



# Employee Handbook For Clergy and Staff

Revised Spring 2018



**INTRODUCTION** ..... 1

**ORGANIZATION**..... 1

History of Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church..... 1

Purpose Statements..... 1

**EMPLOYMENT POLICY STATEMENTS** ..... 2

**AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT** ..... 2

Equal Employment Opportunity..... 2

Anti-Nepotism..... 3

Employment Applications ..... 3

Background Checks..... 3

Drug-Free Workplace ..... 4

Immigration Law Compliance..... 4

Employee Governance..... 4

Open Door..... 4

Conflict Resolution Procedure..... 5

Use of Church Facilities ..... 5

Inspections..... 5

Solicitation and Distribution..... 5

Inquiries from The Media..... 5

Accommodation for Breast Feeding Mothers..... 6

Inclement Weather Before Normal Working Hours ..... 6

Inclement Weather During Normal Working Hours..... 6

**EMPLOYMENT** ..... 7

Employee Status ..... 7

Working Hours..... 7

Get Acquainted Period..... 8

Position Descriptions..... 8

Personnel Records..... 8

Performance Evaluation ..... 8

Resignation and Termination ..... 9

**STANDARDS OF CONDUCT** ..... 10

Harassment Free Workplace ..... 10

**SEXUAL HARRASSMENT** ..... 11

Retaliation Prohibited ..... 12

Drug-Free Workplace ..... 13

**Weapons Prohibition..... 14**

**Safe Sanctuary ..... 14**

**Response and Reporting Procedures ..... 14**

**General Guidelines..... 15**

**Guidelines for Specific Ministries..... 15**

**Standards of Conduct..... 19**

**Disciplinary Action..... 21**

**Ethical Standards/Conflict of Interest ..... 21**

**Attendance..... 22**

**Adherence to “The Book of Discipline” ..... 22**

**Confidentiality..... 22**

**Dress Code ..... 22**

**Smoking Policy..... 22**

**TECHNOLOGY ..... 22**

**Wireless Cellular Device Usage While Driving ..... 22**

**Prohibited Recordings ..... 23**

**Network and Electronic Communications ..... 23**

**Social Media Sites and Blogging ..... 24**

**Use of Personal Technology for Company Business ..... 25**

**Use of Personal Cell Phones and Other Personal Devices ..... 25**

**COMPENSATION ..... 26**

**Pay Periods ..... 26**

**Overtime..... 26**

**Online Timekeeping System ..... 26**

**Payroll Deductions ..... 26**

**Advances and Cashing Checks ..... 26**

**Staff Gifts ..... 26**

**Other Compensation ..... 26**

**Final Paycheck ..... 27**

**Federal and State Unemployment Programs..... 27**

**LEAVES OF ABSENCE..... 27**

**Family and Medical Leave ..... 27**

**Military Family Leave Entitlements..... 28**

**Use of Leave ..... 28**

**Eligibility..... 28**

Definition of Serious Health Condition.....	28
Coordination with the Paid Time Off Policy.....	29
Applying for Family and Medical Leave .....	29
Benefits During Leave of Absence .....	29
Spouses Employed by the Church .....	30
Returning from Leave .....	30
Military Leave.....	30
Bereavement Leave.....	30
Jury Duty Leave.....	31
Personal Leave of Absence.....	31
Mission Trip Leave .....	31
<b>BENEFITS</b> .....	31
Insurance .....	31
Extending Health Coverage When Employment Ends.....	31
Changing Your Benefits Elections.....	32
Holidays .....	33
Paid Time Off (PTO).....	33
Regular Full-Time Employees .....	33
Workers' Compensation Insurance .....	34
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b> .....	35
Telephones.....	35
Safety.....	35
Issuance of Keys .....	35
Employee Photographs .....	35
Expense Reimbursements .....	35
Ministry Expenses Paid by the Use of a Church Credit Card .....	36



## INTRODUCTION

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church (“the Church”) is a member of the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church. As such, the Church is governed by “The Book of Discipline” of the United Methodist Church and by the actions of the Annual Conference of the North Alabama Conference.

This handbook is provided for all lay employees and ordained and diaconal ministers of the United Methodist Church who are affiliated with Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church. You must read this handbook and familiarize yourself with its content. You are encouraged to talk with your supervisor or the Human Resources Administrator if you have any questions about the content of this handbook.

The Church reserves the right to modify the policies in this handbook without prior notice. The policies described in this handbook replace and supersede all prior handbooks provided. This handbook describes the policies the Church will enforce unless applicable law would alter or prevent the practice. This handbook does not address all situations that may arise or contain all of the Church’s policies.

### **YOUR EMPLOYMENT “AT WILL”**

**This Employee Handbook and the policies contained herein do not in any way constitute, and should not be construed as, a contract, express or implied, guaranteeing employment for any specific duration. Although we hope that your employment relationship with us will be long term, either you or Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church (“the Church”) may terminate this relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or notice. Please understand that no supervisor or representative of the Church has the authority to enter into any agreement with you for employment for any specified period of time or to make any promises or commitments contrary to the at-will relationship. Nothing in this Handbook is intended to prohibit employees from engaging in protected concerted activities, making protected statements and reports to the proper internal and external authorities, or from engaging in communication with other Church employees about working conditions or issues.**

## ORGANIZATION

### **History of Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church**

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church was officially organized in February of 1953. It was the first Church formally organized within the city limits of Vestavia Hills. It was chartered on Easter Sunday of 1953 with a membership roll of 115 people. The Church has maintained a continuous ministry from that time until the present.

### **Purpose Statements**

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church adheres to the following:

Our mission is to share Christ by learning, telling, and living His story. His “story” is the good news of God’s love and grace that we know through Jesus Christ.

Our vision and core values are to be a community of faith where lives are consistently changed for Christ through: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-taking Mission & Service, and Extravagant Generosity.

Our bedrock beliefs: In our changing world, it is important to know who we are and what we believe. Our congregation has a healthy diversity, yet we share these basic, foundational affirmations: We trust in God's Grace, embracing the bedrock beliefs of our Creator's Love and Forgiveness, Salvation through Jesus Christ, the Presence of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God as revealed in the Bible, the Resurrection, Eternal Life, the Power of Prayer, and the Church – the Body of Christ – serving the world.

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT**

Employment with the Church is entered into voluntarily. An employee is free to resign at any time. Similarly, the Church is free to conclude an employment relationship at any time for any lawful reason, with or without notice or cause. While it is our hope that our relationship will be long and mutually beneficial, it should be recognized that neither the employee, nor the Church, has entered into any contract of employment, expressed or implied. Neither this employee handbook nor any other communication by any management representative, either written or oral, is intended to create, in any way, an employment contract. While we generally follow these policies and procedures, this employee handbook should not be construed as, and is not, a contract guaranteeing employment for any specific duration.

The contents of this employee handbook are presented as a matter of information of employment only. The handbook is intended to present information that will help an employee understand and abide by the policies and operating procedures we have established. It is also a guide to the benefits one receives as an employee. These policies and benefits, however, change from time to time at the discretion of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. This employee handbook does not constitute a guarantee of operating procedure or terms of employment.

This handbook, or any of the policies contained in it, may be updated, discontinued, replaced, interpreted or revised at any time, with or without notice, in an individual case or generally, at the Church's sole discretion.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

The Church is an equal opportunity employer in all personnel decisions. Applicants for employment are selected on the basis of their qualifications.

It is the intent of this Church to recruit, hire and promote all employees without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion (except for positions where doctrinal agreement and/or adherence is required), national origin, military service connection, or disability unrelated to job performance. As a religious organization of the United Methodist connection, the Church reserves the right to make employment decisions, adopt employment policies (including employee benefits) which are calculated to promote the religious and moral principles for which it is established and maintained, consistent with its rights to the free exercise of its religion guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. Where it is a bona fide occupational qualification for the position, preference in hiring, selection, and promotion may be given to professing members of the United Methodist connection.

The Church provides equal opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment. No person is to be discriminated against in employment opportunities or practices on any basis

protected by applicable federal, state, or local law including race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, national origin, age, veteran status or military service, genetic information, citizenship, disability status, or any other characteristic or status protected by law. This policy applies to all terms, conditions and privileges of employment including, but not limited to, hiring, transfer, promotion, termination, layoff, retirement, training, compensation, and benefits. This includes the behavior of peers, superiors, subordinates, customers and visitors to the premises. Such conduct by an employee may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If you believe you have been discriminated against or have witnessed discrimination in violation of this policy, you should report the discrimination as soon as it occurs to the Human Resources Administrator or your supervisor. Please note that you are not confined to reporting discrimination to a supervisor who may be discriminating against you. If the Human Resources Administrator and/or your supervisor is the source of the problem, or if you feel the Human Resources Administrator and/or your supervisor have not responded appropriately or thoroughly, or if for any reason, you are not comfortable reporting to the Human Resources Administrator and/or your supervisor, then report to the Business Administrator, Senior Minister, and/or a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. You may be asked to submit your complaint in writing so there will be no miscommunication regarding your complaint. Please be assured that the Church will not engage in or permit any retaliation against an employee who makes a good faith complaint of discrimination or who cooperates in the investigation of a complaint in good faith, even if the Church ultimately determines that the complaint is meritless. If you have made a complaint of discrimination and feel that you are being retaliated against, you should immediately report the retaliation to one of the personnel listed above.

Upon receiving any report of discrimination or retaliation, the Church will promptly investigate the allegations. Employees are required to cooperate in all investigations. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Discipline, up to and including termination, may be imposed on any employee who engages in discrimination or who makes complaints in bad faith.

