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Policy #15,
FIRST CALL PROGRAM, Procedural Document

First Call Pastors (FCP) Program
Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

INTRODUCTION

The First Call Pastors program supports and encourages newly ordained pastors as they grow into faithful ministers of the gospel. This required two year program is a partnership between the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, newly ordained pastors, and their congregations.

The transition between seminary and the parish is both exciting and precarious. In an effort to support our First Call Pastors (FCP's) the Presbytery requires their participation in a First Call Pastors' Program comprised of these three key components:

- 1. Mentoring (see page 2)**
- 2. Consultation Group (see page 3)**
- 3. Coaching (see page 4)**
- 4. Addendum (see page 6)**

FCP BEST PRACTICES (based on Best Practices drawn from research from COTE and Lilly Foundation studies)

To be faithful and successful, first call pastors need encouragement and training in:

- **self-understanding related to their role as pastor.** (identity)
- **managing personal boundaries & self care.** (body, mind, spirit)
- **understanding the congregation served in terms of history, ethos, programs, status in the community, and the relation to the denomination.** (detectives of the context)
- **establishing an appropriate leadership, pastoral, and relationship style for their congregation.** (spiritual integrity, ethics and genuine pastoral authenticity vs. management)
- **understanding and dealing with conflicts that may emerge in the congregation.**
 - (culture, family systems, prayer, and conflict & organizational dynamics)

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- **acquiring basic organizational & administrative skills** (prioritizing, delegating, recording, meeting leadership, time management)

By fully investing time, energy, and resources in all dimensions of the FCP Program, our prayer is that everyone involved will grow in spirit and wisdom as members of the body of Christ. We especially pray that our newly ordained pastors will experience this program as God's blessing and gift as they live into their call to grow healthy vital congregations.

Expectations of the First Call Pastor

- ❖ Make the FCP Program a priority in your schedule
- ❖ Participate fully in all 3 components: **mentoring, the consultation group, coaching**
- ❖ Prepare a brief annual report for your session summarizing your experiences in the program

Funding of the FCP Program

The funding of the FCP Program will be shared by the calling congregation and the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.

An FCP's terms of call (or contract in the case of Contract Call) shall include \$400.00 per year for the first two years for the FCP Program. For installed pastors the church shall pay \$800 to the Presbytery at the pastor's start date; for contract pastors the church shall pay \$400 at the start of each contract year.

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta will include a line item in the annual budget for the FCP Program. The fees from the calling congregations along with the money designated from the Presbytery line item will combine to cover the cost of hiring the facilitator(s) of the consultation group and to help underwrite fees for coaching.

FCP MENTORING PROGRAM

The goal of the mentoring component of the FCP Program is to provide the FCP with a covenant relationship with a healthy, experienced pastor in which the FCP can receive guidance, support and practical advice during the first two years of parish ministry.

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When an FCP enters the Presbytery the Congregational Consultant will seek a suitable mentor pairing for the FCP, taking into consideration geographic proximity, size of congregation, gender, and ministry experience.

Mentors are asked to make a *two year* commitment. The mentoring relationship will be reviewed after one year to determine if it is necessary to consider a new mentoring relationship based on the needs of both mentor and mentee.

Expectations of FCP Mentee:

- ❖ Meet face to face with your mentor monthly.
- ❖ Maintain healthy boundaries with your mentor (see Appendix “First Call Pastor Mentor/Mentee Program” document.)
- ❖ Inform Consultation Group Facilitator or Congregational Consultant of any issues regarding this relationship.

Expectations of FCP Mentors:

- ❖ Meet face to face with your FCP monthly. Be available by email and phone in between meetings.
- ❖ Read and discuss the attached Appendix “First Call Pastor Mentor/Mentee Program” with your mentee at the start of the relationship.
- ❖ Pray regularly for your colleague.
- ❖ Encourage and guide your FCP to participate fully in all 3 components:
mentoring, consultation group, coaching.
- ❖ Encourage your mentee to engage in continuing education opportunities that align with Best Practices named in the Introduction on page 1 and which meet identified areas of growth for your FCP.
- ❖ Maintain healthy boundaries with your mentee.
- ❖ Inform Consultation Group Facilitator or Congregational Consultant of any issues regarding this relationship.

FCP CONSULTATION GROUP

The goal of the FCP Consultation Group is to provide:

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- A “safe place” for discussing concerns, frustrations, victories, fears and insights
- A diminished sense of isolation
- A way to promote self-care
- A way to encourage personal, emotional, and spiritual growth
- A place to exchange ideas, garner support, and build relationships

Expectations of FCP

- ❖ Attend monthly Consultation Group Meetings
- ❖ Maintain healthy boundaries with colleagues

The First Call Pastor Consultation Group will meet under the direction of an ordained, professional group facilitator, selected by the Executive Presbyter (E.P). The Consultation Group Facilitator will be accountable to and report to the E.P. and the C.O.M. Care of Church Professionals sub-committee. The Group Facilitator and the E.P. will evaluate the effectiveness of the components of the FCP Program semi-annually and recommend changes to the program as needed.

