

The Report of the Governance Task Force

November 2013

Adopted December 17, 2013

Executive Summary

Since 2007, the congregation and the Session have been dealing with questions about the size of the Session and Diaconate. There has been broad consensus that we should reduce the size of both boards. Reducing the size of these boards, however, requires a reconsideration of how they are organized and what duties they will perform. With respect to the Session, reducing the number of active elders in service without reducing the number of Session duties would overwhelm the capacity of the Session. With this reality in mind, the Session appointed an ad hoc committee in 2009 to address the future of the Session and Diaconate. Using Dan Hotchkiss's book, *Governance and Ministry*, the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance recommended reducing the size of the Session over three years from 25 to 12 and refocusing the Session from *managing programs* to *setting vision* and *creating policies*. The committee also recommended adopting a model for deacons found in *The Book of Order* in which deacons are commissioned individually for service and do not sit on a board. In order to manage these individually commissioned deacons, the committee also recommended forming a six-member Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons and the individually commissioned deacons together would form the Diaconate. The congregation approved this plan in February 2012. At the same time, the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, having completed its assignment, was dismissed with thanks. Beginning with the class of 2015 (elected in 2012 and installed in 2013), the congregation has elected 4 elders and 2 deacons each year. In January 2014, the Session will number 16 elders, and the Board of Deacons will number 11 deacons (with one unexpired term left unfilled). A summary of the Ad Hoc Committee's work is found on pages 2 through 8 of this report and is included for context and background.

In 2013, the Session appointed a second Governance Committee to plan for the transition to the new plan for governance. This report is the culmination of this committee's work. The report's recommendations begin on page 8. The committee recommends that: (1) beginning in 2014, shift the focus of the Session from management to governance as defined in Hotchkiss's *Governance and Ministry*; (2) beginning in 2014, reduce the number of standing committees to five, all of which deal with policy matters; (3) beginning in 2015, divide the Diaconate into a six-member Board of Deacons and an indeterminate number of individually commissioned deacons; (4) beginning in 2014, empower ministry teams, working under the authority of but apart from the Session, to take responsibility for mission and ministry; (5) beginning in 2014, the Session establish a *Policy and Procedures Manual* and be responsible for the policies of the church; and (6) beginning in 2014, ministry teams be responsible to develop procedures, and publish their procedures in the *Policy and Procedure Manual*.

Background

In 2007, the Strategic Planning Committee presented a wide-ranging report to the Session. Among the recommendations contained in that report was the recommendation that the Session take a critical look at our system of governance. (See Appendix 1: Long Range Planning Report, November 2007, esp. recommendations 33.4, 33.5, and 34.1-34.6) In response to these

recommendations, the Session appointed an ad hoc committee in 2011 to complete a study of our current system of governance at FPC and to return with recommendations about how our church might function more effectively in ministry. That committee completed its work and submitted its report to the Session in December, 2011. The Session approved the report and sent it to the congregation for its approval. The congregation gave its approval at the Annual Meeting in 2012.

Summary of the 2011 Ad Hoc Committee Report

The Ad Hoc Governance Committee took up a number of questions, including the question of the size and scope of the work of both our Session and our Diaconate relative to the size of our congregation. The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that because church members have limited time to give to the church, there is a relatively constant pool of time (or man-hours) available for all the tasks that need to be done in the church. By devoting such a large proportion of our volunteer time to service on governing boards, there is less time available for hands-on ministry. The Session adopted the committee's recommendations and took them to the congregation for approval. Beginning with the Class of 2015 (elected in 2012 and installed in January 2013), we have elected 4 elders and 2 deacons to serve on the Session and the Board of Deacons. In 2014 we will have a Session of 16 and a Diaconate of 12. Beginning in 2015 we will have a Session of 12 members and a Board of Deacons of 6 members, and we will have begun commissioning individual deacons to serve under the guidance of the Board of Deacons.

General Philosophy of Governance and Ministry

The Ad Hoc Committee on Governance formulated some very rough ideas about changes that the church might make to render our decision-making processes both more efficient and more effective. The committee studied the book *Governance and Ministry* by Dan Hotchkiss,

and used several of the book's insights to formulate its report. One of the book's key insights is that churches like ours frequently become inefficient, ineffective, and frustrating because we tend to confuse the task of *governance* and the task of *ministry*. People feel frustrated when they volunteer to participate in a ministry, only to find themselves serving on a standing committee which meets and talks, but which takes little concrete action. Hotchkiss provides a helpful description of the tasks of governance and ministry and the differences between them.