### **Anti-Nepotism**

To avoid favoritism, the appearance of or potential for favoritism, and conflicts of interest and loyalty often associated with nepotism, the Church does not hire applicants who are relatives of current employees or SPRC members. Relatives are considered spouses, parents or step-parents, children or step-children, grandparents or step-grandparents, grandchildren or step-grandchildren, siblings or step-siblings, in-laws (mother, father, brother or sister), or cousins. All employees should report any such relations if a relative is applying to work at the Church or if any marriage would put them in violation of this policy. Should a marriage of two current employees cause a violation of this rule, one of the parties would have to resign their position. The only exception to this is in filling an urgent role for which no other qualified applicants are available and then only with SPRC approval.

### **Employment Applications**

The Church relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application, as well as the accuracy of resumes or other data presented throughout the hiring process. Any misrepresentation, falsifications, or material omissions in any of the information or data may result in termination of employment.

### **Background Checks**

The Church reserves the right to conduct background checks of all new employees to determine suitability of employment. The Church also reserves the right to conduct criminal background checks of existing employees. In the event a criminal record exists, consideration will be given to the relationship between the conviction and the responsibilities of the position that is or will be held. A relevant job-related conviction is grounds for termination of employment or non-selection of an applicant. Conviction is defined as including all felonies and misdemeanors. Minor traffic violations will not be considered unless the position includes operation of a motor vehicle. Falsification of application materials, including, but not limited to, failure to disclose criminal convictions is grounds for termination of employment or non-selection of applicant.

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

The Church is committed to providing a drug-free workplace environment. The Church prohibits the possession, use, sale, or purchase of illegal drugs or alcohol during work hours. Violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

As a pre-qualification to assuming any position, employees who have received an offer of employment will be required to provide a body substance sample for drug testing

### **Immigration Law Compliance**

The Church is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form, if they have not completed the I-9 form with the Church within the past three years, or their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

Employees are required to immediately report to the Human Resources Administrator any changes in their Immigration or citizenship status. Employees may raise questions or complaints about immigration law compliance without fear of reprisal.

To be in compliance with state law, the Church will verify the immigration legality of all employees through the federal e-Verify system.

### **Employee Governance**

In accordance with The Book of Discipline, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee of the Church (SPRC) is ultimately responsible for all employee issues at the Church including but not limited to hiring, compensation, benefits, performance evaluations, promotions, employee discipline, retirements, and dismissing staff who are not subject to appointment as ordained clergy. SPRC may discuss any issue related to an employee at any of its meetings. Should there be a discrepancy between the Book of Discipline and either the Employee Handbook or decisions by SPRC, the Book of Discipline is the governing document of the Church.

### **Open Door**

The Church encourages employees to present to their supervisor any ideas for procedural changes that they believe would enhance the productivity and/or morale of the Church.

There may be times when an employee is confronted with some problem regarding employment or of a personal nature and would welcome an opportunity to discuss it confidentially. Employees in those circumstances are encouraged to consult with the Human Resource Administrator, the Business Administrator, any member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and/or one of the ministerial staff.

## **Conflict Resolution Procedure**

Misunderstandings or conflict can arise in any organization. To ensure effective working relations, it is important such matters be resolved before serious problems develop. The Church recognizes problems and complaints may arise in the workplace. It is the Church's intention to attempt to resolve these differences promptly within the organization by the following procedure:

- An employee with a concern or issue with a fellow employee, should first attempt to gain clarification or resolve the issue directly with the fellow employee. If that does not resolve the issue, the employee should discuss the issue with their immediate supervisor. If that does not resolve the issue, the employee should seek assistance from the Human Resources Administrator, the Business Administrator, a clergy member, or any member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- An employee with a concern about policies, procedures, practices or any issue arising in the workplace should express the concern to the employee's immediate supervisor, where practicable.
- If an employee believes it would be inappropriate to express the concern to the supervisor, the employee may bypass the supervisor and seek assistance from the Human Resources Administrator, the Business Administrator, a clergy member, or any member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- The Church will endeavor to work out a satisfactory solution to the problem. The Church will not tolerate any form of retaliation against any employee using this complaint and resolution process.

If these measures do not provide resolution, the matter may be presented to the Senior Minister, in conjunction with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, for final decision and action.

## **Use of Church Facilities**

Notices may not be posted on Church bulletin boards without prior review and approval by the appropriate Church representative.

All goods and equipment in the Church are paid for by the Church for use in carrying out the business of the Church. Letterheads and forms are not for personal use and should not be used for any purpose other than that intended. Computers, printers, audio/visual equipment, telephones, copy equipment, and postage meters are also intended for business use only.

## **Inspections**

The Church reserves the right to require employees while on Church property to agree to the inspection of their person, personal possessions and property, and personal vehicles parked on Church property provided the inspection is authorized by the Business Administrator, Senior Minister or a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. This includes lockers, vehicles, desks, cabinets, workstations, packages, handbags, briefcases and other personal possessions or places of concealment, as well as personal mail sent to the Church. Employees are expected to cooperate in the conduct of any search or inspection.

## **Solicitation and Distribution**

To avoid distractions and awkward situations, solicitation by an employee of another employee is prohibited while either employee is on working time. "Working time" is the time an employee is engaged, or should be engaged, in performing his/her work tasks for the Church. Solicitation of any kind by non-employees on Church premises is prohibited at all times.

## **Inquiries from The Media**

Occasionally, a representative from the media might contact an employee regarding a Church issue. No employee is to give media interviews regarding Church issues without prior approval from the Director of Communications. If contacted by a representative of the media, employees should forward any inquiries to the Director of Communications. This will ensure accurate information is given for those matters appropriate for public knowledge.

**Accommodation for Breast Feeding Mothers**

The Church will provide a reasonable amount of break time to accommodate an employee desiring to express breast milk for the employee's infant child to the extent required by applicable law. The break time, if possible, must run concurrently with rest and meal periods already provided to the employee. If the break time cannot run concurrently with rest and meal periods already provided to the employee, the break time may be unpaid.

The Church will make reasonable efforts to provide employees with the use of a room or location other than a toilet stall for the employee to express milk in private. This location may be the employee's private office, if applicable. The Church may not be able to provide additional break time if doing so would seriously disrupt the Church's operations. Please speak to your supervisor, the Human Resources Administrator, or the Business Administrator if you have questions regarding this policy.

**Inclement Weather Before Normal Working Hours**

If an employee is at home when inclement weather begins they should assume that they should report to work or a worship service on time unless:

- They receive a call, text, or e-mail from their supervisor or other authorized staff person,
- They call the church and receive a message that work or a worship service is cancelled or postponed,
- They see or hear on a local TV or radio station that the Church has cancelled work or worship services.

Cancellation or postponement of public schools should not be taken as a reason not to come to work or a worship service.

The Church does not expect employees to place themselves in danger or place themselves in situations, which they are not comfortable they can handle. However, if an employee decides it is unsafe to travel to work, they must inform their supervisor immediately.

Employees away on scheduled vacation or approved leave of absence will not be called to report.

If the church closes due to inclement weather, employees will be paid for the hours they were scheduled to work.

If schools are closed and an employee has children and cannot find a childcare alternative, he/she may stay home. Employees facing a personal crisis that prevent them from coming in (i.e. protection of their immediate family or personal property because of inclement weather) will also be excused. Time off due to these two circumstances will count against PTO or be without pay.

**Inclement Weather During Normal Working Hours**

In the case of tornado or other severe weather conditions, the employee is to seek shelter in the lowest interior space in the Church building. The employee should go to these areas immediately and lead anyone in their care to a safe place. Attention to warnings/sirens should

be given at all times.

If the Church experiences a prolonged power failure or is aware of approaching bad weather the Senior Pastor or Business Administrator will determine if the Church facilities should be closed. Church staff will be released by their immediate supervisor after their responsible areas have been properly secured for the day.

If an employee is on the job and leadership closes the facilities, the employee will be paid for the hours they would have normally worked for that day.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Employee Status**

All employees of the Church serve at the discretion of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and/or the Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee is the final authority for the establishment of positions, titles, length of appointments, salaries and benefits.

For purposes of salary administration and employee benefits, the Church classifies its employees as follows:

- Regular full-time employees. Employees hired to work 30 or more hours per workweek year-round. Such employees may be “exempt” or “nonexempt” as defined below and are eligible to receive employer-paid benefits, PTO, and holiday pay.
- Regular part-time employees. Employees hired to work less than 30 hours per workweek, year-round. Such employees are not eligible to receive PTO, holiday pay, or employer-paid benefits except for our 403b pension plan if they average at least 20 hours per week.
- Temporary employees. Employees hired to work less than 12 consecutive months that can be hired on a seasonal, internship or on-call basis. Some teachers will be in this category. Temporary employees are not eligible for employer-paid employee benefits, PTO or holiday pay except as indicated below.

For purposes of eligibility for overtime payments, the Church classifies its employees as follows.

- Nonexempt employees. Employees who are required to be paid overtime at the rate of 1.5 times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked beyond forty hours in a work week, in accordance with applicable federal wage and hour laws. The number of hours worked does not include volunteer work performed in the Church.
- Exempt employees. Employees who are not required to be paid overtime, in accordance with applicable federal, state or local law.

You will be informed of your employment classification and of your status as an exempt or nonexempt employee in your employment letter and your orientation session. Your classification and status can change if you change positions during your employment as a result of a promotion, transfer, or change in responsibilities.

### **Working Hours**

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church’s normal workday begins at 8:00 am and ends at 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Certain program ministry areas may operate on a different time schedule. Employees are expected to report to work at their scheduled time and remain on the

job throughout their workday. Any deviations from the stated workday must be approved by the immediate supervisor.

