

Governance Task Force
FINAL PROPOSAL
Presbytery of Great Rivers
August 2025

The Presbytery of Great Rivers will be structured with a Leadership Council, six standing Commissions, three committees required by the Book of Order, and three teams to provide specialized service in the event of crises.

Commission and team members will be selected for their unique gifts, nominated by the Nominating Committee, and elected by the Presbytery to serve one 3-year term. Terms may be renewable for one additional 3-year term. The exception is the Nominating Committee, whose members will be nominated by the Leadership Council. Commission members shall be both teaching and ruling elders, who reflect the diverse make-up of the Presbytery. The Leadership Council and each commission will have the authority to appoint task groups and response teams and invite individuals as necessary to fulfill their particular responsibilities.

Because the desire for relationships and connection is an inherent value in the Presbytery of Great Rivers, regional cohorts have been created to build connections, share resources, enable cooperation, and facilitate opportunities for service in each area of the Presbytery. It is our hope that the cohorts will enable us to live into the ideal of being 82 connected congregations in the body of Christ rather than 82 individual, unrelated churches each trying to figure out the church, culture, and world in isolation.

The goal of this structure is to make manifest the connective nature of our church and to help us better align our outward behavior, structure, and expression with our internal values and mission—community, communication, connection, cooperation, compassion, consistency, collegiality, and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Leadership Council (16-22 members)

Purpose: To continually develop, evaluate, and recommend to the Presbytery Assembly the ongoing vision, priorities, and actions for the Presbytery of Great River. The Council will work collaboratively with all parts of the Presbytery structure and is accountable to the Presbytery.

Membership: The Leadership Council will be comprised of the Presbytery Moderator, Presbytery Moderator-Elect, Immediate Past Presbytery Moderator, co-moderators/moderators of the Commission on Pastoral Leadership, Commission on Congregational Life, Commission on Transitions, Mission Commission, and Operations Commission; co-moderators of the Committee on Accessibility, Representation, and Equity (CARE) and Nominating Committee; Synod Commissioners; the Lead Presbyter; the Stated Clerk; and the Treasurer. The Immediate Past Presbytery Moderator will serve as the Leadership Council Moderator.

Responsibilities:

- Propose missional priorities and goals each year
- Coordinate and evaluate the needs and functions of the Presbytery
- Oversee and ensure the coordination of the committees, ministry teams, commissions, and ministry groups of the presbytery in meeting the missional priorities and goals
- Facilitate information sharing among committees and commissions

- Communicate and coordinate regularly with all parts of the Presbytery, particularly Presbytery Regional Cohorts in consultation with Presbytery staff, Presbytery and Council moderators, commission and committee moderators, and others as may be identified
- Plan and oversee presbytery meetings
- Initiate or respond to requests to plan and implement Presbytery-sponsored events and initiatives
- Coordinate relationships with General Assembly, Synod, and ecumenical partners
- Process overtures from the Bills and Overtures Committee
- Routinely assess and suggest revisions to governance structure of presbytery
- Assume original jurisdiction in matters of church discipline on behalf of the presbytery when there is a need between stated meetings
- Nominate, for Presbytery election, persons to serve on the Presbytery Nominating Committee and Disaster Response Team
- Act for and on behalf of the Presbytery of Great Rivers as needed between regular Assemblies

Commission on Pastoral Leadership

Purpose: To foster the faith and vitality of and provide support for persons discerning calls to the ministries of Commissioned Pastor and Minister of Word and Sacrament and, after ordination, at all other stages and types of ministry—pastors, associate pastors, designated pastors, interim pastors, honorably retired teaching elders, stated supply, temporary supply, teaching elders in specialized ministry, inquirers, candidates, commissioned pastors, certified Christian educators, and ministers at-large with personal support and group opportunities for learning and building relationships with colleagues.

