FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
Church *of* Nashville

POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL



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First Presbyterian Church *of* Nashville
POLICIES & PROCEDURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The Session of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, adopts this policies and procedures manual to formalize the church's rules of operation and to provide guidance for its teaching elders, staff, officers, and congregation so that together we can more effectively serve the great ends of the church – the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind, the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God, the maintenance of divine worship, the preservation of the truth, the promotion of social righteousness, and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

The purpose of this manual is to enable the church to do well the work to which it is called. This requires that the business of the church be conducted with predictability and efficiency. Both are enhanced, we believe, by committing to writing and collecting in one place the policies and procedures by which we govern ourselves.

Article II contains the church's mission, values, and vision statements. These were originally adopted in April 2001 following a congregational planning retreat, with input from a broad cross-section of the church's officers, staff, and congregation. Although the fundamental tenets of our faith can be found in the *PCUSA Book of Confessions*, the character and heart of this church are revealed in what we are most passionate about: our sense of mission, our core values, and our vision for the future. Everything else in this manual is an expression of these principles.

Article III establishes bylaws and procedures for the operation of church government. It follows the *PCUSA Book of Order* but covers many subjects that are either not addressed in the *Book of Order* or are addressed only in very general terms. Many of the practices set out in Article III have long been followed, in one form or another, but have never been codified. Others represent an attempt to clarify areas where there has been confusion and uncertainty. Still others are innovations that we believe are an improvement over past practice.

Important documents as well as policies enacted by the Session to address particular needs and issues are maintained in an appendix. These range from the mundane (weather-related cancellations) to the sublime (Christian marriage). [1]

II. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

1. OUR MISSION

Our mission is to know Christ, to make him known, and to exhibit his love through worship, education, and service.

2. OUR VALUES

2.1 REFORMED TRADITION

We are Presbyterians in the Reformed tradition, dedicated to the service of God, through Jesus Christ, for his glory. We take seriously our faith heritage. We are inspired by the great themes of the Reformation, which still resonate with us today: "Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria" – "grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, and to God alone the glory." We have a rich history, both as Presbyterians and as a congregation. In all that we do, we seek to honor our past and preserve its legacy for future generations.

2.2 ALWAYS REFORMING

We also take seriously our obligation to be open to change, renewal, and reformation – to be "the church reformed and always reforming" according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit. We seek to be a people who embrace the future as well as the past, who are eager to explore and grow and do new things, and who can maintain our strong foundations while constantly building on them.

2.3 WORSHIP

Worship is at the heart of who we are as a church. It is an expression of our fundamental beliefs as Christians. Theologically, we are a diverse church that respects freedom of conscience, but we are firmly anchored in God's

Word and in the historic Reformed faith. The essential tenets of that faith determine many of the elements of worship, and these are constant. Outside of these core elements, however, our particular form of worship is shaped by the church's history, culture, and current needs. The church's primary worship style is traditional, with formal liturgy and classical music. We are committed to maintaining a strong program of traditional worship. We also seek to meet the needs of those in our church family who enjoy other styles of worship and to do this without compromising the essential and distinctive nature of how we worship as Presbyterians.

2.4 MINISTRY

The ministry of this church, like that of the early church, begins with caring for the needs of its members. This ministry of sympathy and compassion is not just the job of teaching elders and staff, or of ruling elders and deacons, but of every member. While pastoral care and church programs play an important role, it is even more important that we support and care for one another. Our goal is to be truly a community of faith, helping each other through times of crisis, supporting each other through times of need, and remembering each other in prayer.

2.5 EDUCATION

We share with other Presbyterians an informed and thoughtful approach to our faith. We view Christian education as a lifelong obligation, one that we undertake with enthusiasm. We do this primarily through Bible study in small groups and Sunday school, but we seek to weave Christian nurture into the entire fabric of church life. Our inquirers, confirmation, and officer training classes, for example, all provide in-depth instruction geared to people at different stages of their faith journey. This church has a special passion for the nurture of its children and youth. This finds expression, among other ways, in Oak Hill School, a K-6 program housed on the First Presbyterian Church campus. We educate and train our members not only for their own spiritual edification, but to better equip them to teach, evangelize, and witness to others, to the end that when we better know Christ, we will be better able to make him known to others.

2.6 SERVICE

Christ calls us to love and serve others, just as he has loved and served us. We seek to be a servant church, fulfilling Christ's commission to aid the hungry, the stranger, the needy, the sick, and the prisoner, in our community and around the world. We endeavor to provide financial support to worthy missions, but even more we seek to engage every member, young and old, in regular service, whether helping with a church program, volunteering at one of our local missions, or going on an extended mission trip abroad.

2.7 EXCELLENCE

We believe that God demands, and deserves, our best. We do not honor God when we give him anything less. We strive for excellence in all things, so that he is truly glorified. This includes the best utilization of our time, our talent, and our financial resources.

2.8 INTEGRITY

We seek to live our lives with Christ as our model – to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. We believe our lives should bear witness to our faith.

3. OUR VISION

Our Vision Statement: First Presbyterian Church is a church family where all generations exhibit Christ's love through lives marked by gratitude, hospitality and generosity.

Hallmarks of the Envisioned Spirit of First Presbyterian Church:

- *Gratitude* – Living in a way that continually expresses our thankfulness for God's grace and love.
- *Hospitality* – Welcoming all people into our community through acts of kindness and care.
- *Generosity* – Recognizing the goodness and graciousness of God through the giving of our time, talents and treasure.[2]

III. ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN POLITY

Our polity, or form of government, is an expression of our theology. We believe that God is sovereign and that Jesus Christ is head of the church; that God has called us to live and work together in community; that our relations with one another should be ordered by law, which is a gift from God; that all human beings are sinful and prone to error; and that we are called to serve God through stewardship, ministry, and mission.

These beliefs lead us to several basic principles of church government. First, church officers must seek to do the will of God rather than merely represent the views of the church's members. They are accountable for their actions not to the congregation but to Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Second, First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, is part of a broader church, and its polity is connectional. This means we recognize the authority of higher governing bodies within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Third, important decisions should be made by groups of church officers, by majority vote after opportunity for discussion, rather than by individuals. Fourth, our decision-making should be ordered and bounded by established principles and precedents. Fifth, we should strive constantly to improve our system of church government. Sixth, our structures and processes must be chosen to facilitate the church's mission.

1.2 A REPRESENTATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT

First Presbyterian Church, like all Presbyterian churches, has a representative and constitutional form of government. The church is governed by officers elected by the congregation. Their authority is defined and limited by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to which First Presbyterian Church adheres. Part I of the Constitution is *The Book of Confessions*, a statement of the essential tenets of our faith. Part II is the *Book of Order*, consisting of the The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline.

The church's council is the Session, which has both clergy and lay members (teaching elders and ruling elders). The Session is assisted in its work by deacons, who are organized into a separate body known as the Diaconate (referred to in the *Book of Order* as the board of deacons). The Diaconate is supervised by the Session. The Session in turn is answerable to the other PCUSA governing bodies of which it is a part. These are, in ascending order, the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, the Synod of Living Waters, and the PCUSA General Assembly.

1.3 PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY OF THIS MANUAL

The *PCUSA Book of Order* is the constitutional authority by which this church is governed, and it is controlling in the event of a conflict with anything in this manual. This manual interprets, supplements, and applies the principles of the *Book of Order*. It was adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, to govern the conduct of all church business. It remains in effect until modified by the Session. Church officers are encouraged to use this manual as a resource and consult it regularly in performing their duties.

1.4 AMENDMENTS

Article III of this manual, which is in the nature of bylaws for the Session and the Diaconate, has been adopted and may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Session. Unless the requirement is waived by unanimous consent, members of the Session must be given ten days advance written notice of a proposed amendment of Article III. All other articles in this manual may be amended by majority vote of the Session, except that amendments to the bylaws of a constituent organization such as Presbyterian Women or Oak Hill School that are set out in the Appendix must first be approved by the organization itself, as provided in its existing bylaws, before being presented to the Session for ratification.

1.5 INTERPRETATION

Organization and governance are not ends in themselves. Our church government is designed to enable us to accomplish the church's mission in the most efficient and effective way possible. To that end, the policies and

procedures in this manual are to be construed and administered in the way that best advances the mission of the church. They must also be read in a way that conforms to the *Book of Order*. Citations to relevant provisions in the *Book of Order* are provided as a convenient reference throughout the manual. The manual is to be construed as a whole, and any interpretation that reconciles its different provisions is to be favored over one that does not.

Church officers are encouraged to resolve questions concerning the proper interpretation of this manual through prayer, discussion, and consensus. Questions of interpretation that arise during a meeting of a council or committee, or of the Session or Diaconate, are to be resolved in the first instance by the presiding officer, whose ruling may be appealed to the full body under the normal rules of order. Other questions of interpretation, particularly those arising between Session meetings, should be addressed to the Coordinating Council of the Session through the associate clerk, who is the officer chiefly responsible for maintaining this manual and encouraging compliance with it. To be precedential, such interpretations must be confirmed by the Session, which may direct that this manual be amended or clarified accordingly.

1.6 DEFINITIONS

As used in Article III of this manual:

1) "PCUSA" means the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
2) "Book of Confessions" and "Book of Order" mean the current versions of the *PCUSA Book of Confessions* and *Book of Order*, as amended, which together form the PCUSA Constitution;
3) "Presbytery" means the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee;
4) "Session" means the duly constituted council of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, consisting of all teaching elders and ruling elders in active service, as described in Section G-3.02 of the *Book of Order* and Sections 6 and 7 of Article III of this manual;
5) "Diaconate" means the board of deacons of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, consisting of all deacons in active service, as described in Section G-2.0202 of the *Book of Order* and Sections 6 and 7 of Article III of this manual;
6) "Moderator," "Clerk" and "Associate Clerk" refer to the officers of the Session described in Sections 8.3.1-3;
7) "Senior Pastor" means the teaching elder currently serving as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee, pursuant to Section G-2.0504a of the *Book of Order*, as distinguished from the church's associate pastors;
8) "Head of Staff" means the senior pastor in his role as chief executive officer of the church staff;
9) "Chairman," "Vice Chairman," and "Secretary" refer to the officers of the Diaconate described in Sections 8.3.4-6; when uncapitalized, the terms "chairman" and "vice chairman" refer to the chairmen and vice chairmen of committees and councils;
10) "Church officer" means a ruling elder or deacon; in most contexts this implies one in active service; where the context allows, "church officer" also includes teaching elders, who are presbyters and officers of the church within the meaning of the *Book of Order*;
11) "Reserve officer" means a ruling elder or deacon who was ordained and has served in this or another PCUSA church but who is not currently serving on the Session or the Diaconate;
12) Depending on the context, "officer" may mean either a church officer or one of the officers of the Session or Diaconate listed in Sections 8.3.1-6;
13) "Council" means one of the organizational subdivisions of the Session described in Sections 10 and 11, and also refers to sessions, presbyteries and synods in our denominational structure.
14) "Administrative Council" means one of the six councils with responsibility for the Session's primary program areas or support functions, as described in Section 11.1-6.
15) "Coordinating Council" means the Coordinating Council of the Session, which oversees the work of the administrative councils, as described in Section 11.7;
16) "Committee" means one of the council subdivisions described in Section 9 and listed in Section 11; it includes subcommittees wherever the context will allow;
17) "Executive Committee" means the Executive Committee of the Diaconate described in Section 11.6.7;
18) Except when used in a generic sense to refer to the church universal, "church" means First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tennessee; "we" or "us" means the Session on behalf of the church;
19) "Congregation" means all the active members of the church;
20) "Member" when referring to the congregation as a whole means an active member of the church who has made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, has been baptized, has been received into membership in the church by the Session, has voluntarily submitted to the government of the church, participates in the church's work

and worship, and supports the church financially (G-1.0402); when referring to the Session, the Diaconate, or a committee, it means a duly appointed or elected member of that body;

21) "Notice" means notification in any manner reasonably calculated to reach all of the intended recipients; actual delivery is not essential for the notice to be effective; written notice may be delivered by email, as well as by regular mail or hand delivery; notice is effective when sent, regardless of the date of receipt;
22) When not otherwise identified, "Article" refers to the numbered articles in this manual, and "Section" refers to the numbered subdivisions in Article III;
23) "Shall," "must," "is to be," or "are to be" means the practice is mandatory;
24) "Should" means the practice is strongly recommended and is to be followed absent compelling reasons to the contrary;
25) "Normally," "typically," or "ordinarily" means the practice is well-established and appropriate; and
26) "May" means the practice is permissible.

Masculine titles and pronouns are employed in this manual for stylistic purposes only. All such references are to be read as applying equally to women.

1.7 PUBLICATION

This manual is a public document, and its contents shall be published in a manner that allows convenient access by all members of the congregation. The associate clerk, in conjunction with the executive pastor, is to maintain a master copy of the manual in both electronic and printed (hard copy) format. The master copy is the authoritative version of the manual. The associate clerk shall supervise the preparation and distribution of as many additional copies of the manual as he deems necessary for purposes of officer training and general reference. Portions of the manual may be published separately.[3]

1.8 REVISIONS

It is the associate clerk's responsibility to insure that this manual is updated regularly to reflect changes in the existing policies and procedures or new policies and procedures enacted by the Session. This includes changes necessitated by actions of the Session that do not expressly amend the manual but that do affect the underlying policies and procedures.

The associate clerk shall draft such revisions as he deems appropriate and, after review and consent by any affected committees, present them to the Governance Council and then the full Session for its review and approval. Once approved by the Session, the revisions shall be entered on the master copy of the manual, which shall state the date on which it was last revised. The master copy is maintained by the Executive Assistant, and a link to the current Policies & Procedures Manual is on the church website. Each year, new officers are given a copy of the Policies & Procedures Manual.[4]

1.9 ANNUAL REVIEW

The Session shall review the policies and procedures set forth in this manual annually to determine if they are operating effectively and if they should be modified or replaced. It shall be the responsibility of the Governance Council to prepare such an evaluation and submit it to the Session along with any recommended changes to the manual. This review process should be completed in time to insure that all copies of the manual are fully updated in advance of officer training each year.

2. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS (G-2.0401, G-2.0404)

2.1 NUMBER AND TERM OF SERVICE

Each fall the congregation elects 12 ruling elders and 20 deacons for three-year terms. Their term of service begins on February 1st and runs through the third succeeding January or until their successors are elected and installed, whichever is later. Each class of church officers is designated by its final full year of service. Thus, the officers elected in November 2001 are the class of 2004, and they will serve until January 31, 2005. A full complement of ruling elders and deacons is 36 ruling elders and 60 deacons, with one-third ending their terms and one-third being newly elected each year.

2.2 THE CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE (G-2.0401)

Each year a Church Officer Nominating Committee is formed to propose a slate of ruling elder and deacon nominees for consideration by the congregation. The committee proposes only as many nominees as there are positions to be filled.

The Church Officer Nominating Committee is responsible for:

1) Soliciting input from the congregation;
2) Identifying a group of individuals from among the members of the congregation whose faith, dedication, gifts, and abilities best qualify them to lead the congregation in the coming years;
3) Educating the proposed nominees about the type of commitment required to serve as a ruling elder or deacon and securing their consent to be put forward for that office; and
4) Proposing the slate of nominees for election by the congregation.

Although a committee of the congregation, the Church Officer Nominating Committee is supervised by the Session and reports to the Session through the Governance Council. It reports to the membership at the annual meeting held for the election of officers.

2.3 ELECTION OF THE CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Church Officer Nominating Committee has seven members plus the senior pastor, who serves ex officio. The Session selects two currently serving ruling elder members, one of whom serves as chairman of the committee, the other as vice chairman. The vice chairman must not be in his final year of service and will normally be selected to chair the committee the following year. The Diaconate selects one member, normally its vice chairman. The Session representatives are nominated by the procedure set out in Section 9.2.2 for committee chairmen and are elected at the December Session meeting. The Diaconate representative is nominated by the procedure set out in Section 8.1 for Diaconate officers and is elected at the December Diaconate meeting. Presbyterian Women selects one member, normally the incoming moderator. The other three members represent the congregation at large and are elected at the annual congregational meeting in November.

Following the election of church officers at the annual meeting, the Church Officer Nominating Committee shall propose three new at-large members of the committee for the coming year. The slate of at-large nominees for next year's committee shall conform as nearly as possible to the criteria in Section 2.4. The floor is then opened for further nominations. If more than three names are placed in nomination, the election shall be by secret ballot. The congregation does not vote on the Session, Diaconate, and Presbyterian Women representatives.

2.4 QUALIFICATIONS OF CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

At-large and Presbyterian Women representatives on the Church Officer Nominating Committee may not be actively serving church officers (though they may be reserve officers). At-large representatives are ineligible to serve two years in succession in that capacity.

The Church Officer Nominating Committee as a whole should be well acquainted with as many members of the congregation as possible and should be familiar with as many different groups and constituencies within the church family as possible to insure the most comprehensive knowledge of potential candidates. To this end, committee members, including the Session, Diaconate, and Presbyterian Women representatives, should represent a diversity of backgrounds, organizations, and interests within the church.

2.5 TERM OF OFFICE

The members of the Church Officer Nominating Committee serve from February 1 to the following January 31 or until their successors are elected, whichever is later. Because the chairman is typically the only member of the committee who served the preceding year, it is his responsibility to provide continuity and consistency from one year to the next. For example, the committee should be aware of potential nominees who were approached the preceding year but declined to serve, as well as the reasons for their refusal, as such information may materially affect the committee's deliberations.