### **Get Acquainted Period**

Newly hired employees, employees transferred to another position, and employees promoted to a higher-level position shall be considered in a “Get Acquainted” status for a period of sixty (60) calendar days from the date of employment or promotion. During this period, the employee’s immediate supervisor will observe the employee’s work performance and general suitability for the position. If the employment is not going to be extended beyond the Get Acquainted period, the supervisor should inform the Human Resources Administrator prior to the end of the Get Acquainted period. If the employment is going to continue, the immediate supervisor should file a performance evaluation no later than ten (10) working days after the end of the Get Acquainted period. A copy of the evaluation will become part of the employee’s permanent personnel record. Either the employee or the Church may end the employment relationship at any time during, at the end of, or after the Get Acquainted Period, with or without cause or advance notice.

### **Position Descriptions**

Position descriptions identifying duties and responsibilities are used for employment purposes, job clarification, and staff evaluations. Employees shall be provided a written job description listing their job responsibilities. All position descriptions are approved by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and are kept on file in the permanent personnel files. Position descriptions shall be kept up-to-date by applicable management and/or the position’s supervisor.

### **Personnel Records**

The Church maintains employment records on each employee. The files may include, but are not limited to, application for employment, references, correspondence, reprimands, wage changes, benefit enrollment, and tax deduction information.

It is important that our personnel records are kept accurate. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify their supervisor and the Human Resources Administrator immediately of any changes in the following personnel information:

- Name
- Dependents
- Home address
- Home and cellular telephone numbers
- Benefit Changes

### **Performance Evaluation**

Each supervisor should schedule a performance evaluation at the end of the “Get Acquainted” period and annually thereafter for each regularly employed staff member. Employees are rewarded strictly on merit and not seniority.

The purposes of evaluation are:

- To increase the effectiveness of each staff member and ministry area, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the Church.
- To increase the staff member’s awareness of professional strengths and weaknesses.
- To establish a basis for counseling and making personnel decisions.

- To identify opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- To serve as a partial basis for such personnel actions as retention, promotion, salary adjustment, demotion and termination.

After the supervisor or the Staff-Parish Relations Committee completes an evaluation, a thorough discussion of the evaluation will take place between the supervisor and the employee and the evaluation will be filed in the employee's personnel file. Performance reviews do not assure an automatic wage increase; rather, they are conducted to evaluate an employee's job fit, job performance, and contribution to the mission and ministries of the Church.

### **Resignation and Termination**

Upon resignation, the employee will provide a written notice, which provides two working weeks' notice unless waived in writing by the employee's immediate supervisor.

Upon termination, the Church will provide a notice in writing and whenever possible and appropriate will have a meeting with the employee. At the discretion of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, an employee may receive pay in lieu of a notice.

Conduct or actions, which may lead to termination, include, but are not limited to:

- Insubordination.
- Poor, faulty or careless work.
- Violation of common sense, safety, health or sanitation practices.
- Incompetence.
- Inefficiency/neglect of duty.
- Dishonesty or professional misconduct.
- Destruction or misuse of Church property.
- Disorderly conduct.
- Discourteous treatment of the public.
- Absence, leave or protracted tardiness without prior notice or permission.
- Act of sexual harassment, other harassment, or discrimination.
- Unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or use of a controlled substance.
- Violation of confidentiality or confidential records.
- Other acts of misfeasance or nonfeasance.

The Church reserves the right to discharge an employee at its discretion, with or without cause. While the Church maintains this right, it may, at its sole discretion, employ a graduated disciplinary program. The discipline may include, but is not limited to, warnings, probation and discharge. Warnings may be either written or oral. The Church does not, however, need to give an employee notice prior to terminating that individual's employment with or without cause. Any use of the graduated disciplinary procedure does not act as waiver of the Church's ability to discharge an employee at any time with or without cause.

All employees will be informed of any deficiency in their work performance. The Church will review any problem independently and based on the severity of the matter, proceed directly with the disciplinary action it deems appropriate.

Any employee terminating employment for any reason is requested to have an exit interview that could include, at the discretion of any or all of the following, the employee's supervisor, the Human Resources Administrator, the Business Administrator, the Senior Pastor, and a representative of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. The purpose of the interview shall be to explain why the employee is resigning or is being terminated, learn how the vacated job or the Church as a whole can be improved, and to discuss the details of termination.

Benefits for an employee who resigns or is terminated will cease in accordance with the benefits plan in place when a notice is given. The Church will pay the employee in their final paycheck for accrued but unused PTO unless the employee is terminated for cause or no notice is given. In those cases, all PTO pay is forfeited. If an employee has used more time than has accrued and their employment ceases, the difference in time used and accrued will be deducted from their final paycheck.

If employment ends for any reason, the employee's last paycheck will be available under the normal payroll cycle and will include the normal deductions for that employee.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

### **Harassment Free Workplace**

The Church is committed to a work environment free from unlawful harassment in which everyone is treated with respect and dignity while working on the Church premises, traveling on a Church trip, or at off-site Church functions. The Church has a zero tolerance for unlawful harassment.

Unlawful harassment is defined as harassment on any characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law including race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, national origin, age, veteran status or military service, genetic information, citizenship, disability status, or any other characteristic or status protected by law. Also prohibited are statements or actions that are threatening, intimidating, vulgar, or hostile, even if not based on protected class status. Such conduct may make a reasonable person uncomfortable in the work environment or could interfere with an employee's ability to perform his or her job, regardless of whether such action is from a fellow employee, supervisor, or visitor.

Examples of conduct, which may constitute such harassment, include but are not limited to:

- Telling racial, ethnic or other jokes, which are offensive to persons in protected groups;
- Name calling based on a person's inclusion in a protected group;
- The use of racial, ethnic or other slurs;
- Making disparaging or insensitive remarks about protected groups;
- The display of material which is degrading or offensive to persons because of their inclusion in a protected group; or
- Any other form of harassment based on inclusion in a protected group.

Comments or actions of this type, even if intended as a joking matter among friends, are always inappropriate in the work place and will not be tolerated. The conduct forbidden by this policy

specifically includes, but is not limited to (a) epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, kidding, teasing, joking, or intimidating acts that are based on a person's protected status, and (b) written or graphic material circulated within the work place that shows hostility toward a person or group because of a person's protected status or characteristic(s).

The Church prohibits the transmission, whether by telephone, facsimile (fax) machine, text message, E-mails, social media, or otherwise, of any communications which may be libelous, offensive, harassing, illegal, derogatory, discriminatory, or considered to be otherwise inappropriate by its management. Foul, inappropriate or offensive messages such as racial, sexual, or religious slurs or jokes are prohibited. Sexually explicit messages or images, cartoons or jokes are prohibited.

Illegal, offensive, harassing or other use of electronic communications, which are inconsistent with the Church's policies, will not be tolerated.

No supervisor or manager should participate in such behavior and must take immediate action to stop those who are known to be or suspected of being involved in such conduct. The supervisor must also contact and report the information up the chain of command so appropriate action may be taken.

### **SEXUAL HARRASSMENT**

While prohibited harassment may be based on any characteristic protected by law, the issue of sexual harassment requires special attention. It is the policy of the Church to maintain a work environment free from any form of coercive sexual harassment or intimidation. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature are serious violations of our policy and will not be condoned or tolerated. Sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature."

Sexual harassment can occur when a supervisor asserts or implies that any condition of employment will be improved or impaired based on an employee's acceptance or refusal of romantic or sexual advances. Sexual harassment can also occur when any employee creates a hostile atmosphere based on sexual conduct, abuse, or language that is reasonably perceived as hostile by an employee.

No supervisor or management employee may threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence any personnel decision regarding that employee's employment, such as evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, work hours, or any other condition of employment or career development.

Sexual harassment may be overt or subtle. Some behavior which is appropriate in a social setting may not be appropriate in the work place. Sexual harassment does not refer to behavior or occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is unwelcome, offensive, and affects an individual's employment or work conditions.

Some examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include: (a) making unwelcome romantic or sexual flirtations, advances, requests for romantic or sexual favors, or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a romantic or sexual nature a condition of employment; or (b) creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment by such conduct as:

- sexual innuendo or sexually suggestive comments - including but not limited to - sexually oriented "kidding," "teasing," or practical jokes; jokes about gender specific traits; foul or obscene language or gestures;

- subtle or direct pressure or request for sexual activities;
- unnecessary touching of an individual, such as pinching, patting, or brushing up against another's body;
- graphic verbal comments about an individual's body or appearance;
- sexually degrading words used to describe an individual;
- the reading or displaying in the work place of sexually suggestive or revealing words, objects or pictures;
- sexually explicit or offensive jokes;
- physical assault; or
- other explicit or implied conduct of a romantic or sexual nature which relates to or affects an individual's employment.

No employee, supervisor, manager or other person, whether employed by the Church or not, shall threaten or suggest that an employee's refusal to submit to romantic or sexual harassment will adversely affect that person's employment, work status, evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, hours of work or any other terms or conditions of employment. Similarly, no employee - regardless of job title - shall promise, imply or grant any preferential treatment in return for another employee's acceptance of conduct which is sexually harassing.

All of the above mentioned and referenced forms of sexual harassment apply equally to any form of electronic communication whether the electronic equipment used is owned by the Church or by the employee.

Any employee who violates this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

If you believe that you are being unlawfully harassed or intimidated in any manner, you should report the harassment/intimidation as soon as it occurs to the Human Resources Administrator, the Business Administrator, or your supervisor. All complaints will be promptly and confidentially investigated. Please note that you are not confined to reporting harassment to a supervisor who may be harassing you. If the Human Resources Administrator, Business Administrator, and/or your supervisor is the source of the problem, or if you feel the Human Resources Administrator, Business Administrator, and/or your supervisor have not responded appropriately or thoroughly, or if for any reason you are not comfortable reporting to the Human Resources Administrator, Business Administrator, and/or your supervisor, then report to the Senior Minister and/or a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. You may be asked to submit your complaint in writing so there will be no miscommunication regarding your complaint.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

The term "retaliation" includes, but is not necessary limited to, any adverse employment action, intimidation, or threats taken because an employee has engaged in protected conduct. Protected conduct under this policy includes, but is not limited to: reporting or complaining in good faith about any discrimination or harassment, or participating in good faith in an investigation about alleged discrimination or harassment.

