouraged to serve others.

C. Theologically informed fidelity to God's Word

"The work to which the continuing member is called [shall make] active and effective use of the biblical and theological training that is required for ordination. Normally, this means that such work should provide opportunities to articulate the Christian faith." (PCUSA handbook)

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay indicating the specific ways in which theological education supports and nurtures the work of the ministry and/or the types of anticipated opportunities for articulating the Christian faith presented by the ministry. It is understood that not all articulation of the faith is verbal; Christian faith may be articulated in acts of compassion and self-sacrifice as well as through verbal proclamation.

D. Accountability for its character and conduct

This criterion shall be satisfied in both of the following ways:

- 1) Submission of a brief written statement (or attachment of separate documentation) indicating
 - a) the persons, entities, or agencies to whom the minister is accountable for the character and conduct of the ministry, whether or not the ministry is compensated, and/or
 - b) the ethical standards of any professional organizations or associations of which the minister is a member in connection with the exercise of this ministry; and
- 2) Regular review by the Member Preparation and Call Commission through
 - a) Annual written reports on the minister's place of residence and performance of the ministry, submitted to the stated clerk of the presbytery, and
 - b) At least one in-person interview with Member Preparation and Call Commission or its designees every three years, unless an exception is granted by the commission.

E. Responsible participations in the deliberations and work of presbytery, and worship and service in a local congregation

This criterion shall be satisfied by both of the following:

- 1) by attestation by the stated clerk of the presbytery that the minister has been in attendance at presbytery at least once in the year previous to application for or review of validation and that the annual report of residence and work has been received for that same year. If the minister seeking validation comes from another presbytery, the stated clerk shall request attestation from the stated clerk of the transferring presbytery. If the person seeking validation is a candidate, the stated clerk shall request evidence of certification of readiness for ministry from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or similar body) of the presbytery of care, and
- 2) by written affirmation from the applicant that he or she is a regular participant in the worship and service of a congregation of God's people.

IV. Process for Approval and Review

A. Approval of Application for Validation of Ministry

- 1) The minister or candidate seeking validation for a particular ministry shall complete the Application for Validation of a Ministry and submit the application to the stated clerk or Moderator of the Member Preparation and Call Commission no later than 2 weeks before the date of the Member Preparation and Call Commission meeting at which the application is to be considered.
- 2) The Member Preparation and Call Commission Moderator shall place the application on the agenda of the committee and, if deemed appropriate, schedule an interview for the minister with all or part of the Member Preparation and Call Commission.
- 3) The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall consider the application and recommend to the presbytery whether or not the ministry should be validated.
- 4) At its next stated meeting, the presbytery shall consider the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommendation and shall determine whether or not to validate the ministry.
- 5) If the ministry is validated, the minister or candidate shall be commissioned by action of the presbytery. A commissioning liturgy may be celebrated by the presbytery to mark the beginning of the ministry.
- 6) The stated clerk shall notify the minister or candidate in writing of the decision of the presbytery.

B. Review of Validation

- 1) Annual Review

The minister engaged in a ministry validated by the presbytery shall report annually concerning the following:

- Current mailing address, telephone number, and (if available) email address
- Character and conduct of the ministry accomplished in the time since validation or previous review
- Any changes in the character and conduct of the ministry anticipated for the coming year.

The report shall be submitted to the stated clerk no later than 30 April of each year, and shall be reviewed by the Member Preparation and Call Commission and reported to the presbytery, ordinarily at its stated fall meeting. The Member Preparation and Call Commission may, and in the case of recommendation to rescind validation shall, interview the minister concerning the report and the character and conduct of the ministry.

- If the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommends continuing validation of the ministry, this action may be included in the consent agenda for the presbytery meeting
- If the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommends rescinding validation of the ministry, it shall report its findings and reasons for so recommending to the presbytery, and the minister shall be offered opportunity to respond.

2) Major Review

At least once every three years after the validation of a ministry, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall conduct an in-person interview with the minister to inquire into the ongoing character and conduct of the minister. This triennial review shall replace the annual review for that year. The content of the interview shall include, but may not be limited to:

- Conduct and activity of the ministry
- Goals for the ministry
- Long-range plans of the minister for continuing education or other personal and professional growth
- Ways in which the presbytery can be of greater support to the minister.

On the basis of this interview, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall recommend to the presbytery whether or not to continue the validation of the ministry, under the same terms as the annual review.

If being present in person for the triennial interview poses a significant hardship for the minister, the Member Preparation and Call Commission may, at its discretion, choose some other means by which to conduct a conversation about the character and accomplishments of the ministry (e.g., on-line electronic discussion, telephone interview, etc.)