Governance and Ministry

Governance and ministry are different tasks, each one of which is necessary for the life and health of the church. Each requires different skills and sensibilities of those who are involved in them. Some people are called to one task, while others are called to another. "Governance," says Hotchkiss, "includes the...tasks of articulating the mission [of the church], selecting a strategy for getting there, making sure it happens, and ensuring that people and property are protected against harm" (Hotchkiss, p. 59). Ministry, on the other hand, "is everything else: the daily, practical work of the congregation, including the rest of the decisions that must be made about what to do and how" (Hotchkiss, p. 59). Governance involves making decisions about overall policy and strategy, evaluating the effectiveness of various ministries, holding persons and groups accountable for their performance, ensuring that people in ministry have the resources they need to accomplish their assigned tasks, and making sure that everyone is safe. Ministry involves the hands-on work of creating results. One way to understand the difference between governance and ministry is to look at what each one produces. "*Governance produces minutes, policies, mission statements, goals, and strategic-planning documents. Ministry brings into being worship services, study groups, mission trips, service projects, mowed lawns, happy*

children, and renewed hope” (Hotchkiss, p. 66). A second way to see the difference between the two tasks is to look at the kinds of people and groups that do each of these tasks most effectively.

Effective governance most typically requires diverse, representative groups of people who sit around tables having orderly discussion. Now and then they may break into smaller groups to make sure everyone’s ideas are heard and considered. Procedure is formal enough to make it clear when the group as a whole has endorsed something and exactly what it has endorsed. Somebody takes minutes, and when a decision is made and written down, the essential work of governance is done. The best group for doing governance is diverse, patient, verbal, and at ease with abstract thinking and intangible work products.

The most effective group—or team—for doing ministry is different in almost every way. First, a ministry team needs to be *unrepresentative*: it systematically excludes everyone who lacks commitment to the task at hand.... The essential qualities of an effective ministry team, in contrast to a governance body, are passion, urgency, unity, problem-solving skills, and a preference for action over talk (Hotchkiss, pp. 66-7).

Both governance and ministry involve making decisions. What differentiate them are the types of decisions they make and what they produce.

Guiding Principles

Based in part on Hotchkiss’s work, the committee proposed that the following principles should guide our thinking about governance and ministry.

- 1) That our system for making decisions at all levels should be aimed at producing effective ministry.
- 2) That decisions should be made as close to a particular ministry as possible.
- 3) That decisions about policy and strategy should be made by the session as the governing body of the church.
- 4) That decisions about management, procedures, and tactics should be made as near to the unit of ministry as possible.
- 5) That as many people as possible should be involved in decision making, consistent with the principles above. Specifically, we should devote fewer human resources to service on

the session and board of deacons, allowing more persons to become involved in meaningful ministry.

- 6) That we should carefully distinguish between governance decisions, which belong to the session, and ministry decisions, which belong to staff and committees:
 - a) Let ministry decisions be made by those involved in ministry.
 - b) Let governance decisions be made by those elected for the purpose of governance.

The Proposal

In order to create a more effective environment in which to accomplish effective ministry, the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance proposed the following actions for congregational approval, and the congregation approved them on February 5, 2012:

1. Redefine the scope of the work of the Session in order to allow the Session to focus on the task of governance, rather than on ministry programming. The session's tasks would be to develop and maintain the church's policies, engage in ongoing strategic planning, evaluate all of the ministries of the church on a regular basis, hold persons and groups accountable for their performance, and perform those tasks specifically assigned to it by the *Book of Order* (G-3.0201).
2. Reconstitute all of the current program committees as free standing ministry groups, separate and apart from, but accountable to, the Session. The greatest tasks of the Session would be to develop policies to guide the work of each of these ministry groups, to define more completely the relationship between the Session and the ministry groups, and to evaluate the work of all ministries on a regular basis, and to provide funding for each ministry.