It is a violation of policy for anyone to retaliate, threaten, or seek any type of reprisal against an individual who reports harassment or discrimination or who participates or cooperates in an investigation regarding harassment or discrimination.

If you have made a complaint of harassment and feel that you are being retaliated against, you should immediately report the retaliation to one of the areas listed above.

Upon receiving any report of harassment or retaliation, the Church will promptly investigate the allegations. Employees are required to cooperate in all investigations. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Discipline, up to and including termination, may be imposed on any employee who engages in unlawful harassment or who makes complaints in bad faith.

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

The Church is committed to providing a drug-free workplace environment. The Church prohibits the possession, use, sale, or purchase of illegal drugs or alcohol during work hours. Violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. If you believe you could benefit from counseling for substance abuse, your supervisor can help you locate resources.

All staff members are prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, selling, dispensing, possessing, or using illicit drugs and/or alcohol while on Church premises or as part of any of its activities while performing Church business off premises. The unlawful use, possession, manufacture, distribution, sale, or dispensation of illegal drugs is also prohibited during nonworking time to the extent that it violates laws or adversely affects the reputation of the Church. Employees are also prohibited from reporting to work or being at work while under the influence of intoxicants, controlled substances, or alcohol. The Church will impose sanctions (consistent with local, State and Federal law) upon all staff members who violate the standards of conduct set forth in this policy. Such sanctions may include required completion (at the staff member's expense) of an appropriate rehabilitation program (chosen by the Church), referral for prosecution, probation, suspension, or termination of the staff member.

Employees who use legally prescribed drugs during work and have reason to expect that such use may affect their ability to safely perform work, must report this fact to their supervisor.

Employees reasonably suspected of violating this policy, may be suspended without pay pending an investigation of the circumstances and/or subject to other disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees also may be sent by the Human Resources Administrator or the Business Administrator immediately for testing to the extent permitted and in accordance with applicable law. The Church may require the employee to submit to treatment as part of disciplinary action to the extent permitted and in accordance with applicable law.

Pursuant to this policy and legal requirements, the Church may administer the following tests:

- **Post-Offer/Pre-Employment Testing** – As a pre-qualification to assuming any position, employees who have received an offer of employment will be required to provide a body substance sample for drug testing
- **Post-Accident Testing** – An employee who is responsible for or involved in an incident or accident that injures the employee or any other person, or damages Church property, while on duty, whether on or off the employer's premises, will be required to provide a body substance sample for drug testing and may be required to be tested for alcohol use if management determines that drugs and/or alcohol likely contributed to the accident or injury. Refusal to submit to a drug or urine screen can result in forfeiture of your worker's compensation benefits.
- **Reasonable Suspicion Testing** – To the extent permitted and in accordance with applicable law, this test may be required if significant and observable changes in

employee performance, appearance, behavior, speech, etc. provides reasonable suspicion of his/her being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, or otherwise in violation of this policy, as determined by management.

- Periodic or Random Testing – Employees may be subject to periodic and/or random drug testing.

If the testing is because of reasonable suspicion (above), the employee will be driven to and from the testing lab by another employee or otherwise provided with transportation.

Any prescription medication information related to the test results should be provided directly to the testing lab's Medical Review Officer (MRO)

Any employee who violates the Drug and Alcohol policy by refusing to consent to a drug/alcohol test and/or to sign all consent forms necessary or attempts to adulterate a specimen or failing a test will result in immediate termination.

An employee who tests positive for drugs or alcohol, refuses to take or cooperate fully with a drug or alcohol test or knowingly alters such a test may forfeit eligibility for worker's compensation.

### **Weapons Prohibition**

Unless authorized by applicable law, the Church prohibits the possession of any weapon on its premises (including guns, knives, clubs, and explosive devices ). The use of workplace objects to cause/threaten injury is also strictly forbidden.

### **Safe Sanctuary**

Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church seeks to create a safe environment for children and students in which opportunities for abuse are minimized by the provision of proper enlistment and supervision of those working with them. In keeping with the North Alabama Conference, this policy is written specifically for all children/students who are 18 years of age and under.

The church above all institutions is called to welcome and nurture children and students. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where our children/students may grow and where those who care for them may see to their needs in a responsible way.

We, at Vestavia Hills United Methodist accept the call to institute policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child sexual/physical/emotional abuse in our church and also accept the responsibility to report abuse as a witness to the world of love and justice of God. We fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply to report abuse can help to stop existing and prevent further abuse. We will also seek to find grace-filled ways to deal with both the victim and the accused when handling any instance of abuse.

These guidelines are for volunteer and paid staff working with children and students at Vestavia sponsored programming events.

### **Response and Reporting Procedures**

- A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. Allegations should be reported to the staff person in charge who will immediately report the allegation to the Sr. Pastor. All staff shall make themselves available to all official investigating agencies.

- The Senior Pastor and/or his/her designee are the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. Allegations of suspected abuse/neglect will be reported to the Department of Human Resources and local law enforcement. The Senior Pastor will also inform the North Alabama Conference office to begin the process for the North Alabama Conference Response Team.
- Allegations against the senior pastor or other clergy should be reported to the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, who will notify the District Superintendent of the North Alabama Conference.

#### General Guidelines

- All persons working with children and students will be at least five years older than the age group with whom they are to work.
- All new hires must be 19 years or older.
- Two adults, not of the same family, must always be present in groups of children and students except in emergency situations and where it is not reasonably feasible. Instances where this is not feasible must be pre-approved by supervisor and should be spot checked with unannounced visits.
- Background checks will be performed on all staff and volunteers who work with students and children and renewed every three years. An acceptable background check will be a condition of employment, both at initial hire and for ongoing employment. All volunteers and staff must fill out an authorization for background check form.
- Persons who are unknown to the church staff will be paired with another adult for the first six months of their volunteering.
- Interior doors are never to be locked and are to remain open unless equipped with windows. If the room is equipped with Dutch doors, the top door must remain open at all times.
- Staff and volunteers will avoid being alone with a child/student without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.
- In a single van, except for transport to locations within five miles of the church campus, two adults are required to transport students.
- Caravanning with students requires one driver per van plus one extra driver for the entire caravan in case of emergencies.
- All staff and volunteers will be required to read and sign that they understand these guidelines for working with children/students at Vestavia UMC programs.
- Volunteers and paid staff should not accompany a child in a restroom. If a child needs assistance, a second adult should be present.
- Child to adult ratios will be set by staff ministry leaders to achieve the most reasonable ratio for a particular context. The ratio should not exceed 1:10, unless that ministry is governed by DHR ratios, for which DHR ratios may supersede.
- These policies will be adhered to strictly, and without exception.

- All church staff and/or laity involved with Safe Sanctuary will be given a copy and receive education on the policy, to be renewed every three years.

#### Additional Guidelines for Specific Ministries

**Children's Ministry:** Children in grades 5th grade and under must be visually supervised by an adult at all times, with the exception that children 3rd through 5th grades will be released to their parents from Sunday School at the parent's request. Parents are solely responsible for helping their children get to and from programming events.

#### **Thrive Student Ministries:**

##### General Student Ministries Policy

- Student Ministries staff may only meet students in public places (restaurants, schools, etc.) with no rides given to the students to or from the meeting. Students, staff, or volunteers are not to give rides in their personal vehicles to students. Any deviation from this rule should be approved by email from any parents involved and a member of the Pastoral Staff.
- Should a Student Ministries staff visit a student in their home, the parent must be present at all times.
- All volunteers or staff must be five years older than the oldest student they care for, and over the age of 18. So, to work as an adult with students, a college student who is eighteen can only work unsupervised with students up to age 13. A twenty-year-old could only work with students unsupervised up to age 15.
- Full-time, regular Student Ministries staff must be 23 years of age to work with all students. Staff or interns under 23 will require specific parameters to work with students of appropriate ages.
- Under no circumstances may a staff member or intern of any age have a physical or emotional relationship with a student in Thrive Student Ministries.
- Student Ministries staff are to monitor class activities at all times.
- Once a scheduled youth event is concluded, it is the responsibility of parents to regulate with whom their child rides home.

##### Transportation

- Driver must have their license and insurance on file with church and have completed van training.
- Everyone should wear seat belts.
- If a charter bus is rented, the company should be questioned prior to hire if they run background checks on their drivers. If they do not, another company should be selected.
- A student is never to be allowed to drive from the church to an off-site activity location, except in special circumstances with documentable

permission from parents or with special permission from Thrive Student Ministries.

- Unless caravanning, two adults are required in a van or personal vehicle. In a caravan, one spare driver is required for the entire caravan in case of emergency.

#### Retreats (Includes Discovery Weekends and Lock-ins)

##### Sleeping Arrangements

- No adults are allowed in a bed with a child.
- No mixed gender rooms with students.
- Hotel Setting – Adults sleep in separate rooms with frequent monitoring or check-ins. If possible, choose hotels with rooms opening to the inside hallway.
- Bunkroom Setting – If adults sleep in a large room with multiple bunk beds, at least two same-gender adults are required. Adults will avoid using the same restroom and shower areas or utilize separate times. Private shower areas are to be preferred when choosing a facility.
- Any variation of these sleeping arrangements must be approved by email from any parents involved and a member of the Pastoral Staff.

##### Release forms / Student Covenants

- Each parent must complete annually a Medical Release Form, Medication Authorization Form, and Code of Conduct Form.
- Each individual trip may require a specific Trip Release Form that parents may be required to complete.
- Any violation of the Code of Conduct will result in the student being sent home at the leader's discretion and at the parent's expense.

