

Policy #10: Moderators of Session

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“The pastor of a congregation shall be the moderator of the session of that congregation. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall both be considered moderators and have provisions for designating who presides at a particular meeting. If it is impractical for the pastor to moderate, he or she shall invite another minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a member of the presbytery or a person authorized by the presbytery to serve as moderator. If there is no installed pastor, or if the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall make provision for a moderator.” (G-3.0104)

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta makes the following provisions for moderators of session:

1. When a minister of the Word and Sacrament has been approved to serve as installed pastor of a congregation, they are appointed as the moderator of session upon the effective date of the relationship, unless otherwise stated.
2. A ruling elder commissioned as Commissioned Ruling Elder may serve as moderator of session in accordance with the provisions of their commission.
3. A minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a member of another presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may moderate the session of a congregation when they have been approved to labor in the bounds of the Presbytery in an interim or contract call relationship with that congregation.
4. An installed pastor may invite another minister member of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta (including those serving in that congregation) to serve as moderator without further approval. The Commission on Ministry also maintains a list of ruling elders and ministers of other presbyteries who are also authorized to moderate a session upon invitation of the installed pastor. Ruling elders on such list may not moderate the session of the congregation of which they are a member.
5. It is not appropriate for the moderator of session to pass the chair to the clerk of session or another ruling elder from that congregation without the moderator of session present. The moderator of session may choose to step out of the meeting and allow the session to discuss the matter informally while the meeting is in recess, but the moderator must return to preside over the vote. Such a leadership role is not considered a conflict of interest. If it is anticipated that such a discussion will not be routine, the pastor should invite another approved person to moderate.
6. When there is no installed pastor, the minister of the Word and Sacrament in an interim or contract call pastor relationship with the congregation is considered the moderator of session unless the terms of such relationship specify otherwise.
7. If there is a vacancy in the pastoral relationship and there is an associate pastor continuing in service to the congregation, the associate pastor or another person may be appointed as moderator of session by the Commission on Ministry.
8. When there is no minister of the Word and Sacrament in any relationship with a congregation, or there is other cause for the Presbytery to make ongoing provision for a

moderator, the Commission on Ministry names the moderator upon recommendation of the Congregational Consultant.

9. When there is no appointed moderator, or if for any reason the appointed moderator cannot serve, the following persons may serve as moderator of session for any congregation in the Presbytery without further approval:
 - a. the Executive Presbyter;
 - b. the Stated Clerk;
 - c. a Congregational Consultant;
 - d. the Executive Director of the New Church Development Commission;
 - e. a co-moderator of the Commission on Ministry; or
 - f. any ruling elder or minister of the Word and Sacrament so designated on the Commission on Ministry's list of authorized moderators.

The moderator of session under this policy is also the moderator of any meetings of the congregation not moderated by the installed pastor of the congregation (G-1.0505). Any person named in #9 above may serve as moderator of a congregational meeting if it is impractical for the moderator of session to preside or to invite another person under G-1.0505.

When a congregation is considering the session's recommendations for changes to a pastor's terms of call under G-2.0804, the pastor may remain as moderator of the congregational meeting or may temporarily invite the clerk of session to preside at the meeting to allow space for questions before the pastor returns to the chair to preside over the vote.