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# Sample Human Resource Policies and Practices

## A Model Policy Manual for Congregations of the HEARTLAND CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

This sample policy manual has been prepared to assist local congregations who wish to develop policies for their use. This sample is modeled after the policy developed for the Heartland (formerly Ohio) Conference by its Personnel Committee, reviewed by Conference legal counsel, and approved by the Conference Board of Trustees in November 2020.

In providing this model, the Conference is not intending to provide legal counsel to a congregation. Rather, this model is designed to assist and encourage the development of a policy that will meet the needs of the congregation. It is recommended that a final policy be reviewed by legal counsel before its adoption.

The personnel policies and practices contained in this manual were adopted by the *Council/Consistory* of \_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ on \_\_\_\_\_. They are intended to provide lawful and appropriate treatment of staff. These policies will be reviewed regularly by the *Council/Consistory*.

Revised 11/2020

**Philosophy of Personnel Management for \_\_\_\_\_  
United Church of Christ**

*Include here a statement of mission for the congregation or a statement of the goals of the ministry of the congregation.*

All staff persons are employed to provide a professional quality of leadership, management, and support to this mission and ministry. It is out of this understanding of the mission of the whole church that we have developed this policy manual.

\_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. All personnel procedures and actions including recruiting, hiring and calling, training, transferring, promoting, compensating, and awarding of other benefits shall be administered without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, handicap, disability, or marital status.

## 1. GENERAL

### 1.1 Employer's Objectives

\_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ will strive to provide salaries and employee benefits which bear a fair and reasonable relationship to the work performed; establish reasonable hours of work; maintain safe and healthful working conditions; and welcome constructive suggestions which relate to methods, procedures, working conditions, and the nature of the work performed.

### 1.2 Governance of the Staff

The *Staff Parish Relations Committee* of the congregation is a standing committee of the *Council/Consistory*. It is charged with developing and reviewing job descriptions for all staff, developing continuing education programs for staff, and providing review and evaluation of all staff members.

The *Senior Minister/Pastor* is called and elected by the congregation as the pastor and chief executive officer and as such is responsible for management of the staff. He/she performs this function guided by the policy established by the congregation.

### 1.3 Classifications of Employees

**1.31 Exempt employees** are those members of the staff who have administrative, program, and managerial responsibilities and are not subject to the hours of work and overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Exempt employees may include:

**The Staff Minister(s)** are those persons with ministerial standing (ordination or commissioning) in the United Church of Christ who have administrative and program responsibilities.

**Managerial Staff Members** are those persons who have administrative, supervisory, and some program responsibilities. Ministerial standing is not required for these positions.

**1.32** All other full-time employees are **non-exempt employees** and are subject to the hours worked and overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**1.33** Three additional categories of workers are part of the work force of the church.

**Part-time workers** are individuals employed for an indefinite period, but who work less than a normal work week. Part-time workers may be temporary, or they may be used to supplement the regular work force on an ongoing basis. Regular part-time employees work an average of at least 20 hours per week and are eligible to receive

some benefits. All part-time workers are expected to follow these personnel policies except where expressly inapplicable.

**Temporary workers** are individuals who may work either full or part-time for a limited period not to exceed 180 days. They supplement the regular work force when necessitated by periods of peak workload, employee absences, or other situations. They are not entitled to employee benefits but are expected to follow these personnel policies except where expressly inapplicable.

**Independent contractors or consultants** are persons engaged to perform short term; distinct functions as prescribed in a written contract. Independent contractors are not employees and therefore do not receive benefits and are not covered by these personnel policies unless specifically indicated.

#### **1.4 Recruitment and Selection Process**

- 1.41** Employment in the congregation will be offered in the spirit of affirmative action. To encourage that all categories of employment reflect the broad spectrum of the diverse society in which we live as well as to live out our theology of inclusiveness, the congregation will advertise widely and recruit vigorously from specialized sources.