2.6 SOLICITING SUGGESTIONS FROM THE CONGREGATION

Each year after its election, the Church Officer Nominating Committee shall solicit suggestions from the congregation for the class of officers to be elected the following fall by distributing suggestion forms to the congregation and by such other means as the committee deems appropriate.

Each member of the congregation should be encouraged to propose worthy candidates, providing as much information as possible about the potential nominee's background and the member's reasons for believing that this person would make a good church officer. Although members of the Church Officer Nominating Committee must ultimately vote their consciences, as they seek God's will for the church, they are to give full and prayerful consideration to the suggestions received from the congregation.

Committee chairmen who wish to propose persons as church officers to fill particular needs in connection with the work of their committees may submit recommendations to the Diaconate or Session representatives.

The Church Officer Nominating Committee determines the format and timing of its solicitation of suggestions from the congregation; provided, however, that the process must be completed in time to allow the committee to meet the deadlines in Section 2.9 for finalizing its slate of nominees.

2.7 OPERATING PROCEDURES OF THE OFFICER NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Except as modified by this section, the Officer Nominating Committee shall follow the procedures for committees set forth in Section 9. The committee should strive to act by consensus, the members of the committee seeking to resolve all differences through prayer, discussion, mutual forbearance, and respect for the opinions of the other members of the committee. If in the opinion of the chairman consensus is not attainable, the vote of five members of the committee shall be sufficient for selection of nominees.

To encourage candor in the committee's deliberations, all proceedings of the Officer Nominating Committee shall be conducted in private, and the confidentiality of the committee's deliberations shall be maintained by the members of the committee. All records of the committee's internal proceedings and deliberations shall either be destroyed or, where appropriate, preserved in confidence by the vice chairman for use the following year.

In proposing church officer nominees, the members of the committee (as well as the members of the congregation) should be mindful of the criteria listed in Section 2.8. The committee may employ additional criteria as long as they are consistent with Scripture, the *Book of Order*, and Section 2.8. No member of the Officer Nominating Committee or the spouse of a member of that committee shall be eligible for nomination to church office during the member's term of service.

The members of the Officer Nominating Committee should rely primarily on their collective knowledge and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in evaluating potential nominees. The committee may make limited inquiries to learn more about prospective nominees, but these must be extremely discreet, bearing in mind their potential for causing embarrassment and discord.

Before the list of nominees is finalized, the senior pastor shall consult with the associate pastors and inform the committee of any potential nominee whose fitness or suitability for church office may be in doubt based on pastoral concerns. The senior pastor shall provide the committee with as much information about the issues involved as he deems permissible under the circumstances, without revealing sensitive and confidential pastoral information. The committee shall then reconsider the proposed nominee in light of the information it has received and the senior pastor's recommendation.

The committee shall adopt internal operating procedures consistent with this section.

Vacancies on the Officer Nominating Committee shall be filled by the appointing body (in the case of church officer or Presbyterian Women members) or by recommendation of the Officer Nominating Committee and vote of the congregation (in the case of at-large members).

2.8 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF CHURCH OFFICERS

2.8.1 From Scripture

All church officers should be above reproach, temperate, respectable, sober, and honest; they should keep God's laws relating to marriage; they should be able to manage their own families well, securing the obedience of their children; and they should keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Timothy 3:2-5, 8-9, 12; Titus 1:6-7, 9)

Elders should also be self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, gentle, upright, holy, and disciplined; they should not be quarrelsome, lovers of money, recent converts, overbearing, or quick-tempered; they should have good reputations outside the congregation, and they should love what is good. (1 Timothy 3:2-3, 6-7, 5:7; Titus 1:7-9)

Deacons should also be sincere and tested. (1 Timothy 3:8, 10)

2.8.2 From the *Book of Order*

All church officers must accept and adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in *The Book of Confessions* and the Form of Government (G-2.0105).

To those called to exercise special functions in the church – deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders – God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church. (G-2.0104a)

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The council responsible for ordination and/or installation shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation. Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates. (G-2.0104b)

Ruling elders should be persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit (G-2.0301). Deacons should be persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment (G-6.0401). As a group, church officers should be broadly representative and inclusive of the entire congregation (F-1.0403 G-9.0104ff, G-14.0201).[5]

Church officers cannot serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office without a break of at least one year (G-2.0404).

2.8.3 Gifts and Abilities Needed by the Church

Some idea of the range of talents needed by the church to perform its mission can be gained from reviewing the functions and responsibilities of church officers (Section 6) and the committees and councils of the Session (Section 11). The church needs leaders who inspire us through their personal spirituality, leaders who inspire us through their compassion, leaders who inspire us through their financial giving, and leaders who inspire us through their work ethic and commitment to service. The church needs visionaries, strategists, communicators, and managers. The church needs leaders with expertise in accounting and finance, law, human resources, property management, insurance, construction, education, communications, computer technology, music, publishing, and many other fields. Only by seeking out members with diverse backgrounds and spiritual gifts to serve as church officers can the church be fully effective as the body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12.)

2.8.4 Ways in Which these Qualities May Be Manifested

In evaluating proposed nominees, the committee should consider their record of achievement and commitment as an active, involved member of this church (or in some cases of other churches). This may include:

1) Regular attendance at worship;
2) Attendance at special services and events;
3) Participation in or teaching Sunday school, Bible study, or small groups;
4) Participation in church functions and activities, such as Wednesday night dinner and classes, youth activities, choir, NaCoMe, building projects, outings, concerts, workshops, and retreats;
5) Participation in the work of church organizations, such as Presbyterian Women, or church committees;
6) Contribution of expertise to assist the church with particular needs or projects;
7) Contribution of time and talent to local missions of the church;
8) Participation in mission trips;
9) Supporting the church financially (the Church Officer Nominating Committee does not have access to individual financial records but can determine if a member has pledged); and
10) Personal witness and ministry to others in the congregation.

Mere participation, however, is not enough. Candidates for church office must also have demonstrated leadership ability. Ruling elders and deacons are not merely devoted Christians and good worker bees. They must also be capable showing the way to others. They are called to be followers of Christ but leaders of the congregation. A track record of taking on responsibility and of successful leadership, both within and outside the church, is therefore a critically important manifestation of the qualities necessary for church office, especially for ruling elders.

Activities outside the church (volunteer, professional, business, religious, etc.) are relevant, both for the insight they can provide into the talent and experience a prospective nominee would bring to the job and in evaluating his ability to commit the necessary time to serving as a church officer.

Finally, the committee should consider whether the prospective nominee's personal and family life reflect a commitment to Christian principles. Ruling elders and deacons are spiritual role models for the congregation, and they should live out their faith with integrity.

2.8.5 Re-nomination of Experienced Church Officers

There is a tension between the benefits to the church of re-nominating experienced church officers, on the one hand, and of infusing "fresh blood" into the system, on the other. Experienced church officers will have demonstrated in a very visible way the qualities the church is seeking in its leaders. Their accumulated knowledge and experience is a priceless resource for the church. These advantages, combined with a natural desire to reward a job well done and a recognition that continuity is important to the work of the church, often favor the re-nomination of experienced church officers.

It is equally beneficial for the church, however, to expand the opportunities for service and to utilize the resources of the congregation to the fullest. First-time church officers often bring new energy, creativity, and dedication to their work that is critical to maintaining the church's forward momentum. They are also challenged to grow in their faith and ministry to others, thereby broadening the base of committed spiritual leaders within the congregation.

It is therefore important for the Officer Nominating Committee to balance these competing considerations in a way that allows for both continuity and change, in whatever proportion seems best suited to the church's needs at the time.

2.9 FINALIZING THE NOMINATIONS

By August 1, the Officer Nominating Committee shall have settled on a list of officer nominees sufficient to fill the next class plus any vacancies, plus a rank-ordered list of six or more alternates for each office (ruling elder and deacon). It shall then be the job of the committee to contact the prospective nominees and inform them of the committee's desire to nominate them to church office.

Each prospective nominee who is willing to consider standing for election should be given a copy of either the ruling elder or deacon job description, and the description of the nomination and election process. The committee contact should discuss the requirements and commitments of the office with the prospective nominee and answer (or get answers to) the prospective nominee's questions. The committee members should impress upon the prospective nominees the high level of commitment required. Prospective nominees should be allowed a reasonable amount of time to pray, reflect, and consult others before making a decision. Each person agreeing to stand for election as a ruling elder or deacon must sign and return to the committee a copy of stating that they have read and understand the ruling elder or deacon job description and agree, if elected, to devote the time and energy needed to do the job well.

Whenever someone on the original list declines, the committee should move to the next name on the alternative list, always taking care never to reveal which nominees were on the original list and which were on the alternative list.[6]

The committee should complete the process of filling out its slate of nominees in time to allow for the printing of pictures and profiles of the candidates in the church newsletter at least a week in advance of the congregational meeting. This means that the slate should be completed no later than August 15. As soon as the slate is completed, the chairman of the Officer Nominating Committee shall inform the Coordinating Council of the slate of officer nominees.

2.10 Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons (G-2.0401)

Except for specially called congregational meetings where officers may be elected to fill vacancies during the year, all church officers are elected at a meeting of the congregation in the fall. At the meeting the moderator shall call on the chairman of the Officer Nominating Committee to introduce the slate of nominees for each office and place their names in nomination; no second is required. Nominations may be made from the floor; these do not require a second but do require the prior consent of the nominee. If there are no additional nominations, a voice vote shall be taken. If there are additional nominations, the election shall be by secret ballot, with deacons selected by the moderator serving as tellers.[7]

2.11 Vacancies

Normally, vacancies are filled at the annual meeting. The Officer Nominating Committee is to present a slate that includes nominees to fill the unexpired terms of church officers who have resigned or otherwise left active service during the preceding year. Nominees elected to fill unexpired terms become members of the class to which the person they are replacing was elected. For purposes of this manual, they are deemed to be in the same year of their term of office (first, second, or third) as the other members of the class.

The Officer Nominating Committee may put forward nominees to fill vacancies outside the normal election cycle if the vacancies are interfering significantly with the work of the church, as determined by the Session, and if the replacements can be trained and installed quickly enough to serve a reasonable period of time during the current year. In such cases the chairman of the Officer Nominating Committee, after conferring with the chairman of the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee and the Coordinating Council, shall recommend to the Session that a special election be held and shall secure approval of the date and time for a congregational meeting at which the election will be held, as well as the schedule for the training, examination, ordination, and installation of the new officers required by Section 4.4.

Absent extraordinary circumstances, the Officer Nominating Committee shall propose only experienced reserve officers to fill mid-term vacancies. Church officers elected to fill vacancies during the church year shall receive abbreviated training, in keeping with their status as experienced officers. If their term extends beyond the current year, they shall be required to participate in the next regularly scheduled officer training program.

3. CHURCH OFFICER TRAINING

3.1 Importance

A church is no stronger, no more committed, and no more faithful than its officers. Church officers determine the level of the church's ministry, stewardship, and outreach. It is therefore of utmost importance that church officers understand their role and function, as well as what it is we believe and are committed to as a church.

The Holy Spirit calls members to church office and equips them with the necessary skills, but it is the church's responsibility to give church officers the knowledge and training they need to serve successfully. When a member of this congregation answers a call to church office, he commits to a period of intensive training in the history, theology, mission, organization, and governance of this church and the PCUSA. Thereafter, it is responsibility of each church officer to continue his education in these areas through study and participation in the work of the church.

3.2 Responsibility for Planning and Conducting the Training Program

The Officer Training and Enrichment Committee, in conjunction with the pastoral staff, is responsible for planning and conducting the training program for church officers. Subject to the requirements of Sections 3.3-3.5, the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee shall establish the schedule and the curriculum and approve the materials and the teachers for the program. The associate clerk is responsible for providing the committee with a current, updated version of this manual prior to the commencement of the training program.[8]

3.3 Schedule

Church officer training normally begins in October and continues through January. The training course must be completed in time to allow for examination, ordination, and installation of the new church officers by February 1, when they begin their term of office.

3.4 Curriculum

The curriculum for the training course should include instruction in Presbyterian history, theology, and polity; the history, mission, values, vision, organization, and governance of First Presbyterian Church; parliamentary procedure and the rules of order; the duties of office; and the spiritual gifts, calling, and abilities of individual officers. It should also provide opportunities for fellowship and personal spiritual growth on the part of the new officers.

3.5 Materials

During training, each church officer-elect is to receive a compilation of materials prepared by the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee, a copy of this manual, *The Book of Confessions*, a *Book of Order*, reference materials on parliamentary procedure, and an officer notebook.[9]

3.6 Officer Notebooks

Each year the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee is responsible for preparing manuals for use by both new and returning officers in the coming year. These are distributed to new officers during training.[10]

4. EXAMINATION, ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF CHURCH OFFICERS (G-2.0402)

4.1 Examination

It is the responsibility of the Session to inquire into the "personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the office" of those elected to church office (G-2.0402). Only upon approval by the Session following this examination may they assume the offices to which they have been elected by the congregation.

The examination consists of three parts:

1) A statement of faith is prepared by each officer-elect, which is shared with members of the Session and other officers-elect;
2) Individual written or oral tests administered during the training course; and
3) An oral examination administered by the Session at the completion of the training course.

If the Session fails to approve any of the officers-elect following its examination of them, it shall report its action to the Church Officer Nominating Committee, which is responsible for nominating a replacement for each of the rejected officers-elect. A special meeting of the congregation must be called to vote on the replacement nominees.

4.2 The Meaning of Ordination and Installation

Ordination is the act by which the church admits a person to church office. The offices of ruling elder and deacon are perpetual, and once ordained, ruling elders and deacons continue to hold those offices even after their active service ends (G-2.0404). Installation marks the entry of a ruling elder or deacon into a term of active service. Consequently, ruling elders and deacons who are entering into service in one of those offices for the first time must be both ordained and installed. Those who are reelected to serve another term in the same office are not re-ordained but merely installed.

4.3 The Service of Ordination and Installation (G-2.0403, W-4.4000)

The service at which church officers are ordained and installed focuses on the joy and responsibility of serving Christ through the mission and ministry of the church. It includes a sermon appropriate to the occasion and a brief statement of the nature of the offices of ruling elder and deacon. The church officers-elect stand before the congregation and answer the prescribed constitutional questions concerning their faith and service in the church offices to which they have been called. There are also constitutional questions for the congregation, which is asked if it will accept, encourage, respect, and follow the leadership of the new ruling elders and deacons.

Those being ordained are asked to kneel for prayer and laying on of hands by ordained ruling elders and teaching elders. The teaching elder then charges the new ruling elders and deacons. The Session and later the congregation are invited to welcome the newly ordained and installed church officers.

4.4 Schedule

New church officers are ordained and installed on the last Sunday in January, unless the date is changed by the Session. The Session is to examine the officers-elect during the week immediately preceding installation, the exact time and date to be set as part of the training schedule prepared by the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee.

Whenever the Officer Nominating Committee nominates members to fill vacancies on the Session or the Diaconate outside of the normal election cycle, including vacancies caused by rejection of officers-elect by the Session following examination, it shall confer with the Officer Training and Enrichment Committee and propose a schedule for the election, training, examination, ordination, and installation of the new church officers. The chairman of the Governance Council shall present the schedule to the Session for approval.

5. RESIGNATION AND REMOVAL OF CHURCH OFFICERS

5.1 Resignation from Active Service (G-2.0405)

A ruling elder or deacon may resign from active service on the Session or the Diaconate for good cause, with the Session's consent. Resignations shall be submitted in writing to the moderator, if by a ruling elder, or to the chairman, if by a deacon. The letter of resignation shall state the officer's reason for wishing to resign from active service. The moderator or chairman shall transmit the letter of resignation to the clerk, who shall inform the members of the Session of its contents. At the next meeting of the Session, the moderator shall seek that body's consent to the resignation.

Upon acceptance of the resignation by the Session, the church officer shall be transferred to inactive status. By resigning from active status, a church officer does not resign his ordination, and he remains a ruling elder or deacon. A church officer's resignation shall be construed as a resignation from active service rather than a resignation from church office, unless the request clearly states otherwise.

A ruling elder or deacon who ceases to be a member of this church thereby resigns as a member of the Session or the Diaconate, and no further expression of intent is necessary for the clerk or secretary to process the resignation. In that case the Session shall merely be informed of the resignation and need not give its assent.

5.2 Resignation from Church Office (G-2.0406)

A ruling elder or deacon against whom no inquiry has been initiated under the Rules of Discipline, against whom no charges have been filed, and who is otherwise in good standing may apply to the Session to be released from the

exercise of ordered ministry. The Session shall grant the request if it determines the ruling elder or deacon meets these criteria. No judgment of failure on the part of the ruling elder or deacon is implied in this action.

The former officer shall discontinue the functions of a ruling elder or deacon and may not thereafter use the title; however, unless the officer also resigns his membership in the church, his status shall be the same as other members of the congregation, and he should be encouraged to continue to participate fully in the life and ministry of the church. The clerk of Session or the secretary of the Diaconate shall remove the resigned officer's name from the official rolls.

A church officer who renounces the jurisdiction of this church or the PCUSA in writing to the clerk thereby resigns his ordination as a church officer (G-2.0407).

5.3 Leave of Absence

A currently serving church officer may request a temporary leave of absence from active service. The request must be in writing and must state the reasons and the expected length of the leave of absence. It must be addressed to the moderator, if by a ruling elder, or to the chairman, if by a deacon. The moderator or the chairman shall present the request to the Session with a recommendation. If convinced there is good cause for the request to be granted and that it will not interfere with the work of the church, the Session may approve a leave of absence for up to one year.