Adopted 18 October 2005

Amended 1 January 2018

Rescinded October 2024

36. WORSHIP AT PRESBYTERY MEETINGS

Presbytery of St. Augustine

The Presbytery of St. Augustine adopts a policy of setting aside a block of time (30 minutes requested) at each Presbytery meeting to be devoted exclusively for worship as planned by the Coordinating Council, and that the time not be used for the presentation of sermons by candidates.

Adopted 27 October 1987

Amended 1 January 2018

37. RESTORATION POLICY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

When a minister of the Word and Sacrament (teaching elder) under the censure of removal from ordered ministry (and, if applicable, from membership) seeks restoration, the presbytery will follow the provisions of the Rules of Discipline in effect at that time.

Unless the Rules prohibit it or provide differently, the minister shall provide a request in writing to the stated clerk, who shall refer the request to the Call Commission. The stated clerk shall also notify the presbytery of the request at the next stated meeting.

The Call Commission shall address each request on a case-by-case basis, beginning with a full review of the presbytery's censure, and shall make a report and recommendation to the presbytery regarding the request. If the presbytery votes in favor of the restoration request, it shall follow the provisions of the Rules of Discipline with respect to a service of ordination and, if applicable, restoration to membership.

Adopted 5 February 2022

38. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

As part of our baptismal vows as members of the church of Jesus Christ, we promise to guide and nurture- by word and deed and with love and prayer- the children and youth within our care.

Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of Matthew (19:14), “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” As a presbytery, we endeavor to maintain the spiritual, emotional and physical safety of our children and youth in our care. Therefore, we require the following guidelines and practices be implemented.

1. All adult workers, paid and volunteer, sign and certify that they have read and understand the current Child Protection Policy in the Presbytery of St. Augustine.
2. Adult-children/youth ratios shall be observed at all times.
3. Respect for the privacy of children, youth, and adults is expected at all times unless the health and safety of the individual is at risk.
4. Responsible use of digital devices and social media platforms is expected in all situations.
5. Children and youth are encouraged to immediately tell an adult about any inappropriate situations. If inappropriate activities are reported, the adult will immediately give the information to the supervising adult or the Lead Presbyter, the Stated Clerk, the Presbytery Moderator or the Chair of Council.
6. All adult workers, paid and volunteer, will abide by the adopted policies of Presbytery of St. Augustine, including the Sexual Misconduct Policy.
7. Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of Minors or Vulnerable Adults. The only exception is if an emergency situation deems this not immediately possible for both in person and online gatherings. All Child and Youth Workers and volunteers must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise.
8. View Windows and Open Doors: When Minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times.

Florida Mandatory Reporting Statutes:

Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) mandates that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline of the Department of Children and Families, 1-800-962-2873. Abuse may be reported online [here](#).

More information from the Florida Department of Children and Families may be found [here](#).

The following information is taken from the PCUSA Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. The full policy can be found [Child-Youth-Vulnerable Adult Policy 2020 \(GA 2020\) \(00131876\).DOCX](#)

Definitions:

Child: A child is defined as a person between the ages of 0–11

Youth: A youth is defined as a person between the ages of 12–17

Minor: A minor is defined as any child or youth between the ages of 0-17.

Ratios for adults, children and youth:

The adult to child ratio is 2:10, for both in person and online gatherings.

The adult to youth ratio is 2:17, for both in person and online gatherings.

Supervision requirements:

All children and youth workers must be at least 18 years old and four years older than the oldest youth whom they are serving.

Code of Conduct when working with Minors that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors:

- Display of sexual affection toward a Minor.
- Discussion of sexual encounters with or around Minors.
- Involving Minors in personal problems or issues.
- Dating or becoming “romantically” involved with Minors.
- Using or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or illegal drugs in the presence of Minors.
- Possessing sexually oriented materials-including printed or online pornography- on Presbytery of St. Augustine property, or property being utilized for a church event.
- Having secrets with Minors.