\_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. All personnel procedures and actions including recruiting, hiring and calling, training, transferring, promoting, compensating, and awarding of other benefits shall be administered without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, handicap, disability, or marital status except where necessary to ensure inclusion.

- 1.42** All candidates for **non-exempt** positions will complete an application for employment, will provide references and previous work experience information, and be personally screened by the *Senior Minister/Pastor* or his/her designee.
- 1.43** The *Senior Minister/Pastor* will be called as defined in the Constitution.
- 1.44** All staff members are employed by the Council/Consistory. Except as specified otherwise herein, candidates for exempt positions will be interviewed by a committee appointed by the *Council/Consistory*.

A letter of agreement will be executed between the successful candidate and the Senior Minister/Pastor or his/her designee. In the case of the call of a person with **ministerial** standing, the proper call document will be executed by the employee and the officers of the *Council/Consistory*.

- 1.45** In no event will the hiring of an employee be considered as creating a contractual relationship between the employee and the congregation, and such relationship will be defined as **employment at will** where either party may dissolve the relationship at any time and for any lawful reason.
- 1.46** The *Council/Consistory* may employ a **relative or cohabitant** of an employee if the individual possesses the qualifications for employment and is the candidate of choice. However, those persons will not be given work assignments which require one to direct, review, or process the work of the other.

## **1.5 Termination of Employment**

Employment may be terminated because of an employee's resignation, discharge, reduction of work force, retirement, or death.

When the employment of any employee terminates for any reason, the employee will be paid for accrued vacation, except that no vacation pay shall be paid to non-exempt employees who have worked less than six months.

- 1.51 Resignation:** Resignation is a voluntary choice made by the employee for whatever reason. Resignation of non-exempt staff persons should be submitted to the *Senior Minister/Pastor* two weeks before the date of leaving. Staff ministers shall give at least ninety days notice before leaving or as negotiated with the *Council/Consistory*. Managerial staff members shall give at least thirty days notice before leaving.
- 1.52 Discharge:** Non-exempt employees who are discharged shall receive two weeks termination pay. Managerial employees shall receive one month of termination pay. Staff ministers shall receive three months of termination pay. All staff will receive all unused earned vacation pay. Employees who are discharged shall not receive severance pay. The final day of employment shall be determined by the *Council/Consistory*.
- 1.53 Reduction in Work Force:** Employees may be separated because of discontinuation of a position or retrenchment in budget or for other circumstances arising through no fault of the employee.

Separation of non-exempt employees due to reduction in work force shall take effect only with at least four weeks notice or payment of equivalent salary in lieu of such notice. Separation of exempt staff due to reduction in work force shall take effect only with at least three months notice or payment of equivalent salary in lieu of such notice.

Employees separated under this section shall receive severance pay in the amount of one week of current salary per year of service to the congregation and may receive out placement services.

**1.54 Retirement:** Employees may elect normal retirement on the first day of the month following the month in which they reach age sixty-five. Employees may elect early retirement subject to the rules, policies, and provisions of the Pension Boards, United Church of Christ.

**1.55 Death:** In the event of the death of an employee who has been employed for five years or more, the surviving spouse or, if there is no spouse, the dependents (sharing on a per capita basis) will receive a gift equal to three months salary. For the purposes of this section a dependent is defined as a person for whom the employee was entitled to claim a federal income tax exemption. For an employee who has been employed less than five years, the gift shall be pro-rated, but no less than one month's salary shall be given. Full-time service in any part of the United Church of Christ will be counted in determining death benefits for all employees.

## **2. SALARY/WAGES AND BENEFITS**

### **2.1 Work Schedule**

The basic work week is 40 hours long, including a 45-minute daily lunch. The church office is open Monday through Friday from \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. to \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. All non-exempt staff will work during these hours except by approval of the *Senior Minister/Pastor*.

Exempt employees' work schedules will not necessarily coincide with office hours. Each individual's normal work week depends upon the position description. Every attempt should be made to keep to a reasonable work schedule with office time, time in the parish, planning and study time, and recreation and free time. In all cases, exempt employees should take at least one full day off each week.