##### Trip Information

- Start and stop times of the event are to be communicated in all advertising. Any variation of those times will be communicated via text and email.
- Program content and lodging will be included in at least one parent email.

##### Events Held in Homes

- Bible studies and other small group events held in private homes require a written waiver from parents and do not fall under our Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
- Overnight housing held in private homes, and transportation to those homes, require a written waiver from parents and do not fall under our Safe Sanctuaries Policies. Parents are to be notified in advance of the homes that their children will stay in, and parents are welcomed to make contact with the host family to clarify any expectations they may have.

##### Social Media Policy When Communicating with Students

- Phones will be provided for Student Ministries Staff (excluding administrative staff) so that all communication with students is open to supervision and can be reviewed at any point for coaching or oversight. Students and parents need to be aware that communications can and will be monitored by the pastoral staff or their assigns. Any communication with students other than on provided devices and approved platforms is strictly prohibited, and will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Any social media communication or texting should happen between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm (on school nights), not during school hours, and never later than 10:00 pm (on weekends). Emergency situations outside these times must be reported to a direct supervisor within 24 hours.
- All social media apps used should be approved by the Pastoral Staff with the username and password on file in the Student Ministries office before use. The names of these Apps will be regularly updated in our email to parents.
- Any personal communication with a student should be limited to three initiated texts per day, limiting total responses to approximately 25 texts per day.
- Any received communication from a student outside of the approved hours or beyond the approved volume of texts should be delayed to the following day if possible, except in emergencies.
- Except for pastoral or logistical conversations, electronic communications by staff should seek to include multiple students or an additional staff member to avoid private conversations as much as possible.
- Electronic communication during retreats or church events are discouraged except for pastoral or related logistical communications.
- Any media received by staff that might be considered inappropriate must be reported within 24 hours.

#### Medications

- Any prescription or non-prescription medication must be placed in the care of a designated adult chaperone (preferably a volunteer who is a medical doctor or nurse). No students may have medications on a retreat in their own possession. This safeguards the student's properly receiving the medication, and any potential misuse or theft.
- A Medication Authorization Form **MUST** be filled out for a student to receive any medication to ensure proper dispensing of medications.
- Any variations from this policy must be approved by email from the parent, trip leader, designated medical volunteer, and Pastoral Staff.

#### **Health, Wellness, and Recreation (Lighthouse):**

- At times when showers are likely to be used by adults, children 18 and under should use alternate facilities.

- Children 5th Grade and under are to be supervised by parents or staff / volunteers of an enrolled church program. Health, Wellness, Recreation staff are not responsible for supervising children.

**Vestavia Day School:** Day School, After School, and Summer Days will follow ratios established by the Vestavia Day School Board.

**Vestavia Dance:** Except for children in the Day School, paid staff are not permitted to assist dance students if a change of clothes is needed.

**Conservatory of the Arts:** Because of the nature of private lessons, a Hold Harmless Agreement must be signed during registration.

**Boy Scouts:** Boy Scouts follow the policy of Boy Scouts of America which is located at <http://www.scouting.org/Training/StudentsProtection.aspx>.

### Standards of Conduct

As a Church employee, it is expected that you will adhere to all policies and practices. It is further expected that you will conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times, and exhibit the highest level of integrity in performing your job. It is equally important to maintain a positive work environment through good working relationships with our members, visitors, and your co-workers. Any violation of these standards of conduct, or other employment policies, or any inappropriate conduct whatsoever may result in immediate discipline up to and including termination.

The list below is not intended to be all-inclusive, but merely illustrates the various types of prohibited conduct.

#### **Attendance:**

- Improper authorization, use, or abuse of paid or unpaid leave. Using an approved leave-of-absence for purposes other than for which it was intended without permission, while on an approved leave-of-absence.
- Excessive absenteeism.
- Being absent without authorization, or repeated unauthorized late arrival or early departure from work. Failure to timely return to work from scheduled breaks.
- Performing overtime work without authorization.
- Failure to notify the supervisor of impending tardiness or absenteeism.
- Failing to work assigned hours including overtime.
- Failing to record time worked in an accurate and timely manner or falsification/tampering with time worked information/recordkeeping.
- Failing to report to work on the first day following the expiration of a leave of absence.
- Failing to report to work for three (3) consecutive shifts without notifying the Church.
- Swapping work hours or days without permission.
- Leaving work without permission.

**Behavior:**

- Failure to carry out a direct order from a superior, except where the employee or another person's safety may be jeopardized. Insubordination when directed to complete a reasonable task.
- Engaging in a conflict of interest activity.
- Conviction of a crime, including convictions based on a plea of nolo contendere, or of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.
- Violence, use of force, with or without weapons.
- Knowingly falsifying, removing, or destroying information related to employment, payroll, or work-related records or reports.
- Lying, falsifying information, reporting information that is known to be false, or intentionally misleading someone.
- Soliciting outside work for personal gain during business hours or participating in any off-duty employment that adversely affects the employee's performance of work for the Church.
- Discourteous treatment of members/visitors, the public or other employees, including, but not limited to, the use of objectionable, obscene, or vulgar language; harassing, coercing, threatening, or intimidating others.
- Violation or neglect of safety rules, or failing to report a hazardous condition to a supervisor.
- Unauthorized removal or use of any Church property.
- Violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity policy or the policy against discrimination, harassment and retaliation included in this handbook.
- Carrying on any outside activities during working time or during any time, which would interfere with the work of other employees.
- Eating in other than designated areas of the workplace.
- Failing to maintain personal appearance standards as set forth by the Church.
- Falsifying Church records or furnishing false or misleading information or withholding any information on Church records or pursuant to any investigation by the Church or any government agency. Theft, misappropriation, defacing or damaging of the Church's or another's property, including cash or merchandise.
- Tape recording any conversations of co-workers or supervisors without express permission of all parties to the conversation.
- Divulging confidential Church information to others.
- Leaving the job during working time without supervisor's approval.
- Refusing to cooperate with any investigation.
- Engaging in any other behavior, at any time, whether at work or away from work, that reflects negatively on the Church.

**Performance**

- Inefficiency, incompetence, or negligence in the performance of duties, including failure to perform assigned tasks or training, or failure to discharge duties in a prompt, competent and reasonable manner.
- Refusal or inability to improve job performance in accordance with written or verbal direction after a reasonable trial period.
- Reporting to work or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty or on Church property. Using, possessing or selling alcohol or controlled substances on Church property or during working time.
- Suspension of driver's license or lack of insurability where job duties require driving.
- Careless, negligent, or improper use of Church property, equipment or funds, including unauthorized removal, or use for private purposes, or use involving damage or unreasonable risk of damage to property.
- Unauthorized release or possession of confidential information.
- Sleeping on the job.
- Violating any employment policy or procedure detailed in this handbook.

### **Disciplinary Action**

The Church has adopted rules and standards to ensure productive, harmonious operations. Although Church employees are employed at-will, the best interest of the Church lies in ensuring fair treatment of all employees and in making certain that discipline is prompt, fair, and uniform.

The Church endorses a philosophy of disciplinary action in which it attempts to provide employees with notice of deficiencies and an opportunity to improve whenever practical or reasonable. Employees' performance and conduct is evaluated on an ongoing basis, with feedback provided when necessary. Informal discussions may be used to ensure that employees know and follow rules and standards. These discussions should focus on clarifying expectations, providing appropriate training, and development and coaching employees.

In some cases, formal discipline is necessary. Types of disciplinary action may include, but are not limited to, verbal warnings, written warnings, unpaid administrative leave and termination of employment. The Church retains the right to administer discipline in any manner it deems suitable and disciplinary action may not always occur in successively more severe steps. Termination of employment may also occur at any time without any prior warning or discipline having been taken. The absence of prior warnings/discipline does not alter the employees' at-will employment status.

### **Ethical Standards/Conflict of Interest**

The Church has an excellent reputation for conducting business activities with integrity, fairness, and in accordance with the highest ethical standards. As an employee, you enjoy the benefits of our reputation and are obligated to uphold our ethical standards in every business activity.

Management reserves the right, however, to determine when an employee's activities represent a conflict with our interests and to take whatever action is necessary to resolve the situation, including termination of employment.

If you are ever in doubt whether an activity meets our ethical standards, may be a conflict of interest, or compromises the Church's reputation please discuss it with your supervisor immediately.

**Attendance**

Because every job is critical in accomplishing our ministries, the Church and fellow employees depend on the employee to arrive on time every workday. If, for any reason, an employee is going to be late or absent from work, he or she must notify his or her supervisor immediately, before the start of the normal work day. Habitual tardiness or absenteeism may result in disciplinary measures up to and including termination.

A lunch break is allowed at a specified time to be coordinated with the respective supervisor. Some office employees will be required to take their lunch break on a rotating basis so telephones and the reception area are constantly monitored throughout the business day.

**Adherence to “The Book of Discipline”**

The Church endorses and adheres to the rules and policies stated in “The Book of Discipline” of the United Methodist Church, to the call of mission and ministry of the North Alabama Conference, and other policies and procedures as recorded in the journal of the North Alabama Conference. Should there be a discrepancy between the Book of Discipline and either the Employee Handbook or decisions by SPRC, the Book of Discipline is the governing document of the Church.

**Confidentiality**

The business of the Church is, in many instances, strictly confidential. Information received by employees in the course of their employment should never be made the subject of conversation or discussion with anyone not directly concerned with the discharge of that business. Violation of this rule may result in the immediate and permanent dismissal of the offending employee.

**Dress Code**

All employees are expected to present themselves in the best light. Accordingly, attire should be acceptable for the task and function to which the employee attends. The minimum acceptable dress Monday-Thursday is Khaki's and a polo shirt for men and pants and a nice top for women. On Friday's, nice jeans and a polo shirt or a Church t-shirt is acceptable. On certain occasions such as memorial services or major events, a business attire will be required. We reserve the right to ask an employee to change attire or to send an employee home to change if necessary.