If the reasons for the request are particularly sensitive and personal, the moderator or chairman may present the request in confidence to the Coordinating Council. If the Coordinating Council approves the request, it shall be presented to the Session with the Coordinating Council's recommendation but without any explanation of the reasons for the request.

5.4 Removal Because of Inability to Perform the Duties of Office (G-2.0405)

When an officer is unable to perform the duties of his office for an extended period of time because of having moved, because of illness or disability, or for any other reason, the moderator or chairman shall confer with the officer about possible resignation. If the officer's inability lasts (or will last) at least a year but the officer does not wish to resign, the moderator or chairman shall inform the Session and recommend either that the officer be removed from active service or that he continue in active service despite his inability to perform the duties of the office. The Session shall remove the church officer from active service unless it finds that there is good reason to maintain the active relationship, which reason shall be recorded in the minutes.

5.5 Removal for Misconduct

Church officers can be removed from office for misconduct only as the result of a disciplinary case conducted according to the Rules of Discipline in the *Book of Order* (D-10.000-14.0502). A disciplinary case is one in which a church member or officer may be censured for an offense. An offense is any act or omission that is contrary to the Scriptures or the PCUSA Constitution (D-2.0203).

5.6 Removal for Neglect of Office

If a church officer neglects his duties, that fact should be brought to the attention of the Coordinating Council. The Coordinating Council should attempt to ascertain the cause and correct the problem. If that proves unsuccessful, the Coordinating Council may recommend that the officer be removed from office under the provisions of Sections 5.4 or 5.5, as appropriate. An officer who persistently fails to perform the duties of his office shall be deemed unable to perform such duties within the meaning of Section 5.4.

5.7 Replacement

The clerk or secretary shall inform the chairman of the Officer Nominating Committee of a vacancy caused by the resignation or removal of an actively serving ruling elder or deacon. The Officer Nominating Committee shall nominate a candidate to fill the vacancy at the next regular election (if the vacancy extends beyond the current year) or through a special election (if the provisions of Section 2.11 relating to filling vacancies in mid-year are satisfied). It is the responsibility of committee and council chairmen to inform the Coordinating Council if they believe vacancies are interfering with the work of the church.

5.8 REINSTATEMENT (G-2.0406)

Upon application by a former officer who was released from office pursuant to Section 5.2, the Session may reinstate the person to his former office without re-ordination. A resigned church officer seeking reinstatement shall address his request to the moderator, if a former ruling elder, or the chairman, if a former deacon, giving his reasons for seeking reinstatement. The moderator or chairman shall inform the Coordinating Council, which shall present the request to the Session, along with its recommendation. The Session may examine the former officer before approving his reinstatement.

The Session may not reinstate a former church officer, or a church officer who has resigned from active service, to a position of active service on the Session or the Diaconate. Church officers who have resigned from active service or who have resigned their office and been reinstated by the Session may reenter active service only through the normal election process.

6. THE FUNCTIONS OF CHURCH OFFICERS

6.1 CHURCH OFFICE AS A CALL TO SERVICE AND MINISTRY

The Church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation. Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of the one who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called to ordered ministries, to fulfill particular functions. Members and those in ordered ministries serve together under the mandate of Christ. (G-20101)[11]

6.2 THE OFFICE OF RULING ELDER

6.2.1 Nature of the Office

In the early church, elders were the overseers of the congregation; indeed, throughout the New Testament the terms "elder" and "overseer" were used interchangeably. Their duties were to teach and preach (1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17), to direct the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17), to shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28), and to guard the church from error (Acts 20:28-31).

The office of ruling elder and the duties and responsibilities of the Session in a Presbyterian church are patterned on the overseer of the early church. The Session is the council for the church. It has ultimate responsibility for all facets of the life of the church, its mission, and its government. The importance of this office is emphasized by the fact that our denomination takes its name from *presbuteros,* the Greek word for elder.

6.2.2 History of the Office

During the Reformation, John Calvin drew on the precedents of the early church to design a new system of church government. According to Calvin, the New Testament envisioned two types of elders – those with responsibilities for preaching and teaching the Word (the office of minister or teaching elder) and those who share with teaching elders responsibility for governance (the office of government or ruling elder). He organized both teaching elders and ruling elders into a single body, the consistory (forerunner of the Session), whose main responsibilities were to encourage the people to act according to the highest moral standards, to participate regularly in worship, and to become more knowledgeable in the Christian faith.

Calvin's model was highly influential among other Reformed churches, including the church in Scotland. By 1592, in the Second Book of Discipline of the Scottish Reformed Church, ruling elders elected by the congregation played an integral role at all levels of church government. At the presbytery level, for example, ruling elders shared responsibility with teachers and teaching elders for maintaining the orthodoxy of preaching, insuring that the sacraments were rightly administered, overseeing financial affairs, maintaining ecclesiastical discipline, carrying out the directives of the Provincial and General Assemblies, and enacting rules to maintain order in its congregations.

When Presbyterians came to this country, they brought with them the Scottish church's understanding of the office of elder. The first presbytery, formed in 1706, had both teaching elders and ruling elders as members. The 1788 Form of Government, which became the Constitution of the newly organized General Assembly, succinctly defined the office of ruling elder:

Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in conjunction with pastors or teaching elders. This office has been understood, by a great part of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures, by the title of governments; and of those who rule well, but do not labor in the word and doctrine.

Throughout the 1800's, there was spirited debate over the nature and importance of the office of elder. This debate led to significant, long-standing differences between the northern and southern branches of the church. The 1879 constitution of the PCUS took steps to elevate the standing of ruling elders, including the provision that they be ordained by the laying on of hands, which had previously been reserved exclusively for teaching elders. The northern church was much slower to adopt these changes, but over time, the office of ruling elder achieved parity with that of minister or teaching elder in the polity of all branches of what is now the PCUSA.

6.2.3 Responsibilities of the Office

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matthew 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office. (G-2.0301)[12]

6.2.4 Particular Duties

In addition to their general responsibilities, ruling elders at First Presbyterian Church have certain specific duties. These include:

1. Attend monthly stated Session meetings, typically on Tuesday evenings (no July or November meeting).
2. Agree to serve on, and actively participate in the work of, one or more Session committees with the intention to be prepared to chair a committee if called upon.
3. Participate in Officer Training as required by the *Book of Order*.
4. Be examined by the Session on completion of training.
5. Be ordained and installed.
6. Attend worship regularly.
7. Serve regular communion, at-home communion, and special event communion.
8. To serve as a commissioner at one Presbytery meeting per year.
9. Assist at baptisms.
10. Serve as Elder Host before Sunday services for two months each year.
11. Participate in the examination of new officers.
12. Be good stewards and support the church financially, including making a pledge during the annual stewardship campaign.
13. Attend the examination of people who are to become members.
14. Prayerfully and enthusiastically work with other officers to find and do God's will in our church and the world.
15. To appreciate and wholeheartedly support the decisions of the Session, even though you may not have voted with the majority decision.
16. To be a positive influence to the congregation on any discussions and/or decisions made within the Session meetings.
17. Commitment to continue to grow in my faith.

18. Other services which you may, from time to time, be called upon to perform.

6.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SESSION (G-3.0201)

The Session is responsible for governing and guiding the congregation's witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world so that the congregation becomes a community of faith, hope, love and witness. The Session has specific power and responsibility to:

a) Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard, including:
   1. Providing a place for worship, education and spiritual nurture.
   2. Providing for regular preaching of the Word.
   3. Planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship.
   4. Planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ.
   5. Initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.

b) Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received, including:
   1. Authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at least quarterly and the sacrament of Baptism as needed,
   2. Exercising pastoral care among the congregation so that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace.

c) Nurture the covenant community, including:
   1. Receiving and dismissing members.
   2. Reviewing the roll of active members at least annually and counseling with those who have neglected their membership.
   3. Providing programs of nurture, education and fellowship.
   4. Training, examining, ordaining and installing ruling elders and deacons.
   5. Encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources.
   6. Managing the physical property of the congregation.
   7. Directing the ministry of deacons and all organizations of the congregation.
   8. Employing administrative staff.
   9. Leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church.
   10. Warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community.
   11. Serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules for Discipline.

d) Direct relations with other councils, including:
   1. Electing commissioners to presbytery and receiving their reports.
   2. Nominating to presbytery ruling elders who may serve as commissioners to synod and the General Assembly as well as on committees and commissions of other councils.
   3. Seeing that guidance and communication of other councils are considered and any binding actions are observed and carried out.
   4. Welcoming representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits.
   5. Proposing to the presbytery or through it to the synod and General Assembly, such measures as may be of common concern.
   6. Sending to presbytery and General Assembly requested statistics and other information as required, as well as voluntary financial contributions.

e) Maintain rolls and registers including:
   1. Maintaining rolls of baptized, active and affiliate members.
   2. Maintaining registers of baptisms, and of installed pastors with dates of service.

f) Oversee finances and provide full information to the congregation about its decisions, including:
   1. Adopting and overseeing a budget.
   2. Distributing the congregation's benevolences.
   3. Authorizing collection and distribution of special offerings.
   4. Electing a treasurer.[13]

6.4 THE OFFICE OF DEACON

6.4.1 Nature of the Office

The word "deacon" comes from the Greek "diakonos" meaning "servant" or "one who waits on" or, more specifically, "one who serves food and drink" or "one who waits on tables." From the practice of the early church it came to mean one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use.

The primary purpose of deacons is to serve those in need (G-2.02). This ministry of compassion may take many forms, but it is most directly implicated in the work of the church's ministry and mission councils. Congregational care, parish ministry, and local missions are areas of special emphasis. Deacons also assist the ruling elders in performing many of the other functions assigned to the Session, particularly management of the church's temporal and material affairs through the work of its resources council.

Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized into a board of deacons, which is under the supervision and authority of the Session (G-2.0202). At First Presbyterian Church deacons are individually appointed to serve on the committees and councils of the Session and are also organized into a separate board of deacons, known as the Diaconate, which serves as an advisory body to the Session.

6.4.2 History of the Office

The Book of Acts recounts how after Christ's ascension the 12 apostles (the first elders) were responsible for all aspects of church life, including care of the needy. When the Greek Jews complained that their widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food by the church, it became apparent that the elders were overburdened. Just as in a similar situation Moses followed the advice of Jethro to delegate some of his responsibilities (Exodus 18:13-26), the elders chose to appoint other members of the church to assist them. They concluded that it would not be right for them to neglect the ministry of the Word "in order to wait on tables." They therefore appointed seven men of good report and practical wisdom, full of the Holy Spirit, to be responsible for the church's ministry to the poor so that the elders could give their full attention to prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6). These were the first deacons.

John Calvin found in this passage ample precedent for the office of deacon. The Scottish Reformed Church agreed and even allowed deacons to participate in church government until the Second Book of Discipline was formally enacted in 1592. The early understanding of the office among Presbyterians in this country was pithily expressed in the 1788 Form of Government:

> The scriptures clearly point out deacons as distinct officers in the church, whose business it is to take care of the poor, and to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use. To them also may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the church.

The recent history of the office of deacon in Presbyterian churches has been marked by confusion and diversity. Use of the office is optional, and many Presbyterian churches have elected not to have deacons. In such cases, the ruling elders are responsible for the tasks that would otherwise be performed by deacons. Moreover, churches that use the office are far from uniform in their conception of the proper role of deacons. The deacons may or may not be organized into a separate board of deacons, and they may or may not be given significant responsibilities for the church's temporal affairs. At this church deacons have historically been charged with responsibility to receive, administer, and distribute the offerings of the church, to plan and implement the stewardship program of the church, and to care for the property of the church. This followed the traditional practice in the PCUS of emphasizing the deacons' role in the church's material ministry.

6.4.3 Responsibilities of the Office

Deacons are, first of all, to minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to anyone who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith. They are also to assume such other duties as may be delegated to them by the Session, which may include leading the people in worship through prayers of intercession, reading the Scriptures, presenting the gifts of the people, and assisting with the Lord's Supper (G-2.0202).[14]

Rather than delegating specific areas of responsibility to the Diaconate as a body, the Session has chosen to incorporate the deacons into the full range of the Session's activities through membership on its councils and committees, with particular emphasis on those dealing with the caring ministries and the church's temporal affairs. Deacons are eligible for appointment to all committees except Governing Bodies. Such appointments should reflect both the spiritual gifts of the individual deacon and the needs of the church. In finding where they are called to serve, deacons should bear in mind their commission to minister to those in need and should find ways to do that regardless of their particular assignment.[15]

Deacons vote and serve on an equal footing with ruling elders in councils and committees. A deacon may serve as chairman or vice chairman of any committee to which he is appointed. When serving as chairman or vice chairman of a committee, a deacon automatically becomes a member of the council to which the committee reports. The vice chairman of each council is a deacon, as is the chairman of the Ushering Committee.[16]

6.4.4 Particular Duties

In addition to their general responsibilities, deacons at First Presbyterian Church have certain specific duties. These include:

1. Attend Diaconate meetings, typically held on Monday evenings.
2. Agree to serve on, and actively participate in the work of, one or more Session committees. This includes attendance at committee meetings.
3. Participate in Officer Training as required by the *Book of Order*.
4. Be examined by the Session on completion of training.
5. Be ordained and installed.
6. Attend worship regularly.
7. Be good stewards and support the church financially, including making a pledge during the annual stewardship campaign.
8. Participate enthusiastically in the ministries and missions of the church according to my interests and spiritual gifts.
9. Pray regularly for the congregation and work of the church.
10. Usher at least 16 regular Sunday services, plus one or more special services.
11. Other services which you may, from time to time, be called upon to perform.
12. Prayerfully and enthusiastically work with other officers to find and do God's will in our church and the world.
13. To appreciate and wholeheartedly support the decisions of the Session, even though you may not agree with the majority decision.
14. To be a positive influence to the congregation on any discussions and/or decisions made within the Diaconate and Session meetings.
15. Commitment to continue to grow in my faith.

6.5 Responsibilities of the Diaconate

6.5.1 Coordinating the Work of Deacons on Councils and Committees

The Diaconate assists the Session in providing oversight and guidance to the councils and committees, particularly those on which deacons are serving.

6.5.2 Education and Spiritual Growth

The Diaconate is charged with providing continuing educational opportunities for its members that extend and build on the officer training curriculum. Special attention should be given to cultivating the deacons' spiritual growth and leadership abilities. Every Diaconate meeting should include both an educational and a devotional component. Deacons should increase their understanding of church government and use this opportunity to prepare for further service. Each deacon should attend at least one Session meeting during his term of office.

6.5.3 Communication

Deacons, like ruling elders, should be kept informed of important matters within each council's jurisdiction so that they are familiar with all facets of the church's work. This means that the Diaconate will normally hear council and committee reports similar in scope and content to those presented at Session meetings. This is important if officers are to have the church-wide perspective they need to do their jobs well and to avoid duplication of effort. In addition, every officer should be a source of accurate information for members of the congregation about what is happening in their church.

6.5.4 Advice

The Session recognizes that the deacons may have a different and helpful perspective on issues that come before the Session. The Diaconate may vote to adopt, reject, or modify the report of any council or committee. This action then becomes a recommendation to the Session accompanying the report of the council or committee.

Where the Session wishes to obtain the Diaconate's advice on other matters, the moderator shall so inform the chairman, who shall put the question to the Diaconate at its next meeting. The chairman shall report to the Session both the Diaconate's recommendation and the tenor of the debate that preceded it. The Diaconate may also adopt such a resolution on its own initiative if it believes its views will significantly assist the Session.

6.5.5 Self-Governance

The Diaconate is authorized to elect its officers, adopt rules of procedure to supplement those contained in this manual, and take all other steps necessary to its efficient functioning in accordance with its assigned responsibilities. Such actions are committed to the sound discretion of the Diaconate and need not be approved by the Session as long as they are consistent with this manual. Any action that would require a modification of this manual must be approved by the Session.

6.5.6 Other Responsibilities

The Session may assign additional responsibilities to the Diaconate, either on a temporary or a permanent basis. If permanent, such changes shall be incorporated into this section.

7. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION AND THE DIACONATE

7.1 MEMBERSHIP (G-3.0201)

The Session consists of the senior pastor, all associate pastors, and the 36 actively serving ruling elders. The Diaconate consists of the 60 actively serving deacons.

7.2 OFFICIAL ACTIONS

Except for matters expressly committed to the discretion of an officer, council, or committee, all actions of the Session and the Diaconate shall be taken corporately by the members of each body duly assembled in a stated (regularly scheduled) or specially called meeting. No binding decisions may be made during a joint meeting of the Session and Diaconate. All formal actions must be taken separately by each body.

All decisions of the Session and the Diaconate shall be by majority vote of those members in attendance and voting, assuming the existence of a quorum, except in cases where this manual or the rules of procedure require a supermajority. Only teaching elders and ruling elders are voting members of the Session. Representatives of other bodies and members of the staff who attend by invitation of the Session have floor privileges but may not vote.

Between Session meetings, the Coordinating Council is empowered to act on behalf of the Session in matters requiring Session approval in order to carry out decisions of the Session or to respond to exigent circumstances; provided, however, that the Coordinating Council may not take any action that countermands an express decision or directive of the Session. The Coordinating Council may act on behalf of the Session in matters requiring Session approval only by vote of at least seven of the Council's nine voting members. The clerk shall report each action taken by the Coordinating Council pursuant to this grant of authority to the Session at its next stated meeting or, if

deemed necessary by the Coordinating Council, a special meeting called for the purpose of reviewing the Council's action. Unless modified or disapproved, the Coordinating Council's action is ratified and becomes an official act of the Session. The Session's disapproval of a Coordinating Council action is not retroactive unless the motion to disapprove so specifies.