Membership: 12 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

- Support, nurture, and strengthen those in pastoral ministry in its many forms (such as Certified Christian Educators, congregational, validated, at large, and retired)
- Establish pastoral relationships: ordain, receive, install, and commission
- Facilitate requests for validated ministries and approve ordainable calls
- Approve the terms of call and covenants/contracts for pastors, approve the commissions for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs), validate other ministries, examine and receive minister members by transfer from other presbyteries for membership at large or retired status in the Presbytery, approve the terms of dissolution of pastoral calls, approve internal Presbytery changes in membership category, and approve transfer of membership to other presbyteries
- Act upon requests to labor inside and outside the bounds of PGR; all temporary, supply, interim, and CP relationships; placement on the Presbytery pulpit supply list, and authorizing CPs to celebrate the Lord's supper, baptism, and moderate a Session
- Recommend for Presbytery action minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for pastors in installed or temporary pastoral relationships, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, certified Christian educators, and certified associate Christian educators
- Arrange for required annual boundary training
- Guide, nurture and oversee the process of becoming a teaching elder, commissioned ruling elder, or certified Christian educator [G-3.0301a, G-3.0307]
- Evaluate preparation of ministers from other denominations seeking membership

- Administer scholarships to candidates, inquirers, and those training to become Commissioned Pastors; funds for pastoral leaders attending transitional ministry training and needing financial support for coaching and other continuing education
- Coordinate with pastors on sabbaticals and their congregations
- Visit regularly and communicate with each pastor of the Presbytery
- Report to the Presbytery annually the type of work in which each Minister of Word and Sacrament of the Presbytery is engaged
- Provide an annual review of those members working in validated ministry beyond a particular congregation (Book of Order G- 2.0503a)
- Provide training and oversight for non-PCUSA ministers serving congregations
- Moderator(s) serve on Ministry Coordination Group with CCL and COT Moderator(s)

Commission on Transitions

Purpose: Assist and guide congregations and Sessions through times of pastoral leadership changes

Membership: 6 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

- Counsel with sessions regarding temporary pastoral services when a church is without a minister of Word and Sacrament (MWS) and provide the names of available and suitable MWSs and CPs (commissioned pastors) to supply vacant pulpits
- In consultation with CPL and CCL, examine and receive minister members by transfer from other presbyteries for the purpose of accepting valid calls to ministry and membership in the Presbytery
- Recommend to the Presbytery the establishment of an Administrative Commission to ordain/install clergy
- Counsel with churches regarding calls for permanent pastoral relationships and options with CPs
- Provide support for congregations without pastors, including assigning moderators and pastoral leaders who can officiate the sacraments
- Guide Sessions through the pastoral call process
- Work with Pastor (or Associate Pastor) Nominating Committees on the MDP and PDP process
- Help churches discern if it is time to complete their mission and close
- Moderator(s) serve on Ministry Coordination Group with CPL and CCL Commissions
Moderator(s)

Commission on Congregational Life

Purpose: To promote and nurture healthy, faith-filled relationships within and among congregations and the Presbytery of Great Rivers

Membership: 12 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

- Maintain ongoing communication regarding the life and ministry of each congregation
- Assess the needs of congregations and, if necessary, refer them to appropriate commission/committee for assistance

- Train sessions in conflict resolution, leadership, and other pertinent topics
- Help churches share their good news stories and best practices with each other and the presbytery
- Facilitate relationships between and within congregations and the presbytery [G-3.0307]
- Check in routinely with regional cohort coordinators
- Share information about and, as appropriate, connect members/congregations to affinity groups
- Provide resources, training, and connections for new church development (NCD) / new worshipping communities (NWC) and church transformation
- Organize, receive, merge, dismiss, and dissolve congregations in consultations with members [G-3.0301a]
- Authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper at meetings, fellowship, NCDs and other non-congregational entities [G-3.0301b]
- Take jurisdiction over members of dissolved congregations [G-3.0301c]
- Review and counsel sessions in matters of controversy, complaint, or appeal [G-3.0303d]
- Control the location of new congregations [G-3.0303b]
- Recommend to the Leadership Council the appointment of administrative commissions to assume original jurisdiction (after Sessions have been given the opportunity to be heard) [G-3.0303e]
- Moderator(s) serve on Ministry Coordination Group with CPL and COT Moderator(s)

Ministry Coordination Group

Purpose: to ensure regular and ongoing communication among the Commission on Pastoral Leadership, Commission on Congregational Life, and Commission on Transitions; and to facilitate cooperation when more than one commission has a role in a given situation. Consists of moderators/co-moderators of CPL, CCL, and COT; Stated Clerk; and Lead Presbyter.