**Smoking Policy**

The Church observes a smoke-free environment in all offices and common areas under its direct control. Smoking is prohibited in the Church building at all times.

**TECHNOLOGY****Wireless Cellular Device Usage While Driving**

Using a cellular telephone or other wireless device while driving can be distracting and dangerous and is illegal or restricted in many areas. As such, employees should never use a mobile device for calling, emailing, texting, or any other activity while operating a Church-owned vehicle or operating any vehicle while engaged in Church-related task. If you receive or must initiate a telephone call or other electronic communication that is urgent, you should wait until you are able to safely pull off of the roadway to a secure location or to wait until you reach your destination.

Employees who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the use of their phone while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions.

## Prohibited Recordings

Unauthorized electronic surveillance of employees (including audio, video or still pictures) is disruptive to employee morale and inconsistent with the respectful treatment required of our employees. For this reason, no employee may record another employee without his or her full knowledge and consent.

No employee may record, by any means, a conversation with another employee unless all of the following criteria are met:

- A legitimate purpose for the recording.
- Written authorization from the supervisor of the employee who wishes to record the conversation.
- Full knowledge and written consent by all parties present in the conversation.
- A recording device in plain view.

Secret recordings are strictly prohibited. A violation of this provision may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

## Network and Electronic Communications

This policy establishes the responsibilities for the proper use of the electronic network, email, fax, and telephone system. This policy applies to all Church employees, consultants and contractors. It is applicable to these persons anywhere a Church system is being accessed or the Church's domain name is being used, to include while in travel status or at home using personally owned equipment.

The Church's Information and Electronic Systems (including internet access) includes Church-provided computers, laptops, office phones, voicemail systems, mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile hot spots, electronic information storage (like hard drives or thumb drives), online information storage ("the cloud"), e-mail accounts, and other digital or electronic means and devices of storing, sending, receiving, or accessing data provided by the Church

The use of the Church's Information and Electronic Systems is limited solely to appropriate business use. Employees are not allowed to use the Information and Electronic Systems for their personal benefit. Employees are strictly forbidden from installing software on the systems. Employees may not use the Information and Electronic Systems to view, download, post, tweet, or forward any obscene, offensive, threatening, or other material that would violate Church policies and procedures, including but not limited to its ethics policy, its policies regarding confidential information, its policies against harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or its violence free work environment policy.

Specific points of this policy include, but are not limited to the following:

- Employees do not have the expectation of privacy regarding any matter created, transmitted, received or stored utilizing the Church's electronic communication systems.
- Electronic Communications systems are provided for business use. Brief and occasional personal use of the electronic mail system or the internet is acceptable as long as it is not excessive or inappropriate, occurs during personal time (lunch or other breaks), does not result in expense or harm to the Church, does not interfere with normal job functions, responsiveness, or the ability to perform daily job activities or otherwise violate this policy.

- The Church prohibits the transmission, whether by telephone, facsimile (fax) machine, text message, E-mails, social media, or otherwise, of any communications which may be libelous, offensive, harassing, illegal, derogatory, discriminatory, or considered to be otherwise inappropriate by its management. Foul, inappropriate or offensive messages such as racial, sexual, or religious slurs or jokes are prohibited. Sexually explicit messages or images, cartoons or jokes are prohibited.
- Illegal, offensive, harassing or other use of electronic communications, which are inconsistent with the Church's policies, will not be tolerated.
- Employees should conduct themselves with the same integrity and appropriateness in the use of electronic communications as they would in face-to-face dealings with one another or a member of their family.
- The use of passwords is encouraged to prevent unauthorized or improper review. However, such passwords are not intended to imply the ability to shield electronic communications from appropriate review, as defined in this policy.
- No employee may attempt to gain access to another employee's electronic communications files except as permitted by the Business Administrator, Senior Minister, or a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- Certain individuals, designated as IT (information technology) Administrators, will have special access privileges to ensure proper operation and administration of the electronic systems and respond to personal requests to access the employee's system to restore or repair said system. All computer-locking passwords (and password changes) must be communicated to the IT Administrator.
- The Human Resources Administrator, Business Administrator, Senior Minister and the members of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee are authorized to monitor and review employees' electronic communication system information, including emails, for purposes of carrying out their respective responsibilities in those roles and ensuring compliance with and enforcement of the policies and procedures in this handbook. A Human Resources Administrator, Business Administrator, Senior Minister and/or member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee acting under this authority to review and monitor such information may, as they deem appropriate, authorize others to carry out such reviewing and monitoring.
- Failure to comply with this policy by any covered employee may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **Social Media Sites and Blogging**

This policy relates to content posted on social media and networking sites.

We understand that employees may participate in social networking sites. To protect the Church's interests, we expect that employees who participate abide by the following guidelines:

- Working time and equipment, including computers and electronic systems, are not to be used for social networking, including updating your personal site.
- All rules regarding confidential and proprietary business information apply in full to posts, blogs, personal websites and social networking. Any information that cannot be disclosed through a conversation, a note or an e-mail also cannot be disclosed in a post, blog, personal website or social network.

- Whether an employee is posting something on his/her own site or someone else's blog, website, or social network, if an employee mentions the Church and also expresses either a political opinion or an opinion regarding the Church's actions, the poster must include a disclaimer stating that the opinion expressed is his/her personal opinion and not the Church's position.
- Any conduct which is impermissible under the law if expressed in any other form or forum is impermissible if expressed through a blog, website, or social network.

The Church encourages all employees to keep in mind the speed and manner in which information posted on a site, blog, website, or social network can be relayed and often misunderstood by readers. While an employee's free time is generally not subject to restrictions by the Church with the exception of the limited restrictions above, the Church urges all employees to use their best judgment. Employees with any questions should review the guidelines above and/or consult with their manager. **WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T POST!** Failure to follow these guidelines may result in discipline up to termination.

When using social media, you may not post discriminatory, defamatory, libelous, or slanderous comments when discussing the Church, its members, visitors, employees, or committees on social media. You should not use social media as a vehicle for personal attacks. Social media postings by you that reflect negatively on the Church, its members, visitors, employees, or committees that otherwise violate any provision of this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit any employees from engaging in communication with other Church employees about working conditions or issues. Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit employees from engaging in protected concerted activities or making protected statements and reports to the proper internal and external authorities.

### **Use of Personal Technology for Company Business**

Employees may not use personal technology (cell phones, tablets, computers, etc.) for any business purpose unless authorized in advance by a supervisor. Employees authorized to use personal technology for any business purpose shall do so in compliance with the same policies applicable to Church-issued technology. Additionally, once an employee uses personal technology for any business purpose, the employee should have no expectation of privacy in the contents of that technology. As a condition of allowing an employee to use personal technology for any business purpose, you may be required to install certain security-related software that authorizes the Church to have remote access to your device. When using personal technology for any business purpose, appropriate security measures must be taken to ensure that confidential or proprietary information stored or transmitted is appropriately encrypted and/or password protected for compliance with Church policy.

### **Use of Personal Cell Phones and Other Personal Devices**

Unless approved by a supervisor under this policy, use of personal electronic devices or other personal entertainment or distraction is forbidden while on the job. These devices may be used on break times. If you have an exceptional situation justifying the use of a personal communications device, you must have your supervisor's permission to carry the device while you work, and you must only use it only for purposes related to that exceptional situation. In the interests of the safety and security of Church proprietary and confidential information, personal technology brought on Church premises is subject to inspection by the Church at any time, without advance notice. Employees bringing personal technology onto Church premises shall have no expectation of privacy in the content of their personal devices.

## **COMPENSATION**

### **Pay Periods**

All employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis. Employees who work year-round receive 26 paychecks per year. All employees are paid every other Friday for two workweeks, each beginning Sunday at 12:00 am and ending Saturday at 11:59 pm of the previous week. If a pay date falls on a Church holiday, the pay date will be revised to the preceding normal workday. Employees will be provided with login information to access their general information, taxes, deductions, PTO, and pay information on the employee portal.

All compensation and benefits are a confidential matter and are negotiated with each employee. Staff members are expected to respect the confidentiality of each other's compensation. Inappropriate inquiry into compensation of other employees may lead to disciplinary action. Salary increases will be determined on the recommendation of the appropriate supervisors and with the approval of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

### **Overtime**

It is the policy of the Church to staff all administrative support and activities in such a manner that employees are regularly scheduled for a workweek of 40 hours or less. Overtime is intended to be a vehicle to resolve emergencies and temporarily alleviate problems resulting from the imbalance in the normal work schedule. It is the responsibility of the non-exempt employee's supervisor to monitor and prioritize each non-exempt employee's work so that overtime is kept to an absolute minimum.

Regardless of a nonexempt employee's regular hours, overtime will only be paid if an employee works over 40 hours during a workweek (from Sunday at 12:00 am to Saturday at 11:59 pm). Overtime is only paid for time actually worked (i.e. PTO and holidays are not counted as hours worked for overtime). Overtime is paid at 1.5 times the hourly rate.

### **Online Timekeeping System**

All employees will have access to the online timekeeping system, which will accurately record each time an employee clocks in or out of work, any overtime, and both holiday pay and PTO. Once a new employee is established in the payroll system, the login information will be provided to that employee. It is the responsibility of each employee to ensure that the recorded times are correct. If any discrepancies are found, the supervisor must be notified within two weeks of any pay date after which the time recorded will be deemed acceptable.

### **Payroll Deductions**

By law, the Church is required to deduct, where applicable, federal and state income taxes and Social Security taxes. Any other voluntary deductions from an employee's paycheck must be authorized in advance, in writing, and submitted to the Human Resources Administrator. All deductions except 403b deductions will be deducted from 24 of the 26 paychecks. 403b deductions will be deducted on every paycheck.

