

Personnel Policy

[Church Name] · Adopted by the Church Council on [date] · Reviewed [date]

1. Purpose and scope

This policy governs employment at [Church Name]. It applies to all paid staff, including part-time employees. It does not apply to appointed clergy, whose relationship to the church is governed by *The Book of Discipline* and the annual conference, nor to volunteers.

This policy is not a contract of employment and does not guarantee employment for any period. [CHOOSE: most churches include an at-will statement here. At-will rules vary by state, and the wording matters – get this sentence from your chancellor rather than from a template.]

Where this policy conflicts with *The Book of Discipline*, the Discipline governs. Where it conflicts with the law of [state], the law governs.

2. Who does what

- **The staff-parish relations committee** recommends staffing, sets job descriptions, conducts the annual evaluation, and recommends compensation (§258.2). Personnel conversations happen in closed session and are confidential.
- **The pastor** supervises day-to-day work [CHOOSE: or name a different direct supervisor for each position – say which, in writing, for every role].
- **The church council** adopts this policy and the annual budget within which compensation sits.
- **The charge conference** sets clergy compensation.

Any employee may raise a concern directly with the SPRC chair without going through their supervisor.

3. Hiring

1. The position and its job description are approved before any candidate is contacted.
2. [CHOOSE: who interviews – SPRC, a search team, the supervisor?]
3. **Screening.** [CHOOSE: which positions require a background check and Safe Gatherings-type training. Recommended floor: everyone with unsupervised access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults, and everyone who handles money.] Screening is completed **before** the first day of work, not after.
4. **Employment eligibility.** Federal law requires Form I-9 verification for every employee within the first three days of work. Use the current form and instructions from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services – do not rely on a copy in a church file, which may be out of date.
5. **Tax forms.** Form W-4 and your state's equivalent, from the IRS and your state revenue department directly.
6. Employment begins with a written offer stating the position, compensation, the supervisor, and the start date.

Flag, not answered here: whether a given position is **exempt or non-exempt** under the Fair Labor Standards Act determines whether you owe overtime, and churches get this wrong routinely — particularly with part-time program staff and anyone called a “director.” The Department of Labor is blunt about it: “job titles do not determine exempt status,” and both the duties test *and* a salary test must be met. Do not assume salaried means exempt.

Note also that the **salary threshold has moved and been litigated in recent years**, so confirm the figure currently in force rather than repeating a number from an older document — including an older version of the DOL fact sheet itself. Ask your conference office before the first paycheck.

4. Classification and hours

- **Full-time** is defined here as [CH00SE: e.g. 30 or more hours per week]. This number has benefits consequences — check it against your health-plan and Wespath eligibility rules before choosing it.
- **Part-time** is anything below that threshold.
- **Regular vs. temporary/seasonal:** [CH00SE].
- Non-exempt employees record actual hours worked. Overtime must be approved in advance [CH00SE: by whom] and is paid whether or not it was approved — approval governs discipline, not pay.

5. Compensation

- Pay periods are [CH00SE: monthly / semi-monthly / biweekly], paid on [CH00SE].
- Compensation is reviewed annually as part of the budget process, on SPRC’s recommendation. Review does not imply increase.
- **Clergy compensation** is set by the charge conference in consultation with the district superintendent and is not governed by this section.

Flag: clergy tax treatment — housing allowance, SECA rather than FICA, and the rule that clergy are generally employees for income tax and self-employed for Social Security — is genuinely unlike other payroll and is easy to get wrong. Use GCFA’s or your conference’s guidance, and a payroll provider that knows churches.

6. Time away

- **Holidays.** [CH00SE: list them. Note that Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Holy Week are working days for church staff in a way they aren't elsewhere — say plainly which staff work them and how that time is returned.]
- **Vacation.** [CH00SE: how much, how it accrues, whether it carries over, and what happens to unused vacation at separation.] Carryover and payout rules are **state-regulated in some states** — check before writing this paragraph.
- **Sick time.** [CH00SE] — several states and cities mandate paid sick leave; confirm what applies to you.
- **Bereavement, jury duty, parental leave.** [CH00SE]

- **Continuing education.** [CH00SE: SPRC is directed by ¶258.2 to arrange time and funding for continuing education and renewal – decide what that means for lay staff too.]
- Requests are submitted to [CH00SE] at least [CH00SE] in advance where foreseeable.

7. Conduct

- Staff are expected to treat members, volunteers, colleagues, and visitors with respect, and to keep confidences – including pastoral, financial, and personnel information – both during and after employment.
- **Conflicts of interest** are disclosed in writing to the SPRC chair. A staff member does not participate in a decision affecting their own compensation or that of an immediate family member.
- **Church property, accounts, and information** are used for church purposes. Passwords are not shared; access is recorded in the church’s account register and key log.
- **Social media.** [CH00SE: a short statement. Keep it about representing the church and protecting confidences; policing personal accounts creates more problems than it solves.]

8. Safeguarding

The church maintains a separate **safe gatherings / child and vulnerable-adult protection policy**, and it governs where it applies. Every employee reads and signs it at hire, and it is re-signed [CH00SE: annually?].

Mandatory reporting. Every employee reports suspected abuse or neglect immediately, as required by the law of [state]. Reporting is not routed through church leadership first, and no employee is disciplined for making a report in good faith. [CH00SE: insert your state's reporting number and any conference-required notification.]

9. Grievances

An employee with a concern raises it with their supervisor, or – if the concern involves the supervisor – directly with the SPRC chair. The SPRC responds in writing within [CH00SE] days. Nothing in this section prevents an employee from contacting the district superintendent or a government agency.

10. Evaluation

Every employee receives a written annual evaluation, conducted by [CH00SE] and reviewed by SPRC. Evaluation is for growth and for identifying training needs; it is not the mechanism for addressing a serious problem, which is addressed when it happens. A copy is signed by the employee – signature meaning “I have read this,” not “I agree” – and filed in the personnel file.

11. Discipline and separation

- Concerns are normally addressed in escalating steps: conversation, written expectations with a date to review, then further action.

- Some conduct warrants immediate action without prior steps [CHOOSE: describe categories generally – theft, violence, abuse, falsifying records – without writing an exhaustive list, which invites the argument that anything unlisted is permitted].
- **Termination** requires [CHOOSE: SPRC consultation? SPRC approval?]. Consult your conference office or chancellor **before** terminating anyone.
- On separation: final pay per [state] law, return of keys and property, removal from all accounts in the church’s register, and an exit conversation where possible.

12. Personnel records

The church keeps a personnel file for each employee containing the job description, offer letter, signed policy acknowledgments, evaluations, and employment dates.

- Files are kept [CHOOSE: where – a locked cabinet or an access-restricted drive], accessible to [CHOOSE: the pastor and the SPRC chair].
- **Medical and disability-related information is filed separately** from the general personnel file.
- **I-9 forms are filed separately** from personnel files.
- Retention: [CHOOSE – retention periods are set by federal and state law and vary by document type; get the schedule from your conference or chancellor rather than inventing one.]

13. Acknowledgment

I have received and read the personnel policy of [Church Name]. I understand it is not a contract of employment and that it may be revised.

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

This is a starting point, not legal advice. Employment law varies by state, and your annual conference may have policies that go beyond the Discipline. Before you rely on anything here for a hiring, firing, or compensation decision, run it past your conference office or chancellor.

Paragraph references are to the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline. This document paraphrases; for the binding text, see the Discipline itself.

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