**2.11 Overtime:** Under normal circumstances work for non-exempt staff will be scheduled so that overtime is not needed. Any overtime must be authorized in advance by the *Senior Minister/Pastor* in consultation with the employee.

Compensatory time will be given at hourly straight-time for overtime work where the employee has not worked more than 40 hours in the workweek and at the rate of one and one-half hours per hour worked over 40 hours in the workweek. The workweek begins on Monday. All compensatory time must be used within the same workweek in which it was accumulated.

When it is not possible to use compensatory time in the same workweek, the non-exempt employee will be paid at hourly straight-time for work not exceeding 40 hours per week and at one and one-half times the regular rate per hour for work in excess of 40 hours per week.

## 2.2 Compensation

### 2.21 Exempt Staff

Salaries for exempt staff will be based on education, skills, and relevant experience. Salaries shall be reviewed annually in conjunction with the process for staff evaluation. (See Part IV.)

Each year the *Council/Consistory*, acting upon recommendation of the *Staff Parish Relations Committee*, shall confirm a stated amount of total compensation paid to each employee who is an ordained minister as a housing allowance in lieu of parsonage in accordance with Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code. This action shall appear in the official minutes of the *Council/Consistory*.

### 2.22 Non-Exempt Staff

Starting wages for non-exempt staff members will be based on education, skills, and relevant experience. Salaries shall be reviewed annually in conjunction with the process for staff evaluation. (See Part IV.)

Full-time, non-exempt staff members will be permitted to engage in remunerative work for persons or organizations other than the church if this does not interfere with the performance of their regular duties. This work will be planned in consultation with the *Senior Minister/Pastor* and shall receive his/her approval prior to being undertaken.

## 2.3 Time Off

### 2.31 Vacations

Vacations accrue on a calendar year basis. Vacation time may be deferred to within the first three months of the following year if approved by the *Council/Consistory*, but must in any event be taken by April 1 of the following year or be forfeited. Holidays that fall within an employee's vacation are not considered vacation days used. Extra pay will not be granted in lieu of vacation.

**Exempt** staff members receive paid vacation of one month per full calendar year of employment. When the initial or final year of employment is a partial year, vacations shall be negotiated in advance. Vacations for exempt employees are normally taken in the summer months, and schedules are to be worked out by the *Senior Minister/Pastor*.

**Non-exempt** staff members receive paid vacation on the following schedule:

Years of Employment	Vacation Days Earned	
	Per Month	
1-3	10	
4-5	15	
6+	20	

Requests for vacation time for non-exempt employees shall be submitted to and scheduled by the *Senior Minister/Pastor*.

**Part-time** employees who average twenty hours or more per week over a twelve-month period (1,040 hours or more per year) earn paid vacation time at the rate of one week off at the average number of hours worked per week they work. After completing four years of employment, the employee will earn one and one-half times the average number of hours worked per week.

### **2.32 Holidays**

The following holidays are observed in the church office:

1. New Year's Day
2. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
3. Presidents' Day
4. Good Friday
5. Memorial Day
6. Juneteenth
7. Independence Day
8. Labor Day
9. Thanksgiving Day
10. Friday after Thanksgiving Day
11. Christmas Day

One additional floating holiday (e.g., Christmas Eve day, or the Friday before Christmas or New Year's) will be assigned each year at the discretion of the *Council/Consistory*. All regular exempt and non-exempt employees who are required to work on one of the observed holidays shall be given compensatory time to be administered under Section 2.11.

All regular employees will receive their regular pay for holidays. Part-time employees will receive holiday pay only for holidays they would normally be scheduled to work, and only for their regularly scheduled number of hours. Temporary employees and consultants or independent contractors are not eligible to receive holiday pay.

Any holiday which falls on a Saturday or Sunday will be observed on another workday.