Mission Commission

Purpose: To promote and nurture the missional action of the Presbytery of Great Rivers

Membership: 6 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

Connection

- Develop and maintain skills/interest bank of people throughout the Presbytery and make it available to committees and congregations
- Connect congregations to PC(USA) and Synod of Lincoln Trails (SOLT) and other appropriate resources in support of congregational mission and witness [G-3.0302]
- Collect and share stories of congregational mission within the presbytery
- Encourage, nurture, resource congregations in their efforts to spread good news, make disciples, offer hospitality

Collaboration

- Encourage collaboration among congregations and pastoral leaders for mission, social justice, peacemaking, and facilitate communication among them
- Explore opportunities for mission partnerships between presbytery and other agencies

Support

- Receive, review, refine grant requests and make recommendations to the Leadership Council for disbursement

- Act on requests for grants and loans from presbytery funds
- Coordinate disposition of received external grants
- Recommend to the Leadership Council the distribution of the Presbytery's portion of the Peacemaking Offering
- Support innovative, creative, and connectional congregational ministries that enhance the vitality of congregations and empower leaders. This support may include training, resources, grants, and accompaniment.

Operations Commission

Purpose: To provide organizational support to the daily operation of the Presbytery of Great Rivers, to hold the Presbytery accountable to its members, and to comply with all state-mandated not-for-profit organizational requirements.

Membership: 9 members, including two co-moderators from different classes, to ensure continuity

Responsibilities

- Serve as Board of Trustees for the Presbytery of Great Rivers
- Prepare, coordinate, and integrate the budget of the presbytery
- Facilitate all trustee and audit functions
- Consult with churches regarding the purchase, sale, and lease of property Conduct annual reviews and evaluations of the work of all staff members and the Stated Clerk
- Review staff position descriptions and update as needed
- Maintain/develop staffing rationale for the Presbytery
- Work with the Lead Presbyter to advertise, interview, and hire staff for positions as authorized by the presbytery assembly
- Make recommendations for changes in staff compensation for budgetary purposes
- Recommend to Presbytery through Leadership Council the dismissal of staff for cause
- Assist in conflict management among staff
- Provide assistance/guidance as needed to LP who serves as Head of Staff
- Review/refine, as needed, personnel policies

Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC)

Purpose: Shall consider and decide cases of process for the Presbytery according to the Rules of Discipline [G-3.0109a]

Membership: Composed of no fewer than 7 members as equally divided as possible between ruling elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament/teaching elders, with not more than one of its elder members from any one of its constituent churches. Commissioners shall be nominated by the Presbytery Nominating Committee and elected by the Presbytery Assembly. The members shall be elected in three classes, and not more than one-half of the members shall be in one class. No person having served upon the Commission for a full six years shall be eligible for re-election until being off the PJC for at least two years. The Commission shall elect from its members a Moderator and a clerk.

D-3.0206b requires the Stated Clerk to keep a roster of those members of the PJC whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. Whenever the PJC reports its inability to obtain a quorum, the

stated clerk shall immediately select, by rotation from that roster, a sufficient number of former members of the PJC to constitute a quorum.

Responsibilities: The PJC shall have the powers and obligations in contested matters of governance, worship, and discipline as set forth in Church Discipline.

COMMITTEES

Committee on Accessibility, Representation, and Equity (CARE)

Purpose: To advise the Presbytery on the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure fair and effective representation in the decision making of the Presbytery.

Membership: 6 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

- Assist the Presbytery of Great Rivers in identifying barriers to participation and access within the work and life of the Presbytery
- Empowering commissions/committees/teams/task forces with considerations, conversations, resources, and recommendations that expand access to the work and life of the Presbytery, with attention to how challenges around inequity and exclusion may arise in their work
- Lead, arrange, and promote opportunities around intercultural competence, cultural humility, and capacity-building efforts for our Presbytery, focusing on issues such as access, equity, gender issues, disability, language, race, culture, and identity, including a once-a-year mandated training on anti-racism, similar to our annual required boundary training
- Help to identify regional agencies in the community of the Presbytery of Great Rivers as well as within the PC(USA) that are doing justice, advocacy, and equity work that the ministries of Great Rivers should be aware of in their partnering efforts for engaging the community, including, but not limited to, charity efforts
- Regularly assess the impact, goals, and purpose of its own work, both internally and with periodic assistance from outside the Presbytery of Great Rivers
- Advise the Council regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity,
- Advocate for diversity in leadership
- Consult with the Council on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403

Nominating Committee

Purpose: to identify people willing and able to serve in leadership roles in the Presbytery and to present them for approval to the Presbytery Assembly.