- Staring at or commenting on the bodies of Minors.
- Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with Minors.
- Working one-on-one with Minors in a private setting.
- Abusing Minors, including but not limited to:
 - o Physical abuse: hit spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain.
 - o Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse.
 - o Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
 - o Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
 - o Neglect: withhold food, water, or shelter.
 - o Permit Minors to engage in: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

Adopted October 2024
Revised May 2025

39. POLICY ON BACKGROUND CHECKS AND BOUNDARY TRAINING

Presbytery of St. Augustine

AWARENESS / TRAINING / BACKGROUND CHECKS

Scripture calls us to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been selected. We take this calling seriously therefore, in seeking to prevent sexual misconduct from occurring, the presbytery places emphasis on educating presbytery representatives concerning appropriate ethical conduct and boundary awareness.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All incoming and current minister members in active service, commissioned pastors (CPs/CREs), certified Christian educators (CCEs), persons under care (Inquirers and Candidates or I&Cs) and presbytery staff enrolled or employed by the Presbytery shall receive this policy and sign a document stating that they have read and understood this policy. A signed copy of the acknowledgement page shall be returned to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery by December 15, 2024. The Stated Clerk will report to the Call Commission on receipt of acknowledgements from all ministers, CCEs, CPs/CREs and I&Cs at the January, 2025 meeting of the Call Commission.

The process shall occur annually. The Presbytery shall include a copy of this policy in the materials distributed for the Fall Presbytery meeting. Signed acknowledgments will be reported to the Stated Clerk by December 15 to be processed as stated in the previous paragraph.

Exempt from this policy are those retired from active ministry and who remain inactive.

BOUNDARY TRAINING

All incoming and current ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and presbytery staff shall complete a course on maintaining appropriate boundaries, including abuse prevention. For incoming ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and presbytery staff, this shall be completed prior to serving a congregation/position within the bounds of the Presbytery. Upon adoption of this policy, all current active minister members, CPs/CREs, CCEs and I&Cs enrolled by the Presbytery and presbytery staff shall complete a course on maintaining appropriate boundaries, including abuse prevention, within the first three months of the adoption of this policy and every three years thereafter.

The Presbytery Communication and Training Team will be responsible for providing the boundary training when required by this policy. Boundary training will normally be offered at a Presbytery meeting, at another Presbytery-wide event and as additionally necessary as determined by the Communication and Training Team. The Communication and Training Team may offer training by in-person meetings, electronic meetings and/or recorded trainings as they may determine.

The Call Commission will provide to the Communication and Training Team the list of current active ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs and I&Cs upon adoption of this policy. The Call Commission will then inform the Communication and Training Team when an incoming minister, CP, CCE or I&C seeks to engage in ministry within the Presbytery. The Lead Presbyter will provide to the Communication and Training Team the list of current Presbytery staff upon the adoption of this policy, and will then inform the Communication and Training Team when presbytery seeks incoming staff.

The Stated Clerk will report to the Call Commission annually on completion of boundary training by all ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs and I&Cs. The Stated Clerk shall notify the Lead Presbyter regarding completion by presbytery staff.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Upon adoption of this policy, all current active ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and Presbytery staff will be subject to a national criminal level 2 background check which shall include but is not limited to a check of the sexual offender registry. The Presbytery will cover the cost of the initial background check for a current active minister, CP, CCE, I&C or Presbytery staff. A national criminal level 2 background check will then be conducted every 5 years thereafter. The costs of the reoccurring background checks will be equally split between the Presbytery and the church/ministry/employer.

The Presbytery will cover the costs of the criminal background checks for all incoming ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and staff directly employed by the Presbytery. These checks shall be run before employment or service commences. In the event of an incoming minister, CP, CCE or I&C, the Call Commission will complete the background check prior to examining the minister, CP, CCE or I&C for Presbytery enrollment.

Those employed as camp staff and those that volunteer for special events (such as mission trips, disaster assistance, youth events, etc.) shall also be subject to background checks as outlined above.

If anyone subject to this policy has previously obtained a level 2 background check valid under the terms of this policy, then a release of that level 2 background check may be signed in lieu of obtaining a new level 2 background check.

PROCEDURES

The Presbytery Office will organize the background checks by providing disclaimer forms for signature and providing instructions on accessing the background check vendor used by the Presbytery. Returned background checks will be submitted to the Stated Clerk. Any background check that contains an item of concern will then be submitted by the Stated Clerk to the Lead Presbyter, Call Commission Moderator, Presbytery Moderator and Coordinating Council Moderator for further review.

Additional steps that may be taken for failure to complete boundary training and/or for critical items of concern discovered by the background check may include administrative leave, dissolution of the call/contract and any other relief deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

Adopted October 2024

40. ANTI-RACISM POLICY

Presbytery of St. Augustine

Presbytery of St. Augustine Antiracism Policy and Statement

Adapted from the “Antiracism Statement” of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) A Corp

Our biblical and theological heritage calls us to love and serve all people, for we are equally beloved of God, with each person possessing the divine image within them. Our shared humanity calls us to live and work together toward God’s shalom. In Scripture we read,

So, God created humankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27) And,

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by^[c] one Spirit—so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

In the Confessions we read,

God’s reconciling love breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference. (Confession of 1967) And,

We believe...that God’s lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness, and enmity, that God’s lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world.... (Belhar Confession)

In Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms that “racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. ... [it] is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others.”¹ We state unequivocally that racism and all forms of discrimination and marginalization are sins against humanity and God, inconsistent with our Christian and corporate values and unacceptable within our congregations and presbyteries.