### **2.33 Continuing Education**

Short-term leave for continuing education opportunities is encouraged out of a commitment to the professional growth and development of full-time exempt employees. Any exempt employee may initiate the request for time to participate in such events. That employee may also be urged to attend such an event which meets a need for her/his growth as perceived by the *Senior Minister/Pastor*.



**2.34 Parental Leave:**

Parental Leave: Parental leave with full salary and benefits up to three months shall be provided following the birth/adoption of a child. Parental leave will begin on a date as agreed to by the employee and the supervisor.

**2.35 Military Training Leave:** A full-time staff member who is required to perform annual military training duty will be granted time off from work, without pay, for a period not to exceed ten working days per year. A copy of the training orders should be shown to the *Council/Consistory*.

**2.36 Leave for Death in the Family**

An employee who loses a parent, child, spouse, fiancé, or significant other will be allowed up to five days leave and may take further time that will be charged to accrued vacation.

An employee who loses a grandparent, grandchild, or sibling will be allowed up to three days of leave and may take further time that will be charged to vacation.

Any other absence due to funeral time will be taken as vacation.

**2.37 Sick Leave**

**Exempt** staff members will be granted full salary and benefits for any long or short-term leave due to illness. Salary and benefits will be paid until the salary supplement is picked up by disability insurance.

Sick leave is granted to full-time **non-exempt** staff at the rate of one and one-half days per month for personal illness or the illness of a dependent family member. Up to three days of sick leave may be arranged for personal leave (without pay) in a calendar year. This sick leave may accrue up to 90 days but may be taken only as sick leave and is not paid for upon termination.

**Part-time** employees who work at least 20 hours per week will receive sick leave of 5% of the hours worked per year. This sick leave may be carried over for one year only and is not paid for upon termination.

**2.38 Personal Leave of Absence**

The *Council/Consistory* may, pursuant to a written request, grant a leave of absence without pay for personal reasons.

### **2.39 Sabbatical Leave**

Staff ministers may request sabbatical leave for the purpose of spiritual and/or intellectual enrichment after three years of employment. One month per year is earned after three years of employment and is cumulative up to three months (i.e., at the end of 3 years, 1 month; at the end of 4 years, 2 months; at the end of 5 years, 3 months).

The staff person should consult with the *Council/Consistory* concerning his/her sabbatical and must submit a written proposal for this leave six months prior to the proposed starting date of the sabbatical. Each request for sabbatical is considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the *Council/Consistory*.

Only one staff person may be away on sabbatical leave at any time.

A staff person is entitled to regular vacation time in the year of his/her sabbatical, and this may be taken consecutively with the sabbatical leave or at another time in the same year. An amount up to \$250 per month may be allowed for sabbatical expenses.

Under normal circumstances the staff person taking sabbatical leave is expected to serve the congregation for at least one additional year.

Sabbatical leave may not be accrued for terminal pay purposes.

**2.310** For **jury duty** the employee will be granted leave with pay.

### **2.4 Social Security**

All lay employees are required by law to participate in Social Security under the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA). Contributions will be withheld from lay employees' pay checks for the employee's share. The church will pay the employer's share. These will be forwarded to the Internal Revenue Service as required by law. All authorized ministers who participate in Social Security do so on a self-employed basis. A Social Security offset, equal to what would be the employer's share, will be paid to each ordained minister and, as required by law, they must pay the Social Security tax directly.

### **2.5 Annuity and Retirement Funds**

The fund, administered by the Pension Boards, United Church of Christ is the Annuity Fund United Church of Christ. It is for the benefit of both ordained and lay employees. All staff shall be enrolled subject to the policies, rules and provisions of the Pension Boards, United Church of Christ. Information detailing all of the provisions of the appropriate pension plan is available from the Pension Boards, United Church of Christ.