### **Advances and Cashing Checks**

The Church will not issue any advances on salary or hourly pay. The cashing of employee paychecks or other personal checks is not allowed from Church funds.

### **Staff Gifts**

All special occasion gifts to staff that are paid out of the Church funds (unrestricted or restricted) that exceed \$25 will be added to their taxable income.

### **Other Compensation**

All employees of the Church will only be paid through the payroll system. Work rendered for any additional services (such as child care, music lessons, weddings, honorariums, etc.), will be added to the employee's paycheck on the next payroll calculation date and is considered taxable income.

### **Final Paycheck**

If employment ends for any reason, the employee's last paycheck will be available under the normal payroll cycle, include the normal deductions, and will include payment for any unused, accrued PTO unless the employee's departure involves theft or fraud.

### **Federal and State Unemployment Programs**

The Church is exempt from paying federal and state unemployment taxes. Therefore, all Church employees will not be eligible to draw unemployment benefits from these programs should their Church employment be terminated.

## **LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

If you need to be absent from work for an extended period of time, it may be possible for you to take a leave of absence. Your leave of absence can be one of the following:

- Family and Medical Leave of Absence (FMLA)
- Military Leave
- Jury Duty Leave
- Personal Leave
- Mission Trip Leave

### **Family and Medical Leave**

In accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), the Church provides 12 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period for the following circumstances:

- For the birth or care of a newborn child of an employee;
- For the placement with an employee of a son or daughter for adoption or foster care;
- For the care of an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition;
- For the care of a serious medical condition of an employee (including any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or childbirth) that makes the employee unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of the employee's job; and/or
- For any qualifying exigency, arising out of the fact that an employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent is a covered military member on active duty or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of contingency operation. This leave also is available for family members of active duty service members.

Eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks of leave in any 12-month period preceding the commencement of the leave requested (i.e. a rolling 12-month period measured backward from each date the employee uses any FMLA leave). An employee's 12 weeks of leave, therefore,

will be reduced by any leave taken for other FMLA leave during that period so that the total amount of leave does not exceed 12 weeks.

### **Military Family Leave Entitlements**

Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post deployment reintegration briefings. For purposes of qualifying for leave to care for the serious medical condition of a child, the child of the employee must either be less than 18 years of age or, if older, be incapable of self-care because of mental or physical disability.

FMLA also provides eligible employees with up to 26 workweeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period for the care of an immediate family member (spouse, child, parent, or next of kin), who is a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is on the temporary retired list, as a result of a serious injury or illness and who were members of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard or Reserves) at any time during the five years preceding the date of treatment, recuperation or therapy.

### **Use of Leave**

A reduced schedule or an intermittent leave is also available under this policy if the leave is related to the employee's own or an immediate family member's serious health condition, to care for an immediate family member of the Armed Services or when an immediate family member is on active duty or notified of impending active duty. If intermittent or reduced-schedule medical leave is requested for a foreseeable planned medical treatment, the employee may be required to transfer temporarily to an alternative position for which the employee is qualified, if that position has equivalent pay and benefits and would better accommodate intermittent or reduced-schedule leave. Family leave for the birth or placement of a child may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced-schedule basis.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for FMLA leave, an employee must:

- Have worked for the Church for a total of 12 months;
- Have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months (including all time worked, but excluding hours such as sick leave, vacation and holidays that were paid but not worked) preceding the requested leave time; and
- Have not already exhausted available Family and Medical Leave.

### **Definition of Serious Health Condition**

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating

in school or other daily activities. Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

### **Coordination with the Paid Time Off Policy**

Employees must use accrued sick and personal days (sick and personal days) concurrently with FMLA leave based on a serious medical condition. Employees may, but are not required, to use accrued vacation days. The substitution of paid time for unpaid FMLA leave time does not extend the length of FMLA leaves. The remaining days of a qualified FMLA leave will be unpaid. Employees on a leave of absence do not receive holiday pay. Refer to the Paid Time Off Policy for additional information about sick days.

Employees receiving Workers' Compensation or qualified disability do not qualify for payout of accrued vacation, sick days, personal days, or other paid days while on FMLA leave. Leaves of absence taken in connection with a workers' compensation injury/illness shall run concurrently with any FMLA leave entitlement. Upon request, the Company will allow employees to use accrued paid time to supplement any paid disability benefits.

### **Applying for Family and Medical Leave**

Employees must complete a Request for Leave Form (available by contacting the Human Resources Administrator) and, if desiring to take a medical leave, obtain certification from a health care provider. An employee giving birth should request the total amount of time she wishes to take, including both the time for actual physical recuperation and bonding with the newborn, in the same request.

The Request for Leave Form should be submitted 30 days before the requested leave date (if the leave is foreseeable and such notice is possible) or as soon as the employee is aware of the need for leave. If 30 days' notice is not practicable, the employee should submit the request as soon as possible and practical, given the circumstances. The Health Care Certification Form should be returned to the Business Administrator prior to the date the leave is to begin, when the leave is requested due to foreseeable events. When the leave is unforeseeable, the certification must be presented within 15 days of the request for certification. If an employee fails to submit a completed certification the FMLA leave may be delayed or denied. Subsequent recertification and/or a second opinion may be required.

Employees are expected, subject to the health care provider's availability and guidance, to schedule doctor's appointments, medical treatments or tests for themselves or covered family members so as not to unduly disrupt their area's operations.

Eligibility to take family leave for the birth or placement of a child expires 12 months after the date of the birth or placement.

Employees requesting leave will be informed whether they are eligible under FMLA. If eligible, the Church will provide notice of any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If ineligible, the Church will provide a reason for ineligibility.

Employees will be informed if the leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the Church determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the Church will notify the employee.

### **Benefits During Leave of Absence**

No benefits that accrued before the date when the leave began will be lost; however, no vacation leave, sick leave, seniority or other employments, excluding health insurance and pension, will accrue while on FMLA leave. Employees will receive health insurance and pension benefits while on FMLA leave, but if employee fails to return to work after the period of leave expires the Church may recover the cost of health and pension benefits paid for the leave period.

### **Spouses Employed by the Church**

Spouses employed by the Church may be limited to a combined total of 12 workweeks of family leave for the following reasons:

- Birth and care of a child,
- For the placement of a child for adoption or foster care, and to care for a newly placed child, and
- To care for an employee's parent who has a serious health condition.

For this purpose, the two employees will have the same "FMLA leave year", consisting of a rolling 12-month period measured backward from each date that either employee uses leave.

### **Returning from Leave**

Employees who return from Family and Medical Leave (up to 12 weeks) will be reinstated to the same job they left or one with equivalent pay and benefits. While on FMLA leave, an employee may be required to report to the Church periodically regarding his or her status and intent to return to work. If the employee's original return to work date changes, the employee should provide the Church with at least two days notice of the change.

A fitness-for-duty medical certification stating that the employee is capable of performing his or her normal duties or assignment will be required before an employee is permitted to return from leave taken due to the employee's own serious health condition (not required for intermittent leave). The attending physician shall ensure that an employee returning to work after a serious injury or illness is physically capable of performing their duties or assignments without risk of re-injury or relapse. If such certification is not submitted as required, the employee's return to work may be delayed.

If an employee can return to work with limiting restrictions and the restrictions can be accommodated within the employee's specific work duties, the employee must review the limitations with the immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Administrator.

### **Military Leave**

Eligible employees who are members of the Alabama National Guard or any reserve component of the United States military forces and who are ordered to annual field training or active duty training are entitled by law to a short-term military leave of absence. An employee who enlists or is ordered to active service with the United States Armed Forces will be granted an extended leave of absence with re-employment rights as required by law.

### **Bereavement Leave**

Employees may take up to three workdays with pay in cases of death in the immediate family. The immediate family is defined as: spouse, children, step-children, parents, parents-in-law, brothers, sisters, step-brothers, and step-sisters. In addition, employees may take up to one workday with pay in cases of death of a grandparent, grandparent-in-law, a grandchild, or an ex-spouse. Additional time may be taken using paid time off (PTO) or without pay with the approval

of the Business Administrator and appropriate supervisor. Bereavement leave is limited to five total days per calendar year. Requests for exceptions to the definition (in consideration of extended and/or blended families) should be submitted in writing to the Business Administrator and the appropriate supervisor.

Any employee's request for time off to attend the local funeral of a friend or other relative will be approved for up to two hours with no reduction in pay.

### **Jury Duty Leave**

The Church encourages its employees to accept the civic responsibility to serve as a juror when summoned. The employee must present the "certificate of jury service" to the appropriate supervisor as soon as it is received from the court clerk. The summons will be placed in the employee's official personnel file. Full compensation will continue for the duration of the employee's leave for jury service.

### **Personal Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence without pay, other than provided for by FMLA, will be granted for limited periods if circumstances warrant. Specific approval for such leave must be requested through the appropriate supervisor, who will discuss the request with the Business Administrator and forward it to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee for action.

### **Mission Trip Leave**

Regular full-time and part-time employees who wish to participate in a Church sponsored mission trip, are eligible for a one week paid mission trip leave (based on the number of hours worked each week) after one year of service. Mission trip leaves may only be taken once every two years except for those coordinating trips as part of their ministry. If a mission trip is taken more often, vacation time must be used.

## **BENEFITS**

The Church reserves the right to modify its benefits program as circumstances dictate. The Church will always endeavor to provide an attractive and market competitive benefits package

### **Insurance**

The Church pays a portion of the premiums for insurance policies that it provides regular full-time employees who have successfully completed their "Get Acquainted" period. These policies may include major medical, hospitalization, dental, life, disability, and accidental death insurance.

Enrollment forms will be given to the employee at that time, along with information explaining the benefits.

Additional individual insurance coverage is available and is paid 100% by the employee. Descriptions of these coverages and plan limits are available from the Human Resources Administrator.