Expectations of the FCP Consultation Group Facilitator:

- ❖ Schedule, plan and lead monthly meetings focused on the above goals
- ❖ Keep the current roster of FCP's and track attendance at the Consultation Group meetings.
- ❖ Check in with FCP's on their mentor/mentee experiences
- ❖ Check in with FCP's on their coaching experiences
- ❖ Report to Care of Church Professionals sub-committee quarterly

When an FCP enters the Presbytery the Congregational Consultant will introduce the FCP to the Consultation Group Facilitator. Depending on their entry date into the Presbytery, new members of the Consultation Group will begin to meet with the group in either January or July and continue for 2 full years. The Facilitator is responsible for tracking progress of the FCP throughout the program.

FCP COACHING

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The goals of the Coaching component of the FCP Program are to:

- Encourage FCP's to identify specific areas for growth, personally and professionally, as they begin their ministry
- Provide opportunities for excellent coaching in order to facilitate clear growth in an identified area
- Encourage a life-long habit of setting personal and professional goals and seeking out the means to address these goals

When an FCP has been in their pastoral position for 6 months the Consultation Group Facilitator will provide a list of coaches. All coaches will be certified by the International Federation of Coaches and vetted by the Executive Presbyter.

The presbytery shall pay for a minimum of four coaching sessions. We strongly encourage FCP's to continue working with the coach throughout their two years in the FCP Program. An FCP may request additional financial support from the presbytery but will also be expected to pay a portion of additional coaching fees.

Expectations for the Congregation:

- ❖ Pray for your FCP and their vital transition into ministry.
- ❖ Make the FCP program a priority. The session will receive an annual report from the FCP summarizing the FCP's experiences in the program.
- ❖ Consider having a few of the members of the PNC/APNC or Session serve as advisors and a support team for your FCP.
- ❖ Schedule and publicize that the FCP will be away for certain times or dates to participate fully in this program.
- ❖ Encourage your FCP to participate fully in the 3 components of **mentoring, consultation, and coaching**. The FCP program does not take the place of continuing education. The FCP should also be encouraged to take the continuing education time allotted in his or her contract/terms of call.
- ❖ Offer feedback to your PGA Congregational Consultant about the FCP program, including concerns, questions, and suggestions.

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First Call Pastor Mentor/Mentee Program

Clarification of Mentor/Mentee Roles

“...most effective mentoring relationships occur when mentor and mentee serve as co-participants in a shared community of practice.”

“Seasoned practitioners who have learned to communicate to others the wisdom they have gained through practice are crucial catalysts in creating the conditions for reflective immersion.”

From *“Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry”*
an Alban Institute Special Report, by James P. Wind and David J. Wood

What is a mentor?

A mentor is an individual, often older, always more experienced, who helps and guides another individual’s development.

According to Merriam-Webster ‘to serve as a mentor’ evokes the following verbs: *coach, counsel, guide, lead, pilot, shepherd, show, tutor.*

What’s key in a mentoring relationship?

This covenant relationship between mentor and mentee is three dimensional: mentor, mentee, God’s presence.

“The formative process of mentoring goes beyond a general conversation of how things are going. Instead, the mentor and new pastor review the ministry activities of the last week or month. The mentor helps the new pastor explore key questions about pastoral identity:

How did you experience yourself as a pastor in that situation?

How did you experience God in that moment?

What were the dynamics in the room?

What worked and what would you do differently?

How did you feel when that comment was made?

The mentor also anticipates the “firsts” with the new pastor. Walking through the first wedding rehearsal...the first funeral...the first baptismal preparation class...the first confirmation class...are all opportunities for dialogue and teaching. Preparing for the first time when parish duties interrupt family or personal plans can be an opportunity to explore where to compromise and where to hold firm. Whatever the circumstance, the mentor

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anticipates the learning curve and offers assistance, guidance and support. The conversation between mentor and new pastor follows the action-reflection model that forms the deeper levels of pastoral identity.”

From *Creating the Conditions for New Pastors’ Success*,
Carol Pinkham Oak, Alban Institute website.

“Ministry is peculiarly demanding, and to stay at it, how do you do that? I don’t think sustaining ministry is your problem. I think that’s God’s problem. The only good reason for staying in ministry is theological. Christian pastoral ministry is just too tough to do it by yourself. And I expect that there are some of you who are here this week to find a technique, some knockdown argument for the faith, some new program. Well, forget it. The Kingdom of God is just too demanding to be encapsulated in a technique. If you’re not careful in ministry, you get to where you substitute a program or a technique for the invasion of the living God, and then you just don’t end up with much.”

From *“Pastoral Excellence and Competence”* by William H. Willimon

What’s NOT key in a mentoring relationship?

When considering your role as either mentor or mentee in the FCP program, remember:

- We are NOT asking you to become best friends, but colleagues.
- We do NOT want you to see this as counseling.
- We do NOT expect this to be school with the mentor seen as a professor.
- We do NOT expect you to invest inordinate amounts of your own time or money.

Please contact your Congregational Consultant with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.