The Diaconate Executive Committee has comparable authority to act on behalf of that body between its regular meetings, subject to the same restrictions and procedures.

7.3 MEETINGS

7.3.1 Time and Place

Normally the Diaconate meets on the third Monday of March, May, August and October at 5:30 p.m. in Vance Hall, and the Session meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month (except the Session does not convene in July or November, but meets on the first Tuesday in December) at 5:30 p.m. in the Session room. These dates and times may be adjusted to take account of holidays and other potential conflicts. Several times a year the Diaconate and the Session meet jointly to hear reports on matters of common concern. Joint meetings may be scheduled on the fourth Tuesday of January and June of each year preceded by a dinner beginning at 5:30 p.m. Following the joint meeting, the Session convenes to conduct its business and the Diaconate is dismissed.[17]

During the fall of each year the clerk-elect, after conferring with the moderator and the chairman-elect of the Diaconate, sets the meeting schedule for the coming year. Once the meeting dates for the year are established, they are incorporated into the church year calendar. The church calendar is distributed to all church officers at the beginning of February and establishes the schedule for stated meetings of each body during the year (from February through January). Either body may change the dates or times of its scheduled meetings at least one month in advance. The moderator or chairman may reschedule a stated meeting less than one month in advance only where it appears there otherwise would be no quorum.

The moderator may call a special meeting of the Session whenever the moderator deems it necessary. The moderator must do so upon written request by two members of the Session or at the request of Presbytery or the Coordinating Council. The moderator shall fix the time and place of the meeting. Except in an emergency, members shall be notified in a manner reasonably calculated to give them at least seven days' notice of the meeting. The call for the meeting, prepared by the moderator, shall specify the matters to come before the Session. It must include any subjects on which a meeting was specifically requested by the Coordinating Council or members of the Session. No business may be considered at a special meeting except that specified in the call.

7.3.2 Quorum

For both the Session and the Diaconate, a quorum for a regularly scheduled or specially called business meeting consists of the presiding officer and one-third of the members. A quorum for meetings of the Session solely for the purpose of admitting members is two ruling elders plus the moderator.

The presiding officer shall determine the presence of a quorum at the start of a meeting. Thereafter a quorum is presumed to exist unless a member, through a point of order, or the presiding officer questions the continued existence of a quorum. In that event the presiding officer shall determine if there is still a quorum. If there is not, the meeting may continue and the body may receive reports and communications; however, unless it regains a quorum, the body may take no other action except to adjourn, recess, or take measures to obtain a quorum. The presiding officer shall determine whether to adjourn or continue a meeting without a quorum, subject to the right of the majority of the members in attendance to vote to adjourn or recess the meeting.

7.3.3 Attendance

Church officers are expected to attend all meetings of the body to which they belong. The clerk and secretary shall take attendance and note in the minutes each member who is absent without an excuse. They shall report members with two or more unexcused absences to the Session Coordinating Council or the Diaconate Executive Committee for such action as those bodies deem appropriate. Continued failure to attend meetings may be considered neglect of office and subject the officer to removal pursuant to section 5.6.

7.3.4 Agenda

The agenda for Session meetings is set by the moderator and the clerk in consultation with the Coordinating Council. The Coordinating Council meets the week before each stated meeting of the Session to discuss the business to come before the full body and to review the proposed agenda. The agenda for Diaconate meetings is set by the chairman and reviewed immediately prior to the meeting by the Diaconate Executive Committee.

Each meeting of the Session and the Diaconate shall be opened and closed by prayer. If time permits, the opening prayer should be part of a devotional presented by one of the members. The agenda should also include reports from each of the councils concerning the work of its committees.

7.3.5 Minutes and Records (G-3.0107)

The clerk and the secretary are responsible for keeping full and accurate records of the proceedings of the Session and the Diaconate. They are assisted in this task by the executive assistant to the senior pastor and other staff.

Unless a summary of the body's deliberations is necessary to understand the actions taken by the Session or the Diaconate, minutes of their meetings should report only what was done, not what was said. The minutes should: (1) record the date, time called to order and time adjourned, place, and type of meeting (stated or called); (2) identify the moderator, the persons giving the opening and closing prayers, and all members and guests in attendance or with excused absences; (3) note any changes in and approval of the minutes of prior meetings and changes in membership; (4) summarize each significant report, communication, or presentation made at the meeting; (5) report the final (amended) version of each substantive motion made during the meeting along with the name of the member who offered the motion (but not the second), its disposition, the number of votes for and against (if a count was taken), and any additional information, such as a summary of debate, amendments, or procedural motions, that is helpful to understanding the action taken; and (6) report important procedural matters such as points of order and their disposition and whether the body recessed or went into executive session or met as a committee of the whole (but not the deliberations during such sessions).

Minutes of congregational meetings, and minutes of the church corporation board of trustees are incorporated into the minutes of the Session and become part of the church's official records. Session minutes are submitted annually to Presbytery for review.

7.3.6 Open and Closed Meetings

Unless closed pursuant to this section, all meetings of the Session and the Diaconate are open to any member of the congregation and other invited guests. Either body may by majority vote taken in open session close its meeting and move into executive session. Only members of the body and any non-members whose presence would assist the members in their deliberations may remain once a vote has been taken to close the meeting. The motion to close the meeting must specify any non-members who will be allowed to attend the executive session. The body remains in executive session until it determines by majority vote to resume its public meeting.

Closing a Session or Diaconate meeting to the public is appropriate when dealing with confidential and sensitive matters such as personnel actions. However, this should be done sparingly and only for the portion of the meeting at which the confidential matters will be discussed.

Business may be transacted in executive session according to the normal rules of procedure. A formal action of the Session taken in executive session must be recorded in the minutes in a way that fully describes the action taken but does not compromise the confidentiality of the deliberations. Members are expected to respect the secrecy of such deliberations and may not publicly divulge information about the executive session other than the final actions reflected in the minutes. Any uncertainty concerning what is appropriate for inclusion in the minutes concerning an executive session shall be resolved in executive session.

When dealing with particularly sensitive issues relating to the pastoral staff, the Session may ask one or more of the teaching elders to leave the meeting voluntarily during the discussion of those issues. The Session should offer the teaching elder or elders the opportunity to return before a vote is taken.

7.4 COMMUNICATIONS

The clerk and the secretary are charged with maintaining good communication between the members of the Session and the Diaconate. To this end, each year before the new class of officers is installed, the clerk and the secretary are to compile a roster showing all of the active members of the Session and the Diaconate for the coming year along with their spouses, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. It is the responsibility of each ruling elder and deacon to update his roster information to reflect changes during the year. This information shall be available to any member of the congregation and may be publicly disseminated in ways that promote ready access by the congregation to their elected officers.

In the week preceding a stated meeting, the clerk and the secretary are to prepare and distribute agendas, minutes, changes in membership, staff and committee reports, motions, and other documents relating to the business to be conducted at the upcoming meeting. Officers and committee chairmen are encouraged to submit all materials that would otherwise be passed out at the meeting to the clerk or secretary by the Monday before the meeting for dissemination to the members. Where feasible, the clerk and secretary may disseminate such information in electronic rather than hard copy format.

Between meetings the officers of the Session and the Diaconate are encouraged to communicate with the members by email, thereby increasing the speed with which they can disseminate and collect information and reducing the cost of copying and mailing. Where appropriate, such communications should be included in the minutes.

7.5 RULES OF ORDER

7.5.1 Basic Principles

The objectives of parliamentary procedure are to guarantee that all members are treated fairly, courteously, and impartially; to insure that the majority prevails but that the rights of the minority are respected; to insure clarity of process and result; to allow business to be conducted expeditiously; and to produce an outcome that best reflects the will of the body as a whole. The rules of order should be applied to achieve these ends.

7.5.2 Right of Dissent

Each church officer has the right to register a dissent from the action of any committee or body of which he is a member. If the action is that of a committee or a council, the report or recommendation of the committee or council shall note the member's dissent and allow him an opportunity to file a dissenting report or recommendation. If the action is that of the Session or the Diaconate, the dissenting member shall follow the procedure set forth in the *Book of Order* (G-3.0105) for the Session and other governing bodies.

Church officers maintain freedom of conscience; however, by becoming officers they agree to exercise that freedom of conscience within certain bounds, including the bounds imposed by our rules of governance. Once a church officer has registered his dissent or protest, he must submit to the decision of the majority. Dissent does not justify disobedience. Although a dissenter may continue to maintain his own opinion, he must do so in a way that is respectful of the judgment and authority of the body of which he is a part. He should avoid conduct that promotes divisiveness and discord, particularly in the congregation at large (G-2.0105).

7.5.3 Consent

All business may be conducted by unanimous consent, i.e., without objection. Members who do not object to a proposed action when invited to do so by the presiding officer are deemed to have consented to it. Approval of a measure by unanimous consent is the parliamentary equivalent of approval by a unanimous vote of the body. If one or more members object, the proposed action must be put to a vote.

The Session is presumed to have approved the report of a council or committee, including all actions reflected in the report, if the report is submitted without objection. If any member objects, the report is adopted only if specifically approved by vote of the Session. This presumption does not relieve councils and committees of the obligation to seek formal approval for all important actions and recommendations Council or committee reports approved without a vote do not constitute an "express decision or directive of the Session" within the meaning of Section 7.2.

7.5.4 Motions

All motions should be submitted in writing. Whenever possible, they should be distributed in advance of the meeting at which they will be voted on. The presiding officer may require that an unwritten motion be reduced to writing before it may be considered.

A written motion, or "resolution," may, but need not, follow the traditional format ("Resolved that…") and may, but need not, include a preamble with recitals ("whereas" clauses) explaining the reasons for the proposed action. The preamble to a motion, if specifically adopted along with the motion, is as effective and binding as the body of the motion. If not adopted, a preamble or other statement of rationale merely represents argument advanced in support of the motion by its sponsor. If it is unclear after the fact whether the body intended to adopt the recitals presented with a motion, they shall be treated as not having been adopted.

Absent an emergency requiring immediate action, any motion that, if approved, would require or allow the expenditure of more than $1,000 of church funds in a manner not clearly authorized by the current operating budget must be in writing and must first be presented to the Finance and Budget Committee for review. The motion must include a statement of the opinion of the Finance and Budget Committee as to:

1) Its best estimate of the amount and timing of the expenditure;
2) Whether any portion of the expenditure can be covered by the current operating budget;
3) Whether, if the expenditure is partly or entirely outside the budget, the extra-budget portion can be funded out of anticipated surplus revenues or by reallocating items in the current budget; and
4) Any advice or recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee concerning the financial implications of the motion.

Unless it is the opinion of the Finance and Budget Committee that the proposed expenditure can be made out of the current budget or out of reasonably anticipated surplus funds, the motion must include a provision for funding the expenditure, either through additional revenues or through reallocation of previously budgeted but as yet unspent funds.

Likewise, absent an emergency requiring immediate action, any motion the subject matter of which is substantially within the jurisdiction of a standing committee should first be presented to that committee for review. If the committee decides to sponsor the motion, it should be presented as a motion of that committee or its governing council. If the committee does not sponsor the motion, the movant must include a statement reporting the committee's views. Committee motions should be reviewed by the council to which the committee reports before being presented to the Session.

Committee or council motions should be offered during or at the completion of the council's report. Motions may be offered from the floor during the council's report only if they are directly related to the subject on which the council has reported or on which the council has offered a motion. All other motions should be offered when the meeting turns to unfinished or new business.

The presiding officer shall rule out of order motions that do not comply with this section, including motions that have not been reviewed by the appropriate committee or council, or that are otherwise improper in form or content. Where a motion is ruled out of order for failure to obtain the requisite committee or council review, the presiding officer may refer the motion to the appropriate committee or council. The presiding officer's ruling that a motion is out of order is appealable and may be overruled by majority vote. Although a motion is not out of order merely because it has not been considered by the Diaconate, the Session may defer action on a motion in order to obtain the views of that body.

7.5.5 Procedure

Any voting member of the body may offer a motion. Proposals to the Session by non-members, including motions of the Diaconate, Presbyterian Women, and similar groups, require a motion and a second from voting members of the Session. All motions require a second except those from a committee or council.

Once a motion has been made and, if necessary, seconded, the presiding officer formally places it before the body for its consideration by stating the question, that is by restating the motion. If the motion is unclear or awkwardly worded, the presiding officer should require that it be refined before putting the question. The movant has the right to withdraw or modify his motion at any time before it has been restated by the presiding officer. Permission of the second is not required. Afterward, he may amend or withdraw his motion only by majority vote, although this is commonly done by general consent. Friendly amendments may be made at any time if there is no objection.

All substantive motions are debatable. The movant has the right to speak first in support of his motion. The presiding officer should attempt to provide proponents and opponents equal opportunity to speak. The body may, by a two-thirds majority, vote to limit debate. The presiding officer may propose such limitations. If time limitations are adopted, the clerk or secretary is responsible for timing speakers. A motion to cut off debate, by calling the question, may be ruled out of order if a substantive motion has not been adequately debated. Both proponents and opponents of a debatable motion must be given a fair opportunity to speak before the question may be called.

An amendment must be germane to the main motion. It requires a second, is debatable (if subsidiary to a debatable motion), and may be amended. An amendment to an amendment, however, may not be further amended. Amendments require a simple majority, even if the main motion requires a supermajority. A motion to amend must be debated and resolved before the main motion. A pending motion must be disposed of before any other business can be considered.

7.5.6 Robert's Rules of Order

Any question of procedure not resolved by these rules shall be governed by the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (currently the 10th edition, published in 2000). Officers are encouraged to obtain and study a copy of *Robert's Rules in Plain English*, which provides a simplified explanation of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

7.6 Councils and Committees

The Session is organized into standing committees. Ruling elders, deacons, and members of the congregation are eligible to serve on most Session committees. Each committee is chaired by a ruling elder or a deacon and has at least one staff liaison member. The purpose of a committee is to study and make recommendations to the Coordinating Council, Diaconate and Session and to carry out the policies and decisions of the Session (G-3.0109).

The Session's standing committees are organized into six administrative councils, each of which has jurisdiction over one of the main areas for which the Session is responsible: worship, education, missions, ministry, resources, and governance. The chairman of each administrative council is a ruling elder and the vice chairman a deacon. Each committee is represented on the council, normally by its chairman. The administrative councils are responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work of the committees. Reports and recommendations of the standing committees come to the Diaconate and Session through the appropriate administrative council, which is authorized to review and approve (or disapprove) the actions of its committees. The chairmen of the six administrative councils, along with the moderator, the clerk, and the associate clerk, comprise the voting members of the Coordinating Council.

The vice chairmen of the six administrative councils, plus the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary, comprise the Diaconate Executive Committee. The administrative councils make informational reports to the Diaconate, which may adopt or reject a report or take such other action as it deems appropriate. All such actions by the Diaconate are advisory in nature, and must be approved by the Session to be effective. The Session welcomes the advice and recommendations of the Diaconate, particularly on issues relating to the ministries of service and nurture and the management of the church's temporal affairs that are the primary responsibilities of deacons. Actions of the Diaconate shall be reported to the Session and given substantial weight in the deliberations and actions of the Session.

7.7 Division of Responsibilities and Workflow

The purpose of having multiple levels of organization is not to cause duplication of effort, endless reviews, a proliferation of meetings, or a lack of accountability. Rather, it is to push work and decision-making down to the

level where these can be done most efficiently while preserving the Session's ability to direct and coordinate the vast array of activities for which it is responsible according to the *Book of Order*.

Most Session responsibilities, and therefore most matters that come before the Session, fall within the jurisdiction of one of its committees. Ideally, no issue should reach the Session for decision until that issue has been fully vetted by a committee. Committees are charged on the front end with initiating, investigating, evaluating, and recommending actions within their areas of responsibility. Then, once a decision has been made, they insure that it is faithfully executed. On either side of the Session's action, the committees of necessity exercise considerable authority and autonomy.

Councils play three important roles in this process. First, they assure that committees do not act parochially but work cooperatively when dealing, as they often do, with issues that cut across different areas of responsibility. Second, the councils provide a screen or filter that focuses and refines proposals coming out of committee. Their job is to anticipate and try to resolve potential problems before a motion reaches the floor of the Session. This means that the Session will be presented with proposals that are better developed and have a broader base of support, and that thus require less time to resolve. Third, much as in the parliamentary system of government, the councils function as executive departments. The Session, as a legislative body, is ill suited to providing focused leadership or to performing management and administrative tasks. A forty-person committee of the whole is an unwieldy and inefficient instrument with which to set priorities for the church or to oversee its operation. Those responsibilities fall to the six administrative councils, in their particular spheres, and the Coordinating Council, for the church as a whole. It is their job to provide direction for the Session and insure that the work of the church is done timely and well.

The deacons play a crucial part in the work of the Session through their participation in councils and committees, where they serve as full partners of the ruling elders. The institutional role of the board of deacons, however, is limited by the *Book of Order*. The Diaconate is not a council and operates entirely under the supervision and authority of the Session (G-2.0202). Its function is primarily advisory. Nevertheless, on difficult issues it provides a valuable sounding board for the Session, with a different perspective than any of the councils or the Session. Like the recommendations of councils, the Diaconate's recommendations, arrived at by a large group of ordained officers prayerfully seeking God's will for the church, carry substantial weight. Even on routine matters, Diaconate concurrence with a committee's recommendation provides assurance that important issues have not been overlooked. It becomes a forum for thorough discussion of any issue raised by staff, a committee, or a member of the church.