The Church reserves the right to modify or discontinue the insurance offered and request additional contributions from the employee. The Church, through the Staff Parish Relations Committee, has sole discretion in interpreting the plan documents and deciding issues relating to them.

### **Extending Health Coverage When Employment Ends**

In accordance with the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), and applicable state law, if your employment with the Church ends, or if you experience a reduction in hours of employment, you may be eligible to either continue your present level of health insurance coverage, if eligible, under the Church's group health insurance plan or you may be able to convert your group coverage to individual coverage. Under COBRA you pay the entire premium plus an administrative fee. This coverage can last for a period of up to eighteen (18) months or such additional periods as required by applicable law.

If your spouse and any dependent children are covered under the Church's group health plan at the time your employment ends or reduction of hours, they may also have the same right to continue their health insurance coverage. In addition, they may have the right to elect to remain covered under our Plan if they lose coverage because of: (a) your death; (b) your divorce or legal separation; (c) your entitlement to Medicare; or (d) a dependent child's ceasing to be a "dependent child" under the plan. However, if events (b), (c) or (d) above occur, you or your spouse must notify us of the event within 60 days in order for your spouse or child to be eligible to continue coverage, subject to applicable law.

To be eligible for these continuation or conversion rights for yourself or your spouse and any dependent children, the law requires that certain conditions be met. In addition, medical summary plan description (SPD) contains further details concerning your health insurance coverage and the extension of such benefits coverage that governs in the event of any conflict. Of course, because the law changes and because our health insurance benefits change periodically, the continuation and conversion of benefits described above may also change.

### **Changing Your Benefits Elections**

You may not make changes to your benefits or enroll in benefits unless you have a qualified "Change in Family Status" or during our annual open enrollment period. This limitation is imposed by the IRS because of the use of pre-tax dollars to pay for benefits. However, with a change in family status, you may be eligible to change benefits or participate in a Special Enrollment Period.

According to the IRS, a "Change in Family Status" is defined as an event that affects your need for any of the plans covered by the Flexible Benefits Program. However, you must request a benefit change within 30 days of your "Change in Family Status". This includes events such as:

- you have a new dependent due to marriage, birth, adoption, or placement for adoption
- a change in marital status
- the death of your spouse or a dependent
- your spouse begins or stops working
- you or your spouse change from part-time to full-time, or vice versa
- your child becomes too old for coverage under your plan
- you or your spouse takes an unpaid leave of absence
- you or your dependents have other medical coverage that ends due to loss of eligibility or failure of the employer to pay toward that coverage
- you or your dependents have COBRA coverage that is exhausted
- you or your spouse loses or gains job-related coverage health coverage, or other employer stops paying for coverage

- your spouse experiences an open enrollment period through his or her place of employment
- your loss of coverage

Generally, you can only make changes that are consistent with the change in your family status. For example, if you have a child, you may add them to your dependent life insurance but not cancel your own coverage.

### **Holidays**

The Church observes the following holidays. Eligible employees will receive holiday pay. Regular full-time employees are paid in accordance with their average hours per week.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday after Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- Day after Christmas

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday will be observed. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday will be observed. Employees away from work on unpaid leave of absence other than leaves due to work-related injuries will not be compensated for holidays occurring during their leave of absence.

### **Paid Time Off (PTO)**

All PTO, except for illness, should be requested as early as possible and will be taken at the convenience of the Church. Employees should request PTO in writing (or through our employee portal) to be approved by the immediate supervisor and communicated to the Human Resource Administrator. Forms requesting and reporting leave are provided. Completed forms are filed as part of an employee's permanent file. Failure to complete these forms may result in loss of benefits, including loss of pay for days absent but not reported or requested, or taken in excess of the allotted leave time.

PTO for employee or family illness should be reported to the employee's immediate supervisor as soon as possible. A PTO form should be completed and presented to the supervisor the day the employee returns to work.

Any time off, whether approved or not, beyond an employee's accumulated PTO or the leave options listed below will be considered unpaid leave. Except where prohibited by law, the Church has the right to discontinue all benefits, like health care, during unpaid leave. If the Church continues benefits, the employee may be required to pre-pay or reimburse the Church for the costs of those benefits.

### **Regular Full-Time Employees**

PTO is designed to provide full-time employees with flexible paid time off from work that can be used for such needs as vacation, personal or family illness, doctor appointments, school,



your worker's compensation benefits. Supervisors are required to complete a written accident report and submit it to the Human Resources Administrator for all work-related injuries.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Telephones**

The nature of our business requires an enormous amount of telephone usage. As a result, personal calls on office phones should be held to a minimum and for emergency or vital matters. Courtesy and professionalism should be displayed in all telephone contacts. The Facilities Manager will arrange for you to be given instruction regarding the use of our telephone system. The following points should be observed in using Church telephones:

- Answer all voice mail messages within 24 hours on business days.
- Keep all necessary personal calls brief.
- Report any telephone trouble to the Facility Manager immediately.

### **Safety**

The Church will make every effort to protect the safety and health of employees. If unsafe conditions are observed, it is the responsibility of the employee to report the unsafe conditions to the Facility Manager and/or Business Administrator.

All employees are required to immediately report any type of work-related injury or illness to their immediate supervisor, and the Human Resources Administrator as soon as it occurs, regardless of how minor the injury or sickness may be. Proper first aid and/or medical attention must be sought immediately. The Human Resources Administrator or the Business Administrator will direct them to the proper doctor or medical facility for care. In an emergency situation, the supervisor, Business Administrator, and/or emergency personnel will transport the employee to a hospital or other appropriate healthcare facility.

All employees are expected to keep their work areas clean and free of hazards.

### **Issuance of Keys**

For security purposes, the issuance of keys to the Church property is limited to employees or individuals who have been approved by the appropriate Church staff member. The employee must sign for receipt of any key issued to them. Keys are not transferable from one employee to another. When the employee terminates from the Church, keys must be returned to the Facility Manager or immediate supervisor. Failure to do so will result in the withholding of final compensation and/or a \$50 fine deducted from the employee's final paycheck.

### **Employee Photographs**

Photographs of Church employees are used by various ministry departments of the Church for newsletters, web site, staff albums, and items of a similar nature.

Photographs may be required for:

- New, regular and full-time employees
- Temporary employees transferring into regular full-time status
- Special requests and updates.

### **Expense Reimbursements**

Employees will be reimbursed for appropriate ministry related expenses that are within the approved budget. The reimbursement form should be completed for all expense

reimbursements. Substantiation requirements for a ministry expense require a notation of date, location, business purpose, and amount. Ministry cash advances are discouraged, but necessary in some instances. All advances must be cleared within 60 days with receipts or returned funds. Failure to clear an advance with approved expenses can result in paycheck withholding or other disciplinary action including termination. All ministry expenditures should be reimbursed within 90 days of the receipt date. Direct questions about what items are reimbursable to the Accountant.

**Ministry Expenses Paid by the Use of a Church Credit Card**

Some employees are issued a Church credit card. All purchases on Church issued credit cards are restricted to Church related supplies, travel and entertainment. Cards must not be used for the convenience of making personal purchases.

Employees who have been issued a Church credit card must save a receipt from every purchase, attach the receipt to the monthly credit card statement, and categorize each transaction on the statement according to the Church's financial accounts. Failure to use the card only for ministry items, save receipts, or process the statements correctly and in a timely manner can result in suspension or termination of card use or other disciplinary actions including termination.

The employee is responsible for the payment of all charges that are not properly substantiated.

## APPENDIX TO EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

### **ORDAINED MINISTERS, DEACONS, AND DIACONAL MINISTERS**

#### **Appointment and Assignment Procedures**

Ordained Ministers are appointed to their position by the action of the Bishop and Annual Conference of the North Alabama Conference in accordance with "The Book of Discipline" of the United Methodist Church. Since Ordained Ministers are appointed by the Conference, they are exempt from the Post-Offer Medical History Questionnaire.

A Diaconal Minister is employed by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee upon the recommendation of the appropriate Church official in accordance with "The Book of Discipline" of the United Methodist Church.

#### **Moving Expenses**

The Church shall pay all moving expenses of incoming ordained ministers. The Church will pay for one housing search trip by a newly employed, out-of-town diaconal minister and their spouse including the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals.

#### **Job Description and Salary**

Each ordained and diaconal minister will be provided with a position statement prior to his or her appointment or assignment. The Annual Conference, on the recommendation of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, will set the annual salary and other benefits of the ordained and/or diaconal ministers.

#### **Continuing Education**

Time for continuing education and study will be provided. Such time will be with pay as directed by the Annual Conference. Workshop time, which is part of the ordained or diaconal minister's responsibilities, shall not be considered as continuing education.

All ordained and diaconal ministers shall be expected to meet the continuing education requirements of the Conference and "The Book of Discipline." Continuing education shall not be considered as vacation time.

#### **Evaluation**

All ordained and diaconal ministers are expected to participate in the evaluation processes as directed by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the Conference Boards of Diaconal Ministry and Ordained Ministry.

#### **Termination of Deacons or Diaconal Ministers**

Since deacons and diaconal ministers are not guaranteed a place of assignment in the Church, special attention shall be given to termination procedures, which allow time for seeking another service position. Notification of dismissal shall be provided in writing at least ninety (90) days prior to final termination of employment. The date for termination of employment shall coincide with the date of the annual conference except for causes as listed in "The Book of Discipline." The diaconal minister shall give the Church and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee ninety (90) days written notice regarding resignation or retirement.

#### **Appointment of Ordained Ministers**

The appointment of ordained ministers shall be consistent with “The Book of Discipline” and the procedure developed by the Church’s Staff-Parish Relations Committee and in consultation with the Bishop and Cabinet.

**Appointed Clergy Time Off**

Appointed clergy will follow the North Alabama Conference guidelines.