3. Reduce the size of the Session over a three-year period from 26 to 13 members. In order to accomplish this goal, direct the Nominating Committee beginning in 2012 to bring 4 nominees for Ruling Elder, instead of 8, to the congregation for election each year, each of whom would serve a three-year term. Direct the Nominating Committee to bring one youth nominee each year who would serve a one-year term. In 2013, there would be 21 members of the Session; in 2014, there would 17 members; and in 2015 there would be 13 members.
4. Adopt a dual structure for our Diaconate in which most deacons serving at any time would be “individually commissioned deacons.” Individually commissioned deacons are persons who are elected by the congregation and commissioned individually to specific tasks in the life of the church. The *Book of Order* up until this year contained the following language concerning deacons:

“The deacons of a particular church shall be organized in one or both of the following ways: a. they may be organized as a board, of which the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors shall be advisory members... b. They may be individually commissioned by the session to particular tasks consistent with the responsibility of their office. The session shall ordinarily conduct an annual review of their service, at which time their commission may be renewed, altered, or terminated.” (G-6.0403)

In the most recent *Book of Order*, which has been shortened considerably, the language is simply: “Deacons may be individually commissioned or organized as a board of deacons.” (G-2.0202)

If this proposal is adopted, we could have as many individually commissioned deacons as we want. Direct management of the work of the deacons would be lodged in a much smaller board of deacons consisting of 6 members. Individually commissioned deacons would work under the direct guidance of the Board of Deacons. The work of the entire Diaconate would be ultimately accountable to the Session. Individual deacons would be

selected by individual interview, ordained by the Session, and commissioned to specific forms of service by the Session. While these deacons would not be required to attend meetings of the Board of Deacons, they would meet periodically with others in their ministry area for ongoing ministry training, coordination, planning, and evaluation.

5. Begin the practice of identifying and commissioning individual deacons who work under the guidance of the Board of Deacons and are assigned to specific ministries. These individually commissioned deacons would be selected by individual interview, or if necessary nominated for ordination by the Nominating Committee and ordained by the Session, and commissioned to specific forms of service by the Session and supervised by the Board of Deacons. These individually commissioned deacons and the Board of Deacons together would comprise the Diaconate of the church.
6. Reduce the size of the Board of Deacons over a three-year period, from 24 members to 6 members. The Board of Deacons would guide and direct the work of the individually commissioned deacons. Theirs would be an administrative role. In order to accomplish this goal, direct the Nominating Committee beginning in 2012 to bring 2 nominees for deacon to the congregation for election each year.
7. Establish the following standing committees on the Session:
 - a. The Budget and Finance Committee
 - b. The Personnel Committee
 - c. The Safety and Risk Management Committee
 - d. The Governance Committee
 - e. The Planning and Evaluation Committee

8. Establish the following ministry groups for the effective management of mission and ministries, which would not be required to have a Session member in charge
 - a. The Christian Education Ministry Group, including:
 1. Adult Ministry
 2. Student Ministries
 3. Children's Ministry
 - b. The Outreach Ministry Group (i.e., evangelism)
 - c. The Mission Ministry Group (i.e., service outside the congregation)
 - d. The Worship Ministry Group
 - e. The Fellowship Ministry Group

Recommendations of the 2013 Governance Task Force

Based on the work of the Ad Hoc Governance Committee and its 2011 report, the Governance Task Force now makes the following recommendations:

1. That beginning in January 2014, the Session shall focus on the task of governance, including strategic planning, visioning, and developing policies to guide the ministries of the church.
2. That beginning in January 2014, the Session shall establish the following Standing Committees of the Session to be chaired by members of the Session and composed of Session members and other members of the congregation at the invitation of the Session:
 - a. Planning & Evaluation. The Planning & Evaluation Committee will be responsible for developing a periodic strategic planning process, monitoring the progress of a strategic plan's implementation, and leading a regular process of evaluation of the church's ministries. This committee will be responsible for scheduling reports of

individual ministry teams and other groups, such as the Board of Deacons, Presbyterian Women, Men of the Church, etc.

- b. Risk Management. The Risk Management Committee will be responsible for assessing risk and recommending policies to mitigate risk in all areas of the church, recognizing that ministry always involves a certain level of risk.
 - c. Budget & Finance. The Budget & Finance Committee will work with the Treasurer to lead the process of developing the annual budget, monitor monthly income and expenses, and recommend to the Session appropriate financial control policies.
 - d. Personnel. The Personnel Committee will be responsible for maintaining the personnel policies, providing for annual review of all employees, annually reviewing all employee compensation, and recommending to the Session any changes to the personnel policies.
 - e. Governance. The Governance Committee will be responsible for maintaining the overall system of governance of the church, and assigning elders and co-opted members (if any) to serve on Session committees. The committee will be chaired by the Clerk of Session.
3. That beginning in January 2015 the Diaconate be composed of two major parts:
- a. The Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons will be composed of 6 deacons nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the congregation, serving in three classes of two deacons each. The Board of Deacons will be responsible for assessing the pastoral care needs of the church and for guiding and directing the work of individually commissioned deacons.