A typical motion originates in a committee or is referred by the Diaconate or Session to a committee for study. From there it goes to the administrative council of which the committee is a part for review. The council's action is reported to the Diaconate, which may or may not make a recommendation to the Session. The council then makes its report and recommendation to the Session, noting any action taken by the Diaconate in response to the council's report. Once the Session has acted, responsibility to implement its decision flows back to the council and the originating committee. There are many circumstances in which the Session's workflow will not follow this precise sequence, but it is a useful model.

8. OFFICERS OF THE SESSION AND THE DIACONATE

The officers of the Session are the moderator, clerk, and associate clerk. The officers of the Diaconate are the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary.

8.1 METHOD OF ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE

Except as specified below, each body elects its own officers for a one-year term beginning on February 1 of each year. To allow the new officers to prepare effectively, officers for the coming year are elected by the Session and Diaconate at their stated meetings in October of the preceding year.

The senior pastor, after consultation with the Coordinating Council, may request that a serving clerk of session continue serving as clerk. If the senior pastor makes this request, then the nominating process for clerk of session would be suspended until the clerk declined to stand for reelection or was not asked to continue to serve by the senior pastor. If the clerk of session continues to serve, they must be an active member of the Session.[18]

As the senior pastor automatically serves as moderator, the Session elects only two of its officers: the clerk and associate clerk. The currently serving associate clerk, if willing, is automatically nominated for the position of clerk. If the associate clerk declines to stand for the election of clerk, the associate clerk nominating committee shall propose a candidate for clerk. Additional names may be placed in nomination from the floor. Election is by majority vote of the Session (or by acclamation if there are no other nominations and no objection.)

The moderator, the currently serving clerk and associate clerk, and two members of the outgoing class of ruling elders, appointed by the moderator, serve as the nominating committee for the office of associate clerk. The nominating committee should seek out a ruling elder experienced in church government, who is familiar with the work of the Session and its councils and committees, to serve as associate clerk. The committee should also strive to find a nominee who will be able to serve for two years, as associate clerk and clerk, during his current term on the Session. If the Session elects a ruling elder in his final year of service to the office of associate clerk, that ruling elder may serve as clerk (with voice but without vote) the following year even if no longer an active member of the Session. As with the office of clerk, if there are no nominations from the floor, election requires a majority vote of the Session.

The Diaconate elects the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary. The chairman and vice chairman must be deacons in active service in the third and second years, respectively, of their three-year terms. The current vice chairman, if willing to serve, stands for election to the position of chairman. Nominees for the other offices, and for chairman if the vice chairman declines to serve, are chosen by a nominating committee consisting of the current chairman, the current vice chairman, and any deacons who are in their final year of service and ineligible for re-nomination. The nominating committee shall consult with the moderator and the clerk before finalizing its slate. Nominations may be made from the floor, and if the election is contested, the offices are filled by majority vote of the Diaconate.

8.2 Vacancies

If the church is without a senior pastor, the interim pastor appointed by Presbytery shall serve as moderator. If the senior pastor is temporarily unable to perform his duties as moderator, he may delegate those duties to one of the associate pastors or, if he does not, the Session, acting between meetings through its Coordinating Council, may assign another of its members to act in his place. Any delegation or reassignment of the moderator's duties as presiding officer of the Session must comply with the requirements of Section G-1.0504 and G-3.0104 of the *Book of Order*; however, this limitation does not affect the senior pastor's other responsibilities as the Session's chief executive officer and the church's head of staff.

If any office other than moderator becomes vacant during the year due to resignation, death, incapacity, or similar reasons, the Session Coordinating Council or Diaconate Executive Committee, as the case may be, shall consider whether, given the importance of the office, the length of time remaining in the officer's term, and the ability of other officers to perform the functions of that office, it is advisable to elect a replacement to serve out the remainder of the year. If the Coordinating Council or Executive Committee concludes that it would be desirable to elect a replacement, it shall propose a nominee to fill out the remainder of the former officer's term. An election to fill the vacancy, following the same procedures as the regular election of officers in the fall, shall then take place at the next stated meeting. If the vacancy is in the office of chairman or vice chairman, the Diaconate Executive Committee shall consult with the moderator and the clerk before finalizing its nominee. Each body is the sole judge of when one of its offices is vacant.

8.3 Responsibilities and Qualifications

8.3.1 Moderator of the Session

The senior pastor serves as moderator of the Session. The moderator presides at meetings of the congregation, the Session, and the Coordinating Council. He also serves as the Session's chief executive officer and, in a related role, as the church's head of staff. He is a voting member of the Session, but he is not a member of the congregation and therefore may not vote at congregational meetings.

The moderator is responsible for preserving order and conducting the business of the Session efficiently. He calls special meetings of the Session if necessary. Along with the clerk and other members of the Coordinating Council, he supervises the work of the Session through its councils and committees and coordinates the work of the Session, the Diaconate, and the staff. He insures that the policies and procedures set forth in this manual

are faithfully executed and performs such other duties as are specifically assigned to him in the *Book of Order* and this manual. He has all authority necessary to carry out these responsibilities.

8.3.2 Clerk of the Session

The clerk of the Session is typically following a term as associate clerk. The clerk fills two roles. The first, which is assigned by the *Book of Order*, is to act as the church's secretary. He keeps the minutes and other records of the Session and maintains the membership rolls of the church. He acts as secretary at congregational meetings and communicates with other governing bodies and conducts official correspondence on behalf of the Session (G-3.0104).

In this church, the clerk also shares executive functions with the moderator and the other members of the Coordinating Council. Subject to the limitations imposed by this manual and the *Book of Order*, the clerk is jointly responsible with the moderator for the leadership of the church and the effective functioning of the Session. One purpose of this division of authority is to free the senior pastor from some of the administrative responsibilities that otherwise would fall to him as moderator, thereby allowing him to devote more time to teaching, preaching, and pastoral care and to the visionary and creative aspects of church leadership.

The clerk works closely with the associate clerk, and together with the moderator they supervise the work of the councils and committees and their chairmen. The clerk also performs such other duties as are assigned him by the *Book of Order* and this manual. He has all authority necessary to carry out these responsibilities.

8.3.3 Associate Clerk of the Session

The senior pastor after consultation with the Coordinating Council may request that the serving clerk of session continue to serve in that role. If the senior pastor makes that request, then the associate clerk of session would not automatically assume the office of clerk the following year. The associate clerk could continue in that role after consultation with the moderator and clerk of session. In the event the associate clerk does not wish to be renominated, the nomination process as outlined in this section (8.3.3) of the Policies & Procedures Manual would be followed.[19]

The associate clerk of the Session is a currently serving ruling elder, elected by the Session, who shares the clerk's secretarial and executive responsibilities while preparing to serve as clerk the following year. In addition to assisting the moderator and clerk in the performance of their duties, the associate clerk has primary responsibility for interpreting and maintaining this manual and insuring compliance with its terms. The associate clerk serves on the Coordinating Council. In consultation with the moderator, clerk, chairman, and chairman-elect, the associate clerk, as clerk-elect, prepares and proposes to the Session in December of each year a slate of officers to chair the committees and councils of the Session in the coming year. He is supervised by the clerk and may perform the functions of the clerk in the clerk's absence.

8.3.4 Chairman of the Diaconate

The chairman of the Diaconate is a currently serving deacon, elected by the Diaconate, who is in the third year of his three-year term. The chairman is the Diaconate's chief executive officer. He presides at all meetings of the Diaconate and possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and conducting its business efficiently. He chairs the Diaconate Executive Committee. The chairman also represents the Diaconate at Session meetings and serves as the principal liaison between the Diaconate and the Session. He represents the Diaconate on the Governance Council and is a non-voting member of the Session Coordinating Council.

8.3.5 Vice Chairman of the Diaconate

The vice chairman is a currently serving deacon, elected by the Diaconate, who is in the second year of his three-year term. The vice chairman normally stands for election and serves as chairman the following year. The vice chairman performs the duties of chairman in the chairman's absence and such other duties as may be assigned him by the chairman or the Diaconate. He serves on the Diaconate Executive Committee and is normally elected to serve as the Diaconate's representative on the Officer Nominating Committee.

8.3.6 Secretary of the Diaconate

The secretary is a currently serving deacon elected by the Diaconate. The secretary is responsible for preparing and distributing the meeting materials in advance of stated and special meetings. He takes minutes of all Diaconate meetings and arranges for them to be transcribed and distributed to deacons before the next meeting. He records the attendance of deacons at meetings of the Diaconate, receives written reports and motions for distribution to other officers as appropriate, and maintains all other records of the Diaconate.

Each year the secretary compiles a record of the actions of the Diaconate for transmission to the Session for inclusion in the minutes of the Session (G-3.0407). The secretary serves on the Diaconate Executive Committee, conducts the official correspondence of the Diaconate, and performs such other tasks, particularly those related to records and communications, as he may be assigned by the chairman or the Diaconate.

8.3.7 Treasurer

The treasurer is an elder or deacon, in each case an active elder and/or active deacon preferred but not required, approved by the Resources Council and confirmed by the Session. The treasurer is a non-voting member of the Session Coordinating Council and, if the treasurer is an active elder, then the treasurer shall serve as chairman of the Finance and Budget Committee. The treasurer is responsible for overseeing the financial affairs of the church, including keeping adequate records, providing monthly reports to the Session, and insuring that an independent audit is performed annually. The treasurer also serves as a member of the Resources Council, attends Session meetings, and reports monthly to the Session on the church's financial condition.[20]

The treasurer should possess professional credentials as a Certified Public Accountant ("CPA") and have proven financial expertise. In the event the Session approves a treasurer who is not a CPA, then the Finance and Budget Committee shall appoint an associate treasurer from among active elders or deacons who does possess credentials as a CPA. The treasurer must understand the church's budgeting process and must be able to manage it effectively. This includes monitoring expenditures throughout the year to insure church expenditures stay within budget. The treasurer must be capable of reviewing and supervising the work of the church's accounting and bookkeeping staff and of dealing with financial industry service providers outside the church, such as auditors and financial institutions, on matters relating to church finances.[21]

9. COMMITTEES

9.1 TYPES OF COMMITTEES AND HOW THEY ARE AUTHORIZED

9.1.1 Standing Committees

Standing committees are created by the Session to perform continuing functions. Once established they remain in existence from year to year until dissolved by the Session. The currently authorized standing committees of the Session are listed and described in Section 11.

The Session should regularly reevaluate the committee structure to:

1) Eliminate or consolidate committees that have become obsolete or inefficient;
2) Add committees in areas that need more focused attention;
3) Realign the responsibilities of committees to achieve a more efficient division of labor; and
4) Correct committee descriptions that have not kept up with a committee's evolving responsibilities.

A motion to create a new standing committee should specify its name, purpose, responsibilities, authority, structure, and staff liaison in a format comparable to that in Section 11.

9.1.2 Special Committees

Special committees, sometimes referred to as ad hoc committees or task forces, are formed for limited terms and purposes. Once they accomplish the discrete task assigned to them, they issue a final report to the Session and cease to exist. A motion authorizing the creation of a special committee should specify its name, purpose,

responsibilities, authority, term of existence (or circumstances in which it will terminate), and source of funding (if relevant). It should also appoint the chairman, members, and staff liaison, or state how they will be appointed.

9.1.3 Nominating Committees

The sole function of a nominating committee, sometimes called a slate-making committee, is to propose candidates for election to office. This manual authorizes nominating committees to propose candidates for election to church office (Section 2), leadership positions in the Session and the Diaconate (Sections 8.1, 9.2.2, 10.3), and membership on a pastor nominating committee (Section 9.1.5). The Session may also create other special nominating committees as the need arises. Nominating committees report to their authorizing body (the congregation or the Session) and are not subject to oversight, except by the Session as may be necessary to insure compliance with the procedures set forth in this manual.

9.1.4 Search Committees

A search committee is a special committee authorized by the Session to recruit non-ordained program staff to fill positions at the church. A search committee is typically formed at the initiative of the senior pastor or the standing committee with jurisdiction over the affected program area.

A motion to create a search committee must first be reviewed by the Personnel Committee and the Finance and Budget Committee, which must approve the proposed terms of employment, and by any standing committee with jurisdiction over the program area covered by the position. The recommendations of those committees should be noted in the motion. The search committee must also consult with these committees before submitting a recommendation to the Session. For the standing committee whose jurisdiction includes the work of the staff person being sought, this is typically accomplished by including one or more members of the standing committee on the search committee.

A search committee should make a final written report to the Session describing the committee's search, its candidate, the reasons it selected this candidate, and the terms of the offer of employment it proposes to extend. The members of the search committee also typically participate in the hiring process and help the new staff member make the transition to First Presbyterian Church.

9.1.5 Pastor Nominating Committee (G-2.0802)

When the position to be filled is that of the senior pastor or an associate pastor, the search committee, called the Pastor Nominating Committee, normally consists of seven members and is elected at a congregational meeting. The senior pastor serves as an ex officio member of an associate pastor search committee. Subject to Presbytery approval, the interim senior pastor serves as an ex officio member of the Pastor Nominating Committee when seeking a new senior pastor. It is the Session's responsibility, in conjunction with the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, to determine when a pastor nominating committee should be formed and, within the limits set by the *Book of Order*, the nature of the position to which the teaching elder will be called.

When the congregation is calling a senior pastor, the Session shall form an ad hoc committee to propose a slate of nominees to serve on the pastor nominating committee. The slate-making committee shall consist of five members: three currently serving ruling elders, one currently serving deacon and one member of the congregation who is not an officer in active service. The three ruling elder members of the slate-making committee shall be chosen by secret ballot of the Session, with each member proposing three names and the three ruling elders receiving the highest number of votes being selected. If any of the three ruling elders receiving the highest number of votes declines to serve, the ruling elder with the next highest number of votes is selected. In case of a tie that is not resolved by one of the ruling elders declining to serve, the Session shall choose between the tied ruling elders by secret ballot. The three ruling elder members shall select the other two members of the committee.

The slate-making committee shall propose seven members, including at least two currently serving ruling elders and one currently serving deacon, to serve on the pastor nominating committee. The slate shall be broadly representative of the entire congregation. The slate-making committee shall present its nominees to the congregation at a congregational meeting called for the purpose of electing the pastor nominating committee.

The names and brief biographies of the nominees should be communicated to the congregation at least one week before the election. The election procedures are the same as those for church officers.

When the congregation is calling an associate pastor, the slate-making function is performed by the Personnel Committee, with the advice and consent of the Session, which must approve the slate before it is proposed to the congregation.

The Pastor Nominating Committee is a committee of the congregation. It is responsible for selecting its own officers and establishing its own procedures, including the confidentiality of its deliberations. In the case of a search for a senior pastor, the Pastor Nominating Committee should make regular reports to the congregation. The Pastor Nominating Committee works closely with the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry. One of its first tasks is to draft a church information form that will accurately describe the church to prospective candidates. This form must be reviewed and approved by the Session.

When the Pastor Nominating Committee is ready to report, it notifies the Session, which must call a congregational meeting, with at least ten days advance notice on two successive Sundays, for the purpose of acting on the committee's report. If possible, the committee should provide a written report to the congregation at least one week in advance of the meeting. The teaching elder's call, which must meet the minimum requirement set by the presbytery (G-2.0804), is drafted by the Pastor Nominating Committee. The terms of the call must also be approved by Presbytery. Although the Pastor Nominating Committee is discharged once the congregation has approved the call for the new teaching elder, the members of the committee should continue to advise, assist, and support the new teaching elder during the transition process.

9.1.6 Subcommittees

The purpose of a subcommittee is to deal with a specific area or issue within a committee's jurisdiction. A standing subcommittee, which continues from year to year, must be approved by the Session; a temporary or informal subcommittee may be created by action of a committee. A subcommittee is responsible to and reports to the committee of which it is a part. It must be chaired by a member of the committee. Other members of a subcommittee may be appointed as provided in Section 9.3.

9.2 Chairmen and Vice Chairmen

9.2.1 Qualifications

The chairman of a standing committee should be a ruling elder or deacon in active service, preferably one who is experienced and has previously served on the committee. A ruling elder may chair any committee. A deacon may chair any committee except the Governing Bodies Committee. If a qualified active officer is not available, a reserve officer may serve as a committee chairman. A non-officer may serve as co-chairman (with an active officer) or as vice chairman. To ensure succession planning, the vice chairman should be someone who is eligible and willing to serve on the committee again the following year.

9.2.2 Selection

In November of each year the moderator and the clerk-elect shall solicit recommendations from the chairmen of the standing committees concerning their successors. After consulting with the clerk, council chairmen, the chairman and chairman-elect of the Diaconate, and members of the staff, and after conferring with prospective nominees, the moderator and the clerk-elect shall submit a slate of proposed committee chairmen for the coming year to the Session for approval at the December meeting.

The slate may also include vice chairmen. If not, the committee chairman shall appoint a vice chairman as soon as possible after the committee is constituted and inform the clerk of the appointment. If a committee chairmanship becomes vacant during the year, the vice chairman shall become acting chairman until the Session appoints a new chairman.

9.2.3 Duties and Responsibilities

The committee chairman provides the leadership necessary for the committee to accomplish its mission. He must take the initiative in organizing the committee, encouraging it to set goals for the year, and keeping it on track. He calls and presides at meetings of the committee and sets the agenda. The chairman normally acts as secretary, though he may appoint another member of the committee to perform that function.