- 2.51 Authorized ministers** shall be enrolled in the Annuity Fund effective on the date of employment at the rate of fourteen percent of the salary basis (cash salary plus housing).
- 2.52** Exempt and non-exempt **lay employees** shall be enrolled in the Annuity Fund at the rate of 14% of salary from the date of employment.
- 2.6 Insurance**  
The congregation provides health, dental, life, and disability insurance coverage for its eligible employees through participation in a group plan.
- 2.61 Health and Dental:** All employees are provided with health and dental insurance policies administered by the Pension Boards, United Church of Christ. Benefits are subject to provisions of the group plan. Full-time employees may receive full family coverage. Part-time employees who work at least 20 hours per week consistently may receive individual coverage and will be offered the opportunity to purchase the family coverage if needed. Coverage begins on the first day of the month following the date of employment. If the employee begins on the first day of the month it begins immediately. A copy of the complete benefits provided under the plan is available to each employee. No increase in salary will be given in lieu of health insurance coverage. The plan available to employees is not an open enrollment plan so employees need to understand that if coverage is initially refused and then requested at a later date, the employee will have to prove insurability.
- 2.62 Life:** Life insurance is provided for each employee in accordance with the respective Conference plans for lay and authorized ministerial employees.
- 2.63 Travel-Accident:** Travel-accident insurance is provided for all employees traveling on church business through worker's compensation.
- 2.64 Disability:** Disability insurance is provided for all full-time employees.
- 2.7** Full-time employees who are promoted or transferred from another body within the United Church of Christ retain their seniority for vacation, sick leave, insurance, and pension benefits purposes. All other entitlements shall be based on the new position.

### **3. COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

It is the objective of the church to encourage prompt resolution of employee dissatisfaction concerning conditions of employment or treatment by supervisors or other employees. While informal methods are encouraged, a formal complaint and grievance procedure is available when it is deemed necessary for resolution of the problem.

### **3.1 Informal Complaint**

All employees are encouraged to approach their immediate supervisors and initiate informal, confidential discussions to settle any dissatisfaction in a very professional manner. If the problem is not solved to the employee's satisfaction by a discussion with the employee's supervisor, the employee may make an informal appeal to the *Senior Minister/Pastor*. Although the employee is expected to work first with the employee's immediate supervisor, the employee may deal directly with the *Senior Minister/Pastor* if the problem is of such a nature as to make it embarrassing or impractical to discuss it with the immediate supervisor. When the complaint is not resolved through informal channels, the formal complaint and grievance procedure may be used.

### **3.2 Formal Complaint and Grievance Procedure**

A grievance is defined as an employee's dissatisfaction concerning conditions of employment or treatment by supervisors or other employees. Subjects of potential grievances include, but are not limited to, application of church policies, practices, and procedures believed by the employee to be unfair; harassment, intimidation, or coercion; alleged discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, handicap, disability, veteran status, marital status, or other status protected by law; and improper or unfair administration of employee benefits or conditions of employment.

**3.21 Employee responsibility:** Whenever an employee's grievance has not been resolved informally, then it is the employee's responsibility to submit a written complaint to the *Senior Minister/Pastor*. A copy of the complaint shall be retained by the employee.

**3.22 Supervisor's responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the *Senior Minister/Pastor* to investigate the complaint, to attempt to resolve it, and to promptly communicate a decision in writing to the employee.

**3.23 Appeal Process:** If the employee is not satisfied with the supervisor's decision, the employee may appeal the decision to the *Staff Parish Relations Committee*, who shall attempt to resolve the grievance. If these efforts fail to satisfy the employee, he/she may proceed to grievance and present details of the grievance in writing to the *Council/Consistory* which will render a final decision.

## **4. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL**

The performance appraisal system is designed so that all members of the staff (including both full and part-time personnel) will have regular and systematic evaluation of their work. The performance review is designed to provide helpful insights and recommendations to the person

being evaluated as well as recommendations regarding the organizational life and ministry of the church.

## **5. EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

### **5.1 Employee Responsibilities**

Each employee of the church will give a productive day's work to the best of her or his abilities and skills. This will include arriving at and beginning work on time; demonstrating a considerate, friendly, and constructive attitude toward other employees; dressing and grooming in a manner that is normally acceptable in the working environment; and adhering to all of the policies adopted by the church.