- b. Individually Commissioned Deacons. The church will select as many persons as necessary to be the church's frontline caregivers. These deacons will be commissioned by the Session to work under the guidance and direction of the Board of Deacons. Individually commissioned deacons will be elected by the congregation in the usual manner, but the Nominating Committee will pay special attention to the suggestions of the Board of Deacons regarding those to be elected. Once elected and trained, the ICDs will be examined by the Session and commissioned pending ordination and/or installation. Once commissioned and installed, ICDs will serve for a year at a time and may be re-commissioned by the Session for up to a total of 6 years of service, after which an ICD must take at least a one-year sabbatical.
 - c. During 2014, the Diaconate will begin the process of reorganizing itself into a Board and ICDs.
4. That beginning in January 2014, other ministry groups and teams be empowered and enabled to serve on their own under the general supervision of the Session. By general supervision we mean that all ministry groups and teams shall:
 - a. Report at least annually to the Session, and whenever Session asks for a report, whether written or verbal
 - b. Work within the policies set by the Session
 - c. Bring any major decisions before the Session for the Session's concurrence. The purpose of this requirement is to make sure major decisions fall within the Session's own understanding of the church's policies. When a proposed action does indeed fit within church policy but the Session believes the proposed decision is unwise, the

Session must articulate a new policy which would proscribe the proposed decision or action.

- d. Ministry team leadership shall be appointed by the Session, except in the case of organizations within the church which operate under a set of bylaws approved by the Session.
- e. Ministry groups and teams are free to incorporate any member of the church into its membership. Persons who are not on the active rolls of the church may also be incorporated into a group's membership except as proscribed by policies enacted by the Session. (An example of a ministry which might not be open to non-members is teaching Sunday school.)
- f. That in January 2014, the following ministry groups and teams will be immediately recognized or established by the Session, and a schedule of reporting established:
 1. Presbyterian Women
 2. Men of the Church
 3. The Christian Education Department
 4. The Church Fellowship Ministry Team
 5. The Mission and Outreach Ministry Team
 6. The Potter House Board
 7. The Evangelism Ministry Team
 8. The Worship and Music Ministry Team
 9. The Fine Arts Ministry Team
 10. A Senior Adult Ministry Team
 11. The Building and Grounds Committee

12. The Prayer Ministry Team

13. A Volunteer Coordination Ministry Team

- g. Other ministry teams may be formed at any time by any group of church members who have a passion for a particular mission or ministry. To form a new ministry team, church members shall prepare a proposal for the Session, which shall include the purpose and scope of the proposed ministry, persons who will be served and what benefit they will receive, ministry team members, and resources required. The Session, at its discretion, may approve or disapprove the proposal, or require more information before giving its approval. Implicit in the act of approval is the Session's permission for the group to proceed. Before approving a new ministry team, the Session must determine if the ministry itself fits within the vision and goals of the church.
5. That in 2014, the Session shall establish a manual of policies and procedures to govern the life and work of the congregation. Policies are the responsibility of the Session; procedures are the responsibility of particular ministry teams or the church staff. The manual should be easily amended and widely available to all church members. Actions of the Session should ordinarily be in the form of amendments to the policy section of the *Policy and Procedure Manual*.
6. That beginning in 2014, ministry teams shall develop whatever procedures are necessary to accomplish their work, and shall develop any booklets, brochures, or any other materials they deem necessary to publicize their work, based on the *Policy and Procedure Manual*. For example, the Worship Committee shall keep and maintain a booklet for prospective brides and grooms, a booklet for families planning services of

Witness to the Resurrection, and families wishing to baptize a child. These booklets need not simply reproduce the relevant sections of the *Policy and Procedure Manual*, but should provide appropriate guidance based on the *Manual*, quoting specific policies when necessary. Other ministry groups shall develop similar booklets and brochures as necessary.