The chairman represents and speaks for the committee and may act on its behalf on matters within the committee's jurisdiction. The chairman must always be mindful, however, that he has no authority to act as an individual but only as a representative of the committee. Therefore, he should take no important actions on the committee's behalf without consulting its members and obtaining their approval.

The chairman, or his designee, represents the committee on the administrative council that supports and oversees its work. Although the chairman may exercise independent judgment when voting as a member of the council, he is also charged with communicating and advocating the views of his committee to the other members of the council and with keeping his committee informed concerning actions taken by the council that affect the work of the committee.

9.3 MEMBERSHIP

9.3.1 Qualifications, Rights, and Obligations of Committee Members

Any church officer or member of the congregation may serve on any committee except the Governing Bodies Committee, which is composed exclusively of ruling elders. Ruling elders and deacons must serve on at least one committee. All members of a committee are entitled to participate fully in its work, its deliberations, and its decisions. Committee members are expected to be active participants in the work of the committee. Those who neglect their responsibilities are subject to removal pursuant to Section 5.4.

9.3.2 Selection Process

In December the clerk-elect and chairman-elect shall give returning ruling elders and deacons an opportunity to express their committee preferences for the following year. The Officer Training and Enrichment Committee shall ask the new class of church officers to fill out a similar form as soon as they have been instructed in the work of the various committees. The results shall be compiled and provided to the committee chairmen.

In January the committee chairmen, or their designees, shall conduct a "draft" under the direction of the moderator, clerk-elect, and chairman-elect to select committee members for the coming year. All ruling elders and deacons are assigned to serve on at least one standing committee based on their gifts and preferences and the needs of the committees. Chairmen are also encouraged to recruit reserve officers and non-officers having suitable gifts and an interest in the committee's work to serve on their committees. However, in order to be official voting members of the committee, their names must first be submitted to and approved by the Session.

After the draft, the chairman-elect shall submit the proposed committee rosters, including reserve officers and non-officers, to the Diaconate for review and the clerk-elect shall submit the proposed committee rosters approved by the Diaconate to the Session for review. Each person named on the roster approved by the Session becomes a voting member of the committee. Committee rosters shall be compiled and distributed to all ruling elders and deacons for inclusion in their officer notebooks and made available to the congregation.

Members may be added during the year by submitting their names to the clerk and obtaining Session approval. Resignations should be reported to the clerk but need not be presented to the Session. Ruling elders and deacons who are dissatisfied with their committee assignments may seek relief from the Coordinating Council, which is authorized to change committee assignments during the year for good cause.

9.3.3 Staff Liaison Members

Each committee has a staff liaison member appointed by the senior pastor in his role as head of staff. Current staff committee assignments are listed in the organization chart. Assignments can be changed by the senior pastor at any time.

The role of staff liaison members is to assist the committee in its work. They provide professional insights, institutional knowledge, continuity, coordination with other parts of the church family, and administrative and clerical support. They are voting members of the committee and participate fully in its work. Staff liaison members are vital components of every committee and should be kept informed and involved. They should be consulted on all matters of importance, including appointment of committee chairmen and vice chairmen.

9.3.4 Consultants and Volunteers

Committee chairmen may also recruit unpaid consultants and volunteer workers who are not church officers to assist the committee in its work. They need not be church members, though they typically will be. Consultants and volunteers are not members of the committee and may not vote or represent the church in the committee's dealings with others outside the congregation. The use of consultants and volunteers is within the sound discretion of the committee and need not be approved by the Session. If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of using a particular consultant or volunteer, or about using them for a particular task, the committee chairman should consult with his administrative council.

9.4 JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY

9.4.1 Authority of a Committee to Act within its Jurisdiction

All decision-making authority within the church is vested in the Session (G-3.0201). The Session may, however, delegate some aspects of this authority to its committees (G-3.0109). Where it does so, a committee, like a commission, may be empowered "to consider and conclude" certain matters coming before it without Session approval. A committee operating under such a grant of authority remains fully accountable to the Session which retains the power to modify or reverse any action of a committee or other subordinate body.

The Session has determined that it can most effectively perform its duties by delegating responsibility for many less important decisions and administrative tasks to its subordinate bodies, the councils and committees, thereby allowing the Session to devote its time and energy to the issues that have the greatest impact on the church and that are best suited to resolution by a deliberative body of 40 members.

The jurisdiction of a standing committee is defined by its description in Section 11. Within its jurisdiction, a committee is responsible for handling a variety of routine and noncontroversial matters that do not warrant review or involvement by the Session. Not all of these are susceptible of easy definition. To the extent they exhibit general characteristics cutting across all committees, they are listed in Section 9.4.2. To the extent they can be identified with a particular committee, they are listed in the committee's description in Section 11.

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of the committee chairman to decide what matters must be submitted to the council or Session for approval, what matters should be reported without seeking formal approval, and what matters need not be brought to the attention of anyone outside the committee. In making that determination, the chairman should consider the criteria in Sections 9.4.2.4 and any specific delegation of authority to the committee in Section 11. As a general matter, the more important and lasting the action in question, the less appropriate it is that a few members of one committee to be the sole decision makers. If in doubt, the committee chairman should consult the chairman of his administrative council.

9.4.2 Actions that Do Not Require Council or Session Approval

The following actions are committed to the sound discretion of each committee:

1) The committee's meeting schedule and its internal operating procedures, as long as they are consistent with this manual;
2) Establishment of specific goals and timetables for the year;
3) Communications with members of the congregation informing them of the committee's activities or soliciting their opinions or participation;
4) Communications with persons outside the church concerning the committee's programs and activities;
5) Advising staff on matters within the committee's jurisdiction;
6) Carrying out previously authorized functions, including the spending of budgeted funds;
7) Implementing decisions and directives of the Session;

8) Routine or non-controversial actions;
9) Matters specifically committed to the committee's discretion in Section 11; and
10) Matters that have traditionally been the sole province of the committee, unless such discretion is removed by action of the Session.

9.4.3 Actions that Require Council Approval

The following actions must be approved by the administrative council to which the committee reports. The council should inform the Session of such actions, but need not obtain prior approval.

1) Any action that significantly affects another committee or matters within another committee's jurisdiction (actions impinging on another administrative council's jurisdiction must also be approved by that council);
2) Reallocation of line items within the budget of $10,000 or less;
3) Approval of teachers, youth leaders, retreat leaders, counselors, and others who represent the church or give care or instruction on its behalf;
4) Approval of educational materials; and
5) Scheduling and programming of events that will be open to a significant number of people, either within or outside the church family.

9.4.4 Actions that Require Session Approval

The following actions require Session approval:

1) All occasions, days, times, and places for services of worship;
2) Observances of the Lord's Supper;
3) Guest preachers;
4) Reception of new members or changes in membership classification;
5) Authorization of unbudgeted expenditures greater than $10,000;[22]
6) Reallocation of line items within the budget totaling more than $10,000;
7) Approval of the annual budget;
8) Any solicitation of funds or special offerings;
9) Any action that might result in a legally binding commitment or liability of the church;
10) Any action that will be highly publicized or visible in the community or that is likely to generate significant controversy within the congregation;
11) Any action that would set a precedent or establish a policy;
12) Any change in the policies and procedures set forth in this manual;
13) Any other action for which another section of this manual requires Session approval; and
14) Election of trustees to the Board of Trustees of Oak Hill School.

9.5 MOTIONS AND REPORTS

Each motion coming from committee must have been approved by the committee in substantially the same form as it is presented to the Session. Before going to the Session, the motion must be approved by the committee's administrative council. If the committee and the council cannot agree, the council may present the committee's motion along with its comments and recommendations, or it may decline to present the motion. In the latter case the motion can be considered by the Session only if it votes to overrule the council and entertain the committee's motion. Committee motions are presented during the report of the committee's administrative council. The Session should be informed of significant dissenting views, either on the committee or the council, and any relevant Diaconate action on the matter.

In addition to matters requiring council or Session approval, committees should report on their goals and plans for the year (at an early meeting), progress in achieving their objectives (periodically), new initiatives and major accomplishments (as they occur), upcoming events and matters of general interest, and matters that may be significant in the life of the church. Committees may also have specific reporting responsibilities as part of their committee descriptions (the Finance and Budget Committee, for example, reports monthly on financial results of the preceding month and the year to date).

Each committee reports to the Session through its administrative council, which may compile and summarize information from various committees or call on committees to make individual reports. Committees are encouraged to submit their reports in writing. This not only makes for more effective communication but also conserves meeting time.

Minutes, motions, and other documents reflecting the committee's actions during the year should be given to the incoming chairman of the committee along with other committee files and records.[23]

9.6 Procedures for Assigning Matters to a Particular Committee

All church officers and staff should be familiar with the church's committee structure and each committee's area of responsibility, and they should assist in directing matters requiring study or action to the appropriate committee. Where committee jurisdiction is overlapping or uncertain, the chairmen of the relevant administrative councils should be consulted. The moderator is responsible for referring matters raised first in the Session to the appropriate committee. The Coordinating Council resolves all jurisdictional disputes. Its decisions may be appealed to the Session.

9.7 Committee Operating Procedures

9.7.1 Meetings

Each committee should hold an organizational meeting before the Session meets in February in order to:

1) Appoint a vice chairman, if one has not already been appointed;
2) Establish a regular meeting schedule (if the committee is one that meets regularly) – preferably the same day, time, and place each month;
3) Orient new members to what the committee does;
4) Review the committee's final report from last year and consider any unfinished business;
5) Discuss the needs being met by the committee;
6) Set goals and objectives for the year;
7) Establish means of measuring and reporting success;
8) Assign individual responsibilities where appropriate; and
9) Establish any other operating procedures for the year.

By the second meeting, the chairman should have prepared and distributed a calendar of meetings and other events for which the committee is responsible during the year. Changes may be necessary, but the committee will function better if it stays on a regular schedule as much as possible. The chairman should supply the committee's meeting schedule to the chairman of his administrative council and the clerk. The chairman should also arrange for monthly reminder notices to committee members.

All meetings should be opened and closed with prayer. The quorum for a committee is a majority of its members. Procedures are informal. A committee may engage in discussions and votes without a formal motion having been made. Committees typically act by consensus developed through guided discussion rather than motions and structured debate. A straw poll of the members taken during discussion is a common technique for gauging committee sentiment and resolving contested issues without the necessity of a formal motion and recorded vote. The chairman may introduce motions and is typically the most active participant in the work and discussions of the committee.

Business of the committee may be conducted by telephone, email, or such other means of communication as may be approved by the committee, provided that the procedures used are consistent with the requirements of Section 7.5.1. These procedures should supplement to and not a substitute for face-to-face meetings.

Committee meetings should be used to measure the committee's progress in meeting its goals, to refine its plans, to report on projects, to assign work equitably, and to build a team that enjoys its work and each other's company. A committee is a small group, and its members should take advantage of the opportunities it offers for fellowship, spiritual growth, and building personal relationships.

9.7.2 Minutes

The chairman is responsible for keeping minutes of the committee's meetings. He may delegate this responsibility. The minutes should record all significant actions of the committee. The committee's minutes are to be submitted regularly to its council and passed on to the incoming committee chair. Good minutes allow effective review of the committee's work and promote continuity in the operation of the committee, both during the year and from year to year.

9.7.3 Voting

All formally assigned members of the committee, including non-officers and the chairman, have a vote. Ex officio members, consultants, and volunteers do not vote. All decisions of the committee are by majority vote. As with the full Session, decisions may be taken by unanimous consent, i.e., without objection, in lieu of a voice vote or show of hands.

10. COUNCILS

10.1 PURPOSE

The councils have three interrelated purposes. The first is to coordinate the work of the committees. This is done at two levels. The first occurs in the six administrative councils, which bring together committees with related functions to foster regular communication and cooperation among them. The second occurs in the Coordinating Council, which brings a church-wide perspective to bear on developments in each program area, thus allowing for greater consistency and direction in the work of the individual committees. The councils' job, in other words, is to be sure that the committees are talking to each other and pulling in the same direction, not working at cross-purposes.

The councils also provide an intermediate level of review for committee proposals that otherwise might come to the Session needing further work. This provides a structured opportunity for feedback and midcourse corrections. Where a motion is not well thought out and needs additional research and development, where a motion is controversial and requires consultations with potential opponents, where a motion is inconsistent with existing policies or programs and needs to be modified to take account of them, and in many other instances, the councils provide a screening function for the Session. Rather than consuming the Session's time while such problems are worked through, the process of council review refines and sharpens proposals coming to the Session, so that what can be resolved ahead of time has been, the issues that have to be debated and decided by the full body are well presented, and Session meetings are as efficient as possible.

The third and perhaps most important function of the councils is to provide executive and administrative leadership for the Session and staff. Historically the church has relied heavily on its senior pastor to fill this role, and as both moderator and head of staff, as well as senior pastor, he continues to play a major role in articulating the church's vision, setting its agenda, mobilizing its resources, and overseeing its day-to-day operations. Nevertheless, it has become clear that no one person can be expected to bear full responsibility for leading the Session. The Session itself must have structures in place that provide clear lines of authority and accountability for insuring that the Session fulfills its many responsibilities. The council system is designed to do just that. It provides a group of experienced officers to share the responsibilities of leadership with the moderator, and it answers the question of who is accountable if there is drift or confusion in the Session or if things are not getting done.

10.2 ORGANIZATION AND PROCEDURE

The standing committees of the Session are organized into six administrative councils. Four of the councils – Worship, Christian Education, Ministries, and Missions – have operational responsibilities for accomplishing different facets of the church's mission. The other two – Resources and Governance – are responsible for the means and procedures by which the mission is accomplished. The administrative councils in turn participate in the Coordinating Council, which oversees all of their work.

Each administrative council consists of the chairman, the vice chairman, and a representative of each of the council's constituent committees, normally the committee chairman. The council may have additional members if approved by the Session. Each member has a vote, and all decisions of the council are by majority vote. Between meetings,

the council may act through its chairman and vice chairman, who must promptly seek approval from the other members of the council.

Councils work on a monthly schedule geared to the stated meetings of the Diaconate and the Session. Insofar as possible, they should meet to consider and act on committee reports and recommendations before the Diaconate meets, so that all business coming from the councils can be considered by both bodies.

Councils generally follow the procedures set out for committees, though they have greater flexibility to adapt those procedures to the council's particular mission, needs, and circumstances. A council may meet less often or more often than once a month, and it may make greater use of informal consultation as a means of making or ratifying decisions. Its committees may meet and work separately from the council or they may transact their business in conjunction with the council. Coordination may be accomplished by joint committee meetings or by communication between committee chairmen. A council may act in place of its committees. It may initiate and act on proposals in the first instance, without deferring to or waiting on its committees. A council may determine that certain types of business, such as drafting policies, should be conducted entirely at the council level.

A council may delegate such of its authority and responsibilities as it sees fit to its chairman and vice chairman. Such delegation is most appropriate with respect to the council's administrative tasks.

10.3 Chairmen and Vice Chairmen

Each administrative council is chaired by a ruling elder in active service. The chairmen of the administrative councils are chosen in the same manner as committee chairmen. See Section 9.2.2. The vice chairman of each administrative council is a deacon in active service. Vice chairmen are selected by the same process as chairmen, except that: (1) nominees put forward by the moderator and the clerk-elect shall be chosen from among names submitted to them by the chairman-elect, and (2) nominees must be approved by the Diaconate as well as the Session. The Coordinating Council is chaired by the moderator or, in his absence, the clerk.

10.4 Jurisdiction and Authority

The jurisdiction of each administrative council is defined in Section 11. Within its jurisdiction, an administrative council exercises both executive and legislative functions. As an executive body, it is responsible for carrying out the programs and policies of the Session, subject to supervision by the Coordinating Council. As a legislative body, it is responsible, through its committees, for initiating, investigating, and submitting proposals to the Session for enactment. It has all powers and authority necessary to carry out these responsibilities.

Each council has supervisory authority over its constituent committees. Every grant of authority to a committee is implicitly qualified by the council's right to oversee the activities of that committee. The Oak Hill School Board, Presbyterian Women, and the Diaconate Executive Committee, although they participate in councils, are not committees of the Session and are not subject to the same degree of supervision by their administrative councils. They do, however, report to the Session through their administrative councils and are subject to Session oversight through the councils. A council has the authority to take any action that could be taken by one of its committees.

11. THE COUNCILS AND STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION

11.1 Worship Council

The Worship Council is charged with fulfilling the responsibilities of the Session listed in Section 6.3 and has jurisdiction over all matters relating to worship. The Council provides leadership and direction in the planning and implementation of worship services in the life of the church to assure spiritual vitality among members and witness to the world.

11.1.1 Music Committee

The Music Committee is responsible for planning and supervising the music program of the church, both within and outside of worship. The committee develops and maintains programs of the highest quality for all age groups and establishes policies concerning music for weddings, funerals and other events. The Music Committee meets on a regular basis and works closely with the Director of Music Ministry and the Sacraments Committee.

11.1.2 Sacraments Committee

The Sacraments Committee is responsible for recruiting ruling elders to serve communion, assist in baptisms, to serve as Greeters for worship services, and for providing them with any necessary training and support. The committee vice chair is responsible for recruiting ruling elders to serve as Greeters. The committee meets on an as-needed basis in fulfilling its duties.[24]

11.1.3 Ushering Committee

The Ushering Committee is responsible for recruiting Deacons and, at times, other church members to usher and collect the offerings as needed. The Ushering Committee meets as needed with the Worship Council to review scheduling and recommend improvements to insure the smooth operation of ushering and offering duties.