### **5.2 Employer Rights**

The congregation, as employer, has the exclusive rights to assign, supervise, discipline, and dismiss employees; to determine and change starting times, quitting times, and flexible time schedules; to establish, change, and abolish its policies, practices, rules, positions, and regulations; to determine and change methods by which its operations are to be carried out; and to assign duties to employees in accordance with carrying out its mission.

### **5.3 Harassment and Inappropriate Workplace Conduct**

The congregation prohibits harassment of its employees. Examples include, but are not limited to, harassment by any person in any form based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or disability.

All complaints should be filed in accordance with the Complaint and Grievance Procedure.

**5.31 Sexual Harassment** - It is the policy of the church to prohibit sexual harassment of its employees in the workplace by any person. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; graphic verbal comments about an individual's body; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual; the display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and sexually suggestive or explicit behavior.

It is the responsibility of every supervisor to maintain a workplace free of sexual harassment. This includes discussing this policy with all employees and assuring them that they are not required to endure insulting or exploitative sexual treatment. No supervisor shall threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the employee's employment, evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, or any other condition of employment or career development.

If any employee believes that she or he or any other individual has been the subject of sexual harassment, the employee shall report the alleged act to the *Senior Minister/Pastor* immediately. Complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated and resolved promptly.

#### **5.4 Optional Progressive Discipline Procedure**

Any employee who violates any of the rules and regulations or standards of employee conduct and behavior shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Where the *Senior Minister/Pastor* deems it appropriate, the following progressive discipline measures may be followed.

- 5.41** First violation - The supervisor meets with the employee to discuss the matter and inform the employee of the nature of the problem and the action necessary to correct it.
- 5.42** Second violation (whether or not of the same type as the first violation) - The supervisor holds a second meeting with the employee and warns the employee that he/she is subject to more severe disciplinary action.
- 5.43** Additional violations (whether or not of the same type as any earlier violations) - The supervisor may suspend the employee without pay, suspend the employee indefinitely and recommend termination, or take such other action as the supervisor deems appropriate.

#### **5.5 Discipline Relating to Ministerial Standing**

Any disciplinary procedure that relates to ministerial standing shall be processed by the Association in accordance with the procedures outlined in the United Church of Christ Manual On Ministry.

### **6. ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND NARCOTICS**

- 6.1** The use, sale, or dispensing of alcohol (except for use in communion services and special social events) or illegal drugs during work hours on the premises of the church is strictly prohibited.
- 6.2** An employee reporting to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol such that performance would be impaired will not be permitted to enter the premises. An employee discovered under the influence while on the job will be required to leave the premises and will be escorted home by another employee or sent by taxi.
- 6.3** Supervisors who observe unusual behavior patterns that may be the result of substance abuse on the part of employees shall direct the employee to have a medical examination or drug test performed at the expense of the church and by a lab or health

care provider determined by the Conference. Failure to fully and immediately cooperate in any such examination or test may be grounds for discharge. An employee who is medically diagnosed to require treatment for drug or alcohol abuse shall be granted a paid leave of absence up to one month to undertake rehabilitation treatment. Additional unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the *Senior Minister/Pastor*.

## Employee Acknowledgement

I have received a copy of the Human Resources Policies and Practices Manual. I have read and understand its contents and I have had an opportunity to ask any questions I may have about its contents.

I am aware that the Human Resources Policies and Practices Manual does not constitute an employment agreement or contract and that my employment is for no specific period of time. I understand that the purpose of the Human Resources Policies and Practices Manual is informational only and that its contents may be changed from time to time to reflect changes in the policies, rules, and regulations of \_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ.

I understand that my employment may be terminated at any time with or without cause and that no one can alter the at-will nature of my employment.

I acknowledge that no employee, agent, or representative of \_\_\_\_\_ United Church of Christ has the authority to allow me to engage in any conduct or behavior that is inconsistent with the Policies and Procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date