Racism is a practice or system of racial prejudice exerted by those in power — institutionally and individually, consciously, and unconsciously — that is deeply ingrained in the history of the United States. Racism benefits people in the dominant culture socially, economically, and politically while disadvantaging people of color and people from minority cultures. However, for all persons, any racism corrupts the image of God within us. The task of dismantling racism must be a partnership that involves all levels of the church.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an institution founded and historically run by white people that remains approximately 88% white. Closer to home, The Presbytery of St. Augustine is largely white, while the communities in which many of us live and serve are much more diverse. We must come to terms with those numbers and their implications for the work we do, and the audiences we reach.² We worship and work in a culture whose implicit, often unconscious bias assumes the primacy of white culture: its patterns of behavior and cultural assumptions regarding values and human vision.

We understand that we may need to unlearn existing habits of thought and behavior that form our speech and our social interactions as well as reform our ecclesial structures and policies, for racism persists despite our expressed values and intentions. If we are to create an antiracist church where “all persons are treated with respect, all gifts are valued and encouraged, and diversity is a gift to be valued,”³ we will be open to courageous self-reflection, confession, and repentance that leads to transformed persons, relationships, policies, and habits of interacting with one another.

We recognize the strides we have made, even as we acknowledge there is more work to do. As we strive to be an antiracist church, we vigorously commit ourselves to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our life together. Such a commitment to DEI requires that we commit to repent, review, require, and repair.

- We commit to repenting of the role we collectively and individually have played and continue to play in creating and maintaining systemic racism that implicitly biases white cultural practices.
- We commit to reviewing annually the presbytery’s own practices and implementing strategies to disrupt and dismantle systemic bias that presumes the primacy of white culture within our life together. To that end, we will offer educational

workshops to better understand biases and deepen our cultural competency.

- We commit to requiring antiracism training of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament in permanent and temporary pastoral relationships, validated ministries, as well as members-at-large. This training is required to be taken once every four to five years. Further, the presbytery commits to requiring of itself that such antiracism training will be offered on an annual basis.⁴
- We commit to repairing the damages caused by racist policies by creating and investing in new strategies to ensure the church's continuous advance away from past practices.⁵ Recognizing that oppression can come from both external and internal forces we will work to dismantle oppression in the church and in the world in all its forms, including working against internalized oppression.

(WHAT IS INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION? When people are targeted, discriminated against, or oppressed over a period of time, they often internalize (believe and make part of their self-image – their internal view of themselves) the myths and misinformation that society communicates to them about their group.)

We acknowledge that this work will not be easy, but, as our church wide antiracism policy affirms: "Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PCUSA must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Antiracist effort is not optional for Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ." ⁶ Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the Presbytery of St. Augustine commits to seeking God's Kingdom for all people.

When we gather as a Presbytery, we will lift up the names of the groups which originally occupied the land through corporate land acknowledgements. We will strive to structure our meetings so that they celebrate the fullness of humanity within our bounds. To that end, we will celebrate the culture and history of our diverse heritages. Normally our February meeting will include the celebration of African, Caribbean or both. Our May meeting will normally include the celebration of Pan Asia, Pacific Islander or both, and our October meeting will include the celebration of LatinX, Native American/Indigenous or both.

Additional Material

Appendix A:

Illustrative (but not exhaustive) List of Potential Topics for Anti-Racism Training

Biblical and Theological Grounding for Anti-Racism Work

Examine such texts as those mentioned in this policy, as well as other biblical and theological examples of how anti-racism work is foundational to ministry practice and community ethics for Christian congregations.

Definition of Anti-Racism:

The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.⁶

Definition of Intersectionality

The ways systems of oppression overlap to create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories. "If you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you're likely to get hit by both." - Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw⁸

Four "I's" of Concern

(1) Ideological—beliefs, values, and culture; (2) Interpersonal—individual behavior; (3) Institutional—policies and practices; and (4) Identity—self-reflection of inferiority.⁷

Cultural Competency Continuum (1) Cultural destructiveness; (2) Cultural incapacity; (3) Cultural Blindness; (4) Cultural Pre-Competency; (5) Cultural Competency; and (6) Cultural Proficiency.⁸

Implicit Bias toward Assuming Primacy of White Culture / Cultural Practices

(1) Focus on perfectionism, (2) Sense of urgency, (3) Defensiveness, (4) Quantity or quality, (5) Worship of the written word,

(6) Only one right, (7) Paternalism, (8) Either/or thinking, (9) Power hoarding, (10) Fear of open conflict, (11) Individualism, (12) I'm the only one, (13) Progress is bigger or more, (14) Objectivity, (15) Right to comfort.⁹

Zones / Distinctions in Allyship

(1) Fear Zone, Learning Zone, Growth Zone; (2) White Fragility vs. Weaponized White Fragility; (3) Performative Allyship vs. Authentic Allyship.