11.1.4 Bereavement Service Committee

The Bereavement Service Committee is responsible for recruiting and instructing greeters and ushers to serve at funeral/memorial worship services. The committee meets as needed.

11.1.5 Bereavement Visitation Committee

The Bereavement Visitation Committee is responsible for providing assistance and support to families of deceased persons who desire to have a visitation in the Cheek House, Courtenay Hall or Enrichment Center. The committee meets as needed.

11.1.6 Worship Flowers Committee

The Worship Flowers Committee is responsible, in conjunction with the church Worship and Music Ministry staff, for planning, overseeing and providing the floral/seasonal decorations for all worship services. The committee meets as needed.

11.1.7 Security Committee

The Security Committee exists to promote a safe, welcoming, and prepared church environment by assessing, recommending, and overseeing appropriate security and safety measures for the church campus. Reporting to the Worship Council, the Security Committee is chaired by an active elder and is comprised of no less than five (5) nor more than seven (7) members, including the Chair of the Diaconate. The Committee's responsibilities include: Reviewing and recommending policies, procedures, vendors and training relating to church security personnel and services; overseeing access control and door security; reviewing interior and exterior lighting and camera surveillance systems; recommending the provision and maintenance of emergency response equipment, [25]supplies, protocols, and training; coordinating church-wide safety practices and procedures; periodically assessing campus risks and developing preparedness recommendations for foreseeable safety and security concerns; reviewing security incidents, drills, and near-miss events and recommending improvements to policies, procedures and training as appropriate; and submitting evaluation of church security personnel to the Personnel Committee.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Committee shall coordinate, as appropriate, with local law enforcement, emergency responders, insurers, professional security advisors, Oak Hill School and shall work in alignment with the church's Safe Church and child and youth protection policies.

The Security Committee serves in an advisory and oversight capacity only. Operational implementation of approved security measures shall be carried out by staff or vendors as duly authorized by the Worship Council and/or Session. In all matters, the Committee seeks to balance prudent risk management with the church's mission of hospitality, ensuring that members, staff and guests may gather and serve with confidence and peace of mind.

11.2 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Christian Education Council is charged with fulfilling the responsibilities of the Session listed in Section 6.3 and it has jurisdiction over matters relating to the Christian education programs of the church. The Council provides leadership in the instruction and guidance of believers and their children in Christian faith and life through the Sunday School, Wednesday night ~~p~~rogram, summer Bible School and other learning programs.

11.2.1 Adult Education Committee

The Adult Education Committee is responsible for planning course offerings, approving curriculum, recruiting and training teachers, and providing necessary space, equipment and supplies for the programs for the adult divisions of Sunday School and Wednesday night program. Communities of Belonging (COBs) are small group opportunities that meet for fellowship and study for a limited number of weeks during the year and are part of this committee. The committee also develops and maintains classes, seminars, workshops, study groups, and travel groups for adults, both in and outside the church family. The Adult Education Committee meets on a regular basis and works closely with the education staff in coordinating these programs for the church.[26]

11.2.2 Youth Committee

The Youth Committee is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive, integrated program of Christian education and discipleship for youth from seventh grade through college and has jurisdiction over the church's ministry to youth and their families. The committee oversees programs such as worship preparation, Sunday School classes, evangelism, missions, family ministry, college ministry, discipleship groups, and other special youth-oriented events. The committee evaluates youth mission trips and recommends improvements to the youth and college mission program. The committee oversees the collection and disbursement of youth mission funds, providing scholarships for persons in need of financial assistance for youth mission trips and other youth ministry related events. To encourage a lifetime of involvement in missions, the committee also supports FPC college students who engage in mission activities, both in Nashville and around the world. The committee works closely with the Associate Pastor for Youth and/or Director of Youth Ministry in coordinating, evaluating and, if needed, recommending improvements in such programs and in integrating the youth ministry into the ministries of the whole church. The Youth Committee meets on a regular basis and committee members are encouraged to participate actively in youth activities.[27]

11.2.3 Ministry with Children and Their Families

The Ministry with Children and Their Families is responsible for all aspects of the church's program for children, from birth through the sixth grade. This includes the Sunday morning education hour and Worship activities, Vacation Bible School, children's activities at NaCoMe family retreats, and other events for Children and their families. The committee works closely with the Children's Ministry staff to recruit and train teachers, evaluate and recommend curriculum, and provide other necessary support to children and their parents. The committee meets on a regular monthly basis throughout the year.[28]

11.3 MINISTRIES COUNCIL

The Ministries Council is charged with fulfilling the responsibilities of the Session for membership, evangelism, and other ministries listed in Section 6.3 which are not specifically assigned to the Christian Education Council or the Missions Council. The Council has jurisdiction over ministries and programs directed primarily to current or prospective members, and others within the church family.

11.3.1 Membership and Connections Committee

The Membership and Connections Committee seeks to welcome guests and assimilate new members into the life of First Presbyterian Church and a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Committee will fulfill that mission by reaching out to prospective members, supporting staff in conducting quarterly Inquirers classes, staffing the Hospitality Desk on Sunday mornings as we maintain a welcoming environment for both members and guests, and providing input to the Communications Department in maintaining and revising printed resources as needed.[29]

11.3.2 Congregational Care Committee

The Congregational Care Committee is responsible for developing and implementing programs to provide sympathetic care and nurture for members and others in the community. The committee encourages and provides opportunities for members to engage in ministries of caring. Current programs include Grief Share, Divorce Care, Monday's flowers, Manna food program, D/F/W men's work group to offer simple home repairs to older adults and single mothers, officer prayer time, adult caregivers support group, caring communications, and Stephen Ministry. The committee works closely with the ordained staff and generally meets on a regular basis.[30]

11.3.3 Recreation Committee

The Recreation Committee is responsible for overseeing the church's recreation programs, including after-school activities, sports, enrichment, day camp, and horseback riding programs. The committee develops, evaluates and improves, as needed, these programs to provide fellowship and recreation for the church family and for the community, and to serve as an outreach to the entire community. The committee is also responsible for overseeing the financial affairs of the Recreation Department with the goal that the department will be financially self-supporting. The committee meets on a regular monthly basis and works closely with the Director of Recreational Ministries and staff of the church.

11.3.4 Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women provides opportunities for fellowship, Bible study and services for women of the church and contributes in many other ways to the life of the church. Presbyterian Women operates with a large degree of autonomy but is subject to supervision by the Session.

11.3.5 Board of Trustees of Oak Hill School

The Oak Hill School is a co-educational elementary school serving students in kindergarten through sixth grade that was founded by First Presbyterian Church in 1961, as an outreach of the Church. The School provides a rich and comprehensive curriculum for qualified students within a nurturing Christian environment.

The Oak Hill School is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that shares facilities and space throughout the Church's buildings and grounds. The School is governed by a Board of Trustees whose members are approved by the Session and elected by the Board. The Board is responsible for establishing School policy, hiring the Head of School and managing the operations of the School, acting through the Head of the School. The Session exercises supervision of the School in three ways: (1) the Session approves members of the Board of Trustees, including having the right to remove one or more trustees at any time by action of the Session; (2) the Chair of the Board of Trustees must be an active member of the Session and who reports to the Session on matters related to the School; and (3) the Session approves the School's By-Laws and any amendment thereto. In addition to the elected members of the Board, the Head of School, Immediate Past-Chair of the Board and the senior pastor of the Church (or his delegate) serve as ex officio trustees.[31]

11.3.6 First Friends Committee

The First Friends Committee seeks to focus on the spiritual and social needs of our senior adult members. The committee aims to foster relationships among senior adults with one another and with the church family for fellowship, service and personal growth by offering activities, programs and events."[3233]

11.4 MISSIONS COUNCIL

The Missions Council is charged with fulfilling the responsibilities of the Session listed in Section 6.3 as relating to the church's mission in the community and the world. It has jurisdiction over all matters relating to the missions programs of the church. In carrying out its duties, the Missions Council seeks to reinforce the importance of mission in the life of the church, to improve coordination among mission efforts and to communicate regularly with the Session and members regarding the status of the church's mission programs.

11.4.1 National and World Missions Committee

The National and World Missions Committee is responsible for overseeing the church's programs of member involvement and support for missions originating outside of the local community. The committee will maintain contacts with such agencies and organizations to determine ways in which the church can partner in Christian mission work, including through personal involvement of members, financial contributions and prayer. Encouraging active participation in such programs by members is a goal of the church, and to that end the committee will plan and execute mission trip opportunities in which adult members and their families and other inter-generational groups may participate. The committee will also evaluate partners and mission trips, making funding recommendations for partner agencies as appropriate. The Committee will regularly communicate with the Session and church members regarding mission partners and involvement opportunities.[34]

11.4.2 Local Missions Ministry

The Local Missions Ministry is responsible for overseeing the church's programs of support for missions in Nashville and the surrounding area. It carries out its duties in much the same manner as the National and World Missions Committee but with special emphasis on encouraging active participation of members in volunteer opportunities involving their time and talents. The committee meets on a regular basis and committee members frequently participate in local mission activities.

11.4.3 Seminarian Support Committee

The Seminarian Support Committee is responsible for fulfilling the Session's obligations under G-14.0306b to provide care and support to persons preparing for the ministry during their periods of inquiry and candidacy. The committee acts as liaison with candidates and with the Presbytery's committee on preparation for ministry. The committee makes funding requests and oversees disbursements of funds allocated for seminarian support, including post-graduate education of ordained staff. The committee has general oversight of the ongoing activities and operations of the Center for Youth Ministry Training Institutes ("CYMT"), primarily through periodic updates from the four board members of CYMT who are members of First Presbyterian Church, including reviewing the actions, operations and plans of CYMT with one or more of such board members on a periodic basis. The Seminarian Support Committee is also charged with informing the congregation about opportunities in the ministry and encouraging members, particularly youth, to pursue careers in ministry. The committee meets as needed to fulfill its duties.

11.4.4 Disaster Response Committee

The Disaster Response Committee is responsible for maintaining an updated list of church members with resources and skills that can be mobilized to assist the church and/or its members, as well as others on a selected basis, in times of need resulting from disasters, natural and otherwise. The committee seeks also to serve as a resource to church members by offering advance personal disaster planning resources as well as serving as a communication network for sharing disaster response needs and resources. The committee is responsible for the administration of gifts from the church's disaster response budget. The committee meets on an as-needed basis, generally every two to three months.[35]

11.5 RESOURCES COUNCIL

The Resources Council is charged with fulfilling the responsibilities of the Session listed in Section 6.3. It has jurisdiction over all matters relating to stewardship, finance and property. In furtherance of such responsibilities, the Resources Council exercises leadership in overseeing the financial affairs of the church including budgeting, accounting, endowments, stewardship and investments.

11.5.1 Generosity Team

The Generosity Team is responsible for devising and communicating the overall stewardship campaign to the congregation for the purpose of raising the funds which help establish and implement the annual budget of the church. In connection therewith, the Generosity Team works most closely with the Budget and Finance Committee but also communicates regularly with all aspects of church ministry through the implementation of

the campaign. The Generosity Team meets on a regular basis throughout the year but on a more frequent basis during the summer and fall prior to and during the actual campaign in October.[36]

11.5.2 Endowment Committee

The Endowment Committee educates and encourages members to make estate and other planned gifts to the church. It supervises the endowment program, including the disbursement of special or restricted funds according to the terms of the Endowment Policy. The Endowment Committee coordinates its activities with the Investment Committee in overseeing the investment of endowment program funds. The committee meets as needed for the proper administration of its responsibilities.

11.5.3 Finance and Budget Committee

The Finance and Budget Committee shall consist of no less than three (3) members, including its chair, and is responsible for overseeing the church's financial operation and the maintenance of financial records as described in Section 6.3. The Finance and Budget Committee is responsible for establishing and implementing appropriate financial policies, including policies governing the collection and disbursement of funds, preparing the annual church budget, obtaining Session approval of the budget, monitoring and reporting on variances from the budget in revenue and expenses, and recommending and implementing adjustments as needed. The chair of the Finance and Budget Committee shall be an active elder and, if the treasurer is an active elder, then the treasurer may serve as the chair of the Finance and Budget Committee as provided in Section 8.3.7. The Finance and Budget Committee shall meet on a regular monthly basis to review the financial statements and financial operations of the church and to review requests for expenditures not contained in the annual budget but recommended by the church staff and other committees for approval.[37]

11.5.4 Investment Committee

The Investment Committee oversees the investment of the church's endowment and other general and special funds and, subject to Session approval, establishes, monitors and revises as appropriate the church's investment policies. The committee meets as needed to fulfill its duties.

11.5.5 Property Committee

The Property Committee is responsible for the church's grounds, columbarium, buildings, furnishings, equipment and other property. It plans and oversees improvements, maintenance, repairs, replacements and major decorative changes to the property, and it recommends and implements facilities usage polices and other policies related to the property. The committee is responsible for maintaining appropriate insurance coverage and monitoring property expenditures. The committee also is responsible for evaluating the services of contractors, for property related contracts and insurance, and for recommending action on future contracts and renewals. The committee also is responsible for maintaining the columbarium records, approving application for space(s) in the columbarium, for monitoring the amount of donations or pledges appropriate for the privilege of interment, and for implementing and administering the agreements necessary for the orderly operation and maintenance of the columbarium. Committee members with experience in property management, construction, insurance, interior design or engineering are helpful. The committee usually meets monthly.[38]

11.6 GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

The Governance Council has jurisdiction over all matters relating to the administration and governance of the church. In furtherance of such responsibilities, the Governance Council will coordinate the work of its reporting committees, provide an intermediate level of review and feedback from a church-wide perspective on committee activities and proposals requiring Session approval, exercise leadership and initiative in the discharge of the church governance responsibilities of the Session, take a leadership role in administering the Policies and Procedures Manual including its interpretation, evaluation, improvement and amendment, and provide feedback and recommendations for committee memberships and assignments within the Governance Council.

11.6.1 Governing Bodies Committee

The Governing Bodies Committee serves as the Session's liaison with the higher governing bodies of the PCUSA. The committee is responsible for keeping our Session informed of Presbytery and denominational activities and initiatives, and implementing those activities within our own church as directed by the Session. Each ruling elder, not currently serving on the Coordinating Council, is expected to serve as a commissioner at one Presbytery meeting per year. Commissioners vote their consciences at each meeting of the Middle Tennessee Presbytery as provided by the *Book of Order*, although each member generally takes into consideration positions taken by the Session. Finally, when required, the Governing Bodies Committee is responsible for judicial matters under the rules of discipline.[39]

11.6.2 Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee is responsible for the process of hiring and evaluating all church employees, including ordained staff, and for the maintenance of a work environment that demonstrates the mission and values of the church. The committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining policies relating to wages, hours and working conditions, approving job descriptions, reviewing compensation and other terms of employment, establishing lines of authority and reporting responsibilities, and overseeing annual review process for all teaching elders. The committee has the primary responsibility to nominate search committees for associate pastor positions, subject to approval by the Session. Committee members are expected to actively participate in committee meetings and to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive personnel matters. The committee works closely with the senior pastor and executive pastor, who are members of the committee, and generally meets on a monthly basis, although some meetings are required on short notice. Committee members with experience in human resources management and/or related areas such as risk management, employee relations, recruitment, compensation and employee benefits, labor law, and management training and development are helpful.[40]

11.6.3 Officer Nominating Committee

As provided in Sections 2.2 – 2.7, the Officer Nominating Committee is not a committee of the Session and is subject to only limited oversight by the Governance Council. The chairman of the committee is a member of the Council for purposes of communication and coordination.

11.6.4 Officer Training and Enrichment Committee

The Officer Training and Enrichment Committee is responsible for the training, examination, ordination and installation of new officers, and for providing officers with continuing education and enrichment activities throughout their term of office. The committee is responsible for providing the Officer Nominating Committee with information for potential officers, including a list of officer expectations, a training schedule, and other materials to fully inform officers of the expectations of their office. The committee also provides opportunities for continuing education, fellowship and social interaction among the officers, and plans retreats and training meetings for officers as appropriate. The committee generally meets on an as-needed basis, and members may have additional responsibilities during the scheduled training of new officers in the months of October through January. The committee works closely with the Officer Nominating Committee and the church staff to ensure the ongoing coordination and effectiveness of the training and installation of new officers.

11.6.5 Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is responsible for the creation, articulation, enhancement and maintenance of the church's numerous messages and other information through effective communications that support our mission to know Christ, to make Him known, and to exhibit His love through worship, education and service. It is responsible for establishing consistency guidelines and standards for all communications pieces, maintaining and enhancing a user-friendly, leading edge website that meets the complex needs of the church, and maintaining and enhancing all other communications including keeping the congregation well informed about activities and issues in the church through effective communications. The committee generally meets on a regular monthly basis. Committee members should also be prepared to provide guidance, direction and services as needed to ensure the ongoing coordination and effectiveness of all aspects of internal and external communications regarding the church, its members and its mission.

11.6.6 Diaconate Executive Committee

The Diaconate Executive Committee consists of the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary of the Diaconate and the vice chairmen of the six councils. Its purpose is to set the agenda for Diaconate meetings, to act for the Diaconate between regular meetings, to review the work of the Diaconate, and to exercise leadership and initiative for the body as a whole. The committee typically meets one hour before each stated meeting of the Diaconate and at the call of the chairman.

The Executive Committee's participation in the Governance Council is the means by which the Session oversees the work of the Diaconate and by which the Diaconate as a body formally reports to the Session.