Membership: 6 members including moderator/co-moderators

Responsibilities:

- Nominate Presbytery Moderator and Moderator-Elect; moderators and members of committees; commissioners and YAADs to the General Assembly; commissioners to the Synod of Lincoln Trails, and other leaders as requested by the Presbytery or Leadership Council
- Nominate corporate officers to the Presbytery for election
- Nominate individuals to serve on the boards of Kemmerer Village and Illinois Presbyterian Home

- Consult with CARE concerning principles of inclusion, non-discrimination, and balance in nominations
- Consult periodically with co-moderators of committees to determine needs for membership

Bills and Overtures Committee

Purpose: Review proposed changes to the Constitution and present them to the presbytery for deliberation and action. Bring to the presbytery any overtures to the General Assembly from any unit of the presbytery or congregation in the Presbytery.

Membership: Composed of the Commissioners to the General Assembly. They shall serve from the Assembly at which they were commissioners until the next Assembly.

TEAMS

Conflict Response Team

Purpose: to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that the difficulties may be corrected by the Session of the church, if possible, and that the welfare of the particular church may be strengthened, so that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest.

Membership: The six members of this committee will be elected for a term of six years. They should be experienced in helping congregations and pastors who are involved in some kind of conflict and have a working knowledge of family systems theory, conflict identification/management strategies, and other relevant practices. Ongoing training will be provided. This Team will be appointed by the Leadership Council and will work with the Lead Presbyter.

The Stated Clerk will keep a roster of those members of the Conflict Response Team whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. Whenever the Conflict Response Team reports its inability to obtain a quorum, the Stated Clerk shall immediately select, by rotation from that roster, a sufficient number of former members of the Conflict Response Team to constitute a quorum.

Responsibilities:

- Serve as an instrument of Presbytery for promoting peace and harmony in each congregation, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations among pastoral leaders and their congregations
- Counsel with sessions as invited concerning reported or observed difficulties within a congregation, including: (1) advising the session as to appropriate actions to be taken to resolve the reported difficulties, (2) offering to help as a mediator, and (3) acting to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unable or unwilling to do so, following the procedural safeguards of the Church Discipline section of the Book of Order
- Recommend, after discernment, to the Leadership Council, the establishment of an Administrative Commission of Presbytery to address issues in particular churches, with or without asserting original jurisdiction

Sexual Misconduct Response Team

Purpose: to ensure that a caring response is made by the Presbytery to individuals who have been harmed following allegations of sexual misconduct within a congregation. **This Team will not investigate an allegation or usurp the roles of PGR staff, investigating committees, or the PJC.**

Membership: Four members, including a Moderator, will be elected for a term of six years. Members of the Team and any individual participating in the work of this Team shall sign a pledge of confidentiality, copies of which shall be furnished to the moderator of the Team and the Stated Clerk. This Team will be appointed by the Leadership Council and work with the Lead Presbyter.

The Stated Clerk will keep a roster of those members of the Sexual Misconduct Response Team whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. Whenever the Sexual Misconduct Response Team reports its inability to obtain a quorum, the Stated Clerk shall immediately select, by rotation from that roster, a sufficient number of former members of the Sexual Misconduct Response Team to constitute a quorum.

Responsibilities:

- Coordinate a process that addresses the specific needs of the alleged victim(s) and their families, those accused and their families, an affected congregation, and the Presbytery
- Assign advocates, if requested by the alleged victims, the accused, family members, or an involved congregation
- Recommend, provide, and participate in education regarding sexual misconduct, its consequences, and its prevention

Disaster Response Team

Purpose: provides the Presbytery with planning and coordination in preparation for and partnered response with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and other agencies to natural or human-caused disasters within the bounds of the Presbytery as well as collective responses to such disasters outside of the Presbytery.