Overt vs. Covert Racism

Overt: Lynching, Hate Crimes, Blackface, the N-word, Swastikas, Neo-Nazis, Racist Jokes, Racial Slurs, KKK, Cross Burning

Covert: Weaponized Whiteness, Expecting BIPOC to Teach Whites, Believing We Are "Post-Racial," "But We're All One Big Human Family," "There's Only One Human Race," Housing Discrimination, Bootstrap Theory, School-To-Prison Pipeline, Police Murdering BIPOC, Virtuous Victim Narrative, Higher BIPOC Infant/Maternal Mortality Rate, "But What About Me?," "All Lives Matter," BIPOC as Halloween Costumes, Racial Profiling,

A Partial list of Resources for Churches as they offer Training.

[Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance – PMA/OGA film series At The River: Struggle and Grace in the Segregated South](#)

[Sarah Augustine. The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Jemar Tisby.](#)

[The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism Carolyn Helsel.](#)

[Anxious to Talk About it: Helping White People Talk Faithfully About Racism](#)

[Resmaa Menakem. My Grandmother's Hands](#)

[The Book of American Negro Poetry edited by James Weldon Johnson Margaret](#)

[Musgrove Ashanti to Zulu](#)

[Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher. African Ceremonies](#)

[Daniel Banks. A Mighty King in Battle](#)

[Daniel Banks. Letters to Mr. Davis](#)

[The African Heritage Bible. edited by Dr. Cain Hope Felder](#)

[James H. Cone. A Black Theology of Liberation](#)

[Ibram X. Kendi. How to be Antiracist](#)

[Amanda Gorman. Call Us What We Carry](#)

[Ta-Nahesi Coates. Between the World and](#)

[Me Ibram X. Kendi. How to be an Anti-](#)

[Racist Ibram X. Kendi. Antiracist Baby](#)

[Bryan Stevenson Just Mercy](#)

[Bryan Stevenson Legacy](#)

[Museum](#)

[Dr. Babara J. Brooks. One](#)

[House. Block. Street.](#)

[Community Charles Eady.](#)

[Hidden Freedom](#)

[Jeanne Theoharis. The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks](#)

[Dr. Carol Anderson. White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide Dr.](#)

[Carol Anderson. The Second](#)

[Danisha Huntley. Lost Land](#)

[Gilbert King. Devil in the](#)

[Grove](#)

[Michelle Alexander. The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness Wilkerson.](#)

[Isabell The Origins of Our Discontents](#)

[Origin 2023 A film Based on the life of Isabell Wilkerson](#)

Visit YouTube and look for the Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes experiment.

****There is a plethora of valuable material available for increasing one’s knowledge and insight in this area, this list is just a sampling of some of the resources that others have found to be beneficial.****

1 Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community, 222nd General Assembly (2016) <https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/40835/>

2 "Black Lives Matter," on the Presbyterian Historical Society's website, <https://history.pcusa.org/blog/2020/06/black-lives-matter>

3 See Appendix A on page 3 for a list of potential topics to address in that training. The list of topics is illustrative, not exhaustive, and represents the scope and focus of training topics to be offered. It is understood that future years and challenges may necessitate a different list of potential training topics.

4 As an example, the Civil Rights movement established the following: the 1965 Civil Rights Legislation and the 1964 Voting Rights Legislation, which include policy changes and investments to sustain the work of moving toward diversity, equity, and inclusion. As an example, taken from the context of our Native congregations, the General Assembly has acted to encourage mid-councils to consider donating a portion of funds received whenever a property is sold go to Native congregations for their benefit and rehabilitation.

5 Samantha Davis, presentation to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, May 2023. 8 Samantha Davis, *ibid*.

6 Facing Racism, *ibid*.

7 Josefina Ahumada, presentation to Presbytery de Cristo Leadership Commission, June 2021.

8 Tema Okun, “White Supremacy Culture,” DRworks, www.dismantlingracism.org.

Adopted October 2024