11.6.7 College of Ruling Elders

The college of ruling elders consists of all reserve officers who are members of the congregation. It is an advisory board with no fixed duties. It meets at the call of the moderator. The college recognizes the past contributions of inactive ruling elders and provides a way in which they can continue to assist in the mission of the church. A representative of the college of ruling elders, selected by the process set out in Section 9.2.2, sits on the Governance Council as a nonvoting member. The role of the representative of the college of elders is to represent the interests and views of reserve officers in the council's deliberations and to provide a channel of communication between reserve officers and the active Session.

11.6.8 FPC/OHS Strategic Committee

The FPC/OHS Strategic Committee serves as the Session's liaison with the Oak Hill School Board. It seeks to enhance all levels of communications and governance between the church and the school. The committee serves primarily as a communication conduit and has no authority to decide matters for either the Session or the Oak Hill School Board. The committee concerns itself with matters of long-term strategic interest to both church and school, e.g. coordination of programs, campus facility needs, and discussion of potential candidates for OHS Board service. All members serve ex Officio and include FPC Pastor (or Pastor's designee), FPC Clerk of Session, FPC Associate Clerk of Session, FPC Governance Council Chair, FPC Property Committee Chair, OHS Head of School, OHS Board of Trustees Chair, OHS Board of Trustees Vice Chair, OHS Finance Committee Chair, OHS Committee on Trustees Chair, and OHS Property and Buildings Committee Chair. The FPC/OHS Strategic Committee meets quarterly at the call of the OHS Board Chair.[41]

11.7 SESSION COORDINATING COUNCIL

The moderator, clerk, associate clerk, and the chairmen of the six administrative councils are voting members of the Coordinating Council. The Diaconate chair and treasurer are ex officio members. The moderator, or in his absence the clerk, serves as presiding officer. The moderator may ask one of the associate pastors to substitute for him at meetings of the Coordinating Council. In such cases the associate pastor may vote on behalf of the moderator but does not preside. No other member may designate a substitute or proxy to attend and vote at meetings of the Coordinating Council.

The Coordinating Council normally meets at 5:30 p.m. on the Tuesday preceding each stated Session meeting or as determined by the moderator. It also meets at the call of the moderator. A quorum is at least seven voting members. Decisions are made by majority vote, except for decisions on matters requiring Session approval, as provided in Section 7.2, in which case the approval of seven of the nine voting members is required. Where it is not feasible for the Coordinating Council to meet, the moderator or clerk may poll the members individually, and the votes of seven members are sufficient to constitute an action of the Council. Every action of the Coordinating Council on a matter requiring Session approval must be reported to the Session and ratified as provided in Section 7.2. The Council may invite guests to attend its meetings. The clerk serves as secretary to the Coordinating Council and is charged with keeping accurate record of all actions of the Council.

The Coordinating Council is responsible for overseeing the work of the administrative councils, and it has all powers and authority necessary to carry out that responsibility. To better manage the Session's agenda and coordinate proposals coming from different councils and committees, the Coordinating Council is empowered to decide when and how proposals are presented to the Session. It may defer action or return a motion to committee for further study. Such determinations may be overruled by majority vote of the Session.

12. CHURCH STAFF

Not all of the work of the church can be accomplished by the church officers and other volunteers. Therefore, the church employs a variety of paid staff members to assist with its programs and operations.

12.1 ORDAINED AND PROGRAM STAFF

Although ordained teaching elders are members of Presbytery and the Session, they are also part of the church's paid staff. Each teaching elder has specific responsibilities, which are outlined in the terms of the call he received from this church, as well as the more general responsibilities set forth in the *Book of Order*. In addition, the church employs non-ordained professionals to administer programs in their areas of expertise, such as education and music. Together, the church's ordained and program staff exercise significant leadership in accomplishing the church's mission, as well as providing assistance to the Session, the Diaconate, and the congregation.

12.2 SUPPORT STAFF

The church employs support staff to assist in the day-to-day operation of the church and its programs. They serve in a wide variety of capacities – as managers, administrators, directors, coordinators, administrative assistants, musicians, bookkeepers, secretaries, receptionists, and custodians. The church could not function without their dedicated service.

12.3 DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN CHURCH OFFICERS AND STAFF

The relationship between church officers and staff is one of shared responsibility. Although all church employees report directly or indirectly to the senior pastor in his role as head of staff, they are ultimately responsible to the Session. The staff plays a crucial role in carrying out the mission of the church, but it generally does not make policy and must defer to the guidance of church officers acting within their areas of responsibility. It is often necessary for staff to work closely with church officers, as, for example, when serving as staff liaison to a committee. Conversely, church officers normally have neither the time nor the specialized expertise to provide detailed direction and supervision to the staff. Staff are normally accorded a high degree of trust, respect, and autonomy within their fields. Church officers regularly look to staff for guidance and defer to their leadership.

The cooperative relationship between church officers and staff has its roots in our Presbyterian polity. The *Book of Order* specifies that church governance and ministry are joint obligations of clergy and laity – teaching elders and ruling elders – working together. This is the model we seek to follow wherever the duties of church officers and staff intersect. Nevertheless, we also believe that this level of cooperation is best achieved within a framework of clearly defined responsibilities and lines of authority. We have therefore attempted to set these forth with precision throughout this manual, trusting in the ability of church officers and staff to apply them with discretion.

12.4 HIRING PROCESS

Ordained and certain program and support staff positions are filled through the search process described in Sections 9.1.4 and 9.1.5. All other previously approved and budgeted support staff positions are filled by the executive pastor after consultation with the head of staff, subject to approval by the Personnel Committee. New positions must first be approved by the Session upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee, after consultation with the Finance and Budget Committee and, if appropriate, with the committee having jurisdiction over the program area in question. The Session and Diaconate should be informed of personnel changes.

Currently serving ruling elders and deacons may not be employed by the church, and if hired for paid staff positions they must resign their church office before beginning employment. Family members or others with close personal relationships with church officers or employees may not be hired in positions that would create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, particularly where one would supervise the other or have influence over the other's performance evaluations or compensation.

12.5 SUPERVISION, EVALUATION AND TERMINATION

The reporting and supervisory relationships among the staff are set forth in the staff organization chart, which is included in the Appendix. Each person is responsible for supervising the work of those below him on the organization chart and for providing each employee he directly supervises with an annual performance review, in a format and on a schedule determined by the Personnel Committee. Each performance review shall be reviewed and approved by the head of staff (for ordained and program staff) or the executive pastor (for support staff) and made available to the Personnel Committee.

Support staff may be terminated by the executive pastor after consultation with the head of staff and with the advice and consent of the Personnel Committee. Program staff may be terminated by the head of staff, but only with the advice and consent of the Personnel Committee and the Coordinating Council. The pastoral relationship between the church and its ordained staff cannot be terminated by the Session. It may only be dissolved by Presbytery in the manner specified in the *Book of Order* (G-2.0901).

12.6 PASTORAL RELATIONS

The Personnel Committee shall serve as the Session's liaison with the pastoral staff. The Personnel Committee (minus the senior pastor) is responsible for assisting the senior pastor with performance reviews of the associate pastors and conducting the annual performance review of the senior pastor (following consultation with members of the Coordinating Council and such other officers and staff as the committee deems appropriate).

The Personnel Committee is also responsible for fielding complaints and suggestions from the congregation concerning the performance of teaching elders, hearing complaints from teaching elders about other teaching elders or the church, counseling with the teaching elders as appropriate, providing them with feedback and advice between annual performance reviews, and making recommendations for such action as may be necessary to respond to any emerging problems. In performing this task, the committee may seek the assistance of such other officers and staff as it deems appropriate.

The Personnel Committee shall endeavor to maintain a good working relationship with the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, which serves as teaching elder and counselor to the Presbytery's teaching elders and is charged with facilitating good relations, and settling differences, between teaching elders and their congregations.

12.7 SABBATICAL POLICY

First Presbyterian Church ("FPC") recognizes that just as God rested on the Sabbath day after creating the world in six (6) days (Genesis 2:2-3) and Christ regularly took time apart for refreshment, renewal and connection with God (e.g. Mark 1: 35), FPC's full-time ordained staff should periodically be allowed to take a carefully planned sabbatical leave for the purposes of study, reflection and spiritual renewal. FPC views such sabbatical leave as both: (i) an act of faith that God will sustain such ordained staff member through a period of reflection and changed activity, and (ii) an occasion to help improve such ordained staff member's quality of service to FPC through the renewal of skills, enthusiasm and energy.

12.7.1 Eligibility

Unless otherwise set forth in an ordained staff member's Call, each full-time ordained staff member who has served in his position for six (6) continuous years at FPC shall, upon the approval of FPC's Session, be eligible to receive a sabbatical leave. Thereafter, such ordained staff member shall be eligible to take an additional sabbatical leave upon the expiration of a period of six (6) years from his return date from his last sabbatical leave.[42]

In the event multiple ordained staff members are eligible for sabbatical leave in the same year, the Session shall determine the order in which each will take sabbatical leave; provided, however, at least twelve (12) months separation between sabbatical leaves is required.

12.7.2 Duration and Payment of Benefits

The duration of a sabbatical leave shall not exceed three (3) consecutive months with full salary and benefits. However, sabbatical leave may be combined with vacation leave, so long as the total time away with full pay

and benefits is no more than four (4) consecutive months. If an ordained staff member takes a sabbatical leave, he shall not be entitled to study leave in the year in which the sabbatical leave is taken and shall commit to return to his responsibilities at FPC for a term of at least four times (4x) the amount of sabbatical leave taken.

12.7.3 Requests for Sabbatical Leave

Any ordained staff member who desires to take a sabbatical leave shall present FPC's Personnel Committee, in writing, a program of activity for sabbatical leave at least six (6) months prior to the proposed beginning of the sabbatical leave. This program of activity shall include the duration of sabbatical leave requested, a description of the plan, the goals to be achieved and the expected end-products, a personal statement as to why sabbatical leave would be valuable for both the ordained staff member and FPC, and suggestions for the reallocation of the ordained staff member's responsibilities during the sabbatical leave (the "Plan"). Upon the Personnel Committee's approval of the requested sabbatical leave and associated Plan, the matter shall be referred to FPC's Coordinating Council for its approval and thereafter to FPC's Session. The Personnel Committee shall give the Coordinating Council and Session its recommendation as to the re-allocation of such ordained staff member's responsibilities during his sabbatical leave and whether FPC should seek part-time ordained staff.

Upon approval of an ordained staff member's request for sabbatical leave, FPC's Session and such ordained staff member shall work to build support among the congregation in preparation for the same.

12.7.4 Obligations Upon Returning from Sabbatical Leave

Upon such ordained staff member's return from sabbatical leave, he shall give a written report to the congregation of the details of activities during the leave as well as reflections on its value and benefit.

12.8 Employee Handbook

The church's policies relating to terms and conditions of employment, benefits, compensation, and expense reimbursement are set out in an Employee Handbook.

12.9 Positions and Job Descriptions

The organization of the church staff parallels that of the Session. Both are intended to align with the church's mission statement. The senior pastor functions as head of staff in a capacity similar to that of the Coordinating Council. At the next level are ordained and program staff with responsibilities for worship (the Director of Music Ministry), education (the Associate Pastor for Youth and Their Families, the Director of Adult Education, and the Director of Children's Ministry), ministries (the Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Discipleship, the Director of Recreation Ministries, and the Director of the Early Preschool), missions (the Associate Pastor for Missions and Outreach), resources (the executive pastor), and governance (the Senior Pastor). They in turn supervise support staff, and in some cases additional program staff, in their areas of responsibility.

The current list of positions and job descriptions for the church staff is included in the Appendix. This list is revised and maintained by the Personnel Committee.

13. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS (G-1.05)

13.1 How and When Convened

The congregation must meet at least annually. The principal business conducted at the annual meeting is the election of ruling elders and deacons. Special meetings may be called as needed (G-1.0501).

Congregational meetings may be called by Session or Presbytery whenever they determine it necessary. In addition, the Session must call a meeting when requested to do so in writing by one-fourth of the active members. Public notice of the meeting must be given on two successive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following the notice given on the second Sunday.

13.2 QUORUM

All members on the church's active roll who are present at the meeting are entitled to vote. A quorum is one tenth of the church's active members. The senior pastor normally serves as moderator. Before calling the meeting to order he shall obtain from the deacon serving as head usher, or from another deacon specially appointed for that purpose, a count of members present. Comparing this to the number of currently enrolled members, as reported by the clerk, he shall determine whether a quorum is present.

If a quorum is present, the moderator shall call the meeting to order, declare the existence of a quorum, and open the meeting with prayer. If a quorum is not present, the moderator shall nevertheless convene the meeting and offer an opening prayer. The moderator shall then announce the absence of a quorum and inform the congregation that it may recess temporarily, take measures to obtain a quorum, or adjourn the meeting (the *Book of Order* precludes the congregation from fixing a time to which to adjourn). The requirement of a quorum may not be waived, even by unanimous consent, and no other business transacted without a quorum is effective unless ratified by a later meeting at which a quorum is present.

If the number of additional members needed for a quorum is small, the moderator should direct the ushers or other deacons specially selected for the purpose to attempt to obtain the attendance of enough additional members to constitute a quorum. The congregation may hear reports and discuss the business for which the meeting was called while such efforts are under way.

If efforts to obtain a quorum are unsuccessful but the business at hand is urgent, the moderator may inform the congregation of its power act in the absence of a quorum, on peril of later failing to obtain ratification of its action at a duly constituted meeting. If the congregation is willing to proceed, the moderator may submit the issues for which the meeting was called to a vote. While such action is null and void unless formally ratified, it may guide the Session in determining how to respond to the urgent circumstances that precipitated the meeting.

Before a meeting without a quorum is adjourned, the Executive Council of the Session, acting through a poll of its members as provided in Section 11.7, pursuant to its powers under Section 7.2, may fix the date for another congregational meeting and announce it to the congregation. The meeting may then be held as early as the following Sunday.

13.3 MINUTES

The clerk, or in his absence the associate clerk, serves as secretary of the meeting. If both are absent, the congregation elects a secretary. The minutes of the meeting are transcribed, signed by the moderator and the secretary of the meeting, and submitted to the Session at its next meeting for correction and approval. The minutes shall be available at the next congregational meeting and may be read to the congregation for its additions or corrections if requested. Minutes of congregational meetings are entered in the minute book of the Session.

13.4 MATTERS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED BY THE CONGREGATION

The *Book of Order* specifies the type of business that may be transacted at a congregational meeting to the following (G-1.0503):

1) Matters related to the electing of ruling elders, deacons, and trustees;
2) Matters related to the calling of a teaching elder or teaching elders;
3) Matters related to the pastoral relationship, such as changing the call, or requesting or consenting or declining to consent to dissolution;
4) Matters related to buying, mortgaging, or selling real property (G-4.0206); and
5) Matters related to requesting the presbytery to grant an exemption as permitted by the constitution (G-5.05), and matters related to approving the creation of a joint congregational witness, or amending or dissolving the joint congregational witness (G-5.05).[43]

All business falling within one of these categories is in order at the annual meeting. The congregation may also hear a variety of informational reports. The business transacted at a special meeting is limited to the items specifically listed in the call for the meeting (G-1.0501).

14. THE CHURCH CORPORATION (G-4.01)

First Presbyterian Church was chartered as a Tennessee corporation on October 19, 1871, under the name "Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church at Nashville" for the purpose of holding title to property. A restated charter and by-laws, which are included in the Appendix, were adopted by the members of the corporation at its annual meeting on November 7, 1984.

The members of the corporation are the communing members of the congregation. The Session serves as the board of directors. The corporation has two officers, a president and a secretary, who are elected by the board of directors at its annual meeting in November. The clerk of Session typically serves as president of the corporation and is responsible for timely annual renewal of the charter with the Tennessee Secretary of State's office. The officers may buy, sell, or mortgage the corporation's real property only if the transaction is approved by a majority of the members of the corporation.

The corporation holds title to the land and improvements at 4815 Franklin Road, constituting the church's current campus. This property was conveyed to the corporation by deed dated June 21, 1949 from John and Susan Cheek.

Following the reunion in 1983 of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), churches within the denomination were allowed by vote of the congregation to exempt themselves from any of the requirements in the PCUSA *Book of Order* relating to church property to which they were not subject prior to reunification (G-4.0208). A church exercising this option "shall hold title to its property and exercise its privileges of incorporation and property ownership under the provisions of the Constitution to which it was subject immediately prior to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." First Presbyterian Church, a former PCUS congregation, voted in September 1983 to take advantage of this exception. This had the effect, among other things, of allowing the church to sell, encumber, or lease its property without the approval of Presbytery.

ENDNOTES:
1 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
2 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
3 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
4 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
5 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
6 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
7 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
8 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
9 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
10 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
11 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
12 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
13 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
14 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2023.
15 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2023.
16 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2023.
17 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
18 Amended and approved by Session 12/12/2022.
19 Amended and approved by Session 12/12/2022.
20 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2013.
21 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2023.
22 Amended and approved by Session 4/22/2025.
23 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
24 Amended and approved by Session 3/16/2016.
25 Amended and approved by Session 5/19/2026.
26 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
27 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
28 Amended and approved by Session 1/30/2023.
29 Amended and approved by Session 3/28/2022.
30 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
31 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
32 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
33 Amended and approved by Session 9/27/2021.
34 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
35 Amended and approved by Session 4/27/2015.
36 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
37 Amended and approved by Session 12/19/2023.
38 Amended and approved by Session 1/28/2025.
39 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
40 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.
41 Amended and approved by Session 9/26/2016.
42 Amended and approved by Session 1/24/2022.
43 Amended and approved by Session 12/14/2015.