Membership: Up to three individuals will serve as team coordinators and will be elected for a term of six years. They will be appointed by the Leadership Council and will work with the Lead Presbyter.

The Stated Clerk will keep a roster of those members of the Disaster Response Team whose terms have expired within the past six years. The names shall be arranged alphabetically within classes beginning with the most recent class. Whenever the Disaster Response Team reports its inability to obtain a quorum, the Stated Clerk shall immediately select, by rotation from that roster, a sufficient number of former members of the Disaster Response Team to constitute a quorum.

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REGIONAL COHORTS

The Purpose and Value of Our Regional Cohorts

- **Connections:** Getting to know fellow Presbyterians from area churches and building relationships as fellow disciples and as congregations will enrich us individually, build up the body of Christ, and strengthen our witness in each region of the presbytery. Regional cohorts may choose to gather for prayer and worship regularly or for occasional special services, potlucks, studies, or other activities.
- **Resources:** In gathering with others in the same region, churches will have the opportunity to hear about the mission and educational programs that others are engaged in, share

recommendations of COM-approved pulpit supply preachers and local musicians, and swap stories of what materials and programs are engaging the folks in their congregations.

- **Cooperation:** Instead of every session and congregation “reinventing the wheel,” regional gatherings will be a platform to cooperate in fulfilling the requirements and responsibilities of our polity, such as providing training for deacons and elders, clerks of session, and moderators, or confirmation classes for youth. Our Stated Clerk already uses this format—to great success—for Session record reviews. Churches can explore together other forms of cooperation, such as multiple small congregations sharing pastoral leadership.
- **Service:** Regional cohorts will be encouraged to help the presbytery find those elders and ministers who are gifted and called to serve on various committees/teams of PGR. The Nominating Committee will keep the groups informed of the vacancies and needs and will take nominations from the regional cohorts to the presbytery.

Regional Cohorts

After an initial gathering, organized by the Lead Presbyter, the cohort gatherings will select a coordinator and plan their own events. The coordinator will communicate gathering dates and topics to the Presbytery. Cohorts can re-name themselves, if they choose.

Peoria region (11): Bartonville, Edwards, Elmwood, Eureka, Farmington, Peoria, Peoria FFC, Peoria UPC, Peoria Westminster, Washington, Yates City

BloNo region (8): Bloomington NCC, Bloomington Second, Bloomington St Luke, Chenoa, Clinton, Danvers, LeRoy, Normal First

Galesburg region (8): Biggsville, Galesburg First, Kirkwood, Knoxville, Media, Monmouth First, Monmouth Sugar Tree Grove, Stronghurst

Mid-eastern region (10): Athens, Delavan, Greenview, Lincoln, Mason City, Middletown, Petersburg, Tallula, Virginia First, Virginia Sangamon Valley

Mid-central region (7): Adair, Bushnell, Canton, Ipava, Lewistown, Macomb First, Macomb Scotland Trinity

Mississippi region (4): Carthage First, Hamilton, Niota, Warsaw

Quad cities region (7): Coal Valley, E Moline, Geneseo, Milan, Orion, Reynolds, Rock Island

North central region (8): Aledo College Ave, Alexis, New Windsor, Oneida, Rio, Seaton, Viola, Woodhull

Springfield region (7): Chatham, Pleasant Plains, Springfield First, Springfield Hope, Springfield Korean, Springfield Third, Springfield Westminster

South-eastern PGR region (7): Carlinville, Carrollton, Divernon, Jacksonville, Virden, Whitehall, Woodson

South-west PGR region (5): Clayton, Mt. Sterling, Perry, Quincy, Rushville

AFFINITY COHORTS

Our hope is that these groups will organically emerge. Contact the Lead Presbyter if you would like to start or join a group. Examples include: Youth and Young Adult Ministries; Singles Ministries; Grief; Congregational Care (Deacons, Stephen Ministry); Stewardship; Rural Ministry; Mission; Facility/Building/Property Use; Churches that have cemeteries; Parish Nurses