**PERSONNEL / HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Minimum Pastoral Support Package for Full Time Lead/Senior Pastors**

Which includes all salary and benefits, provided by a local church to be considered a full-time pastoral appointment be set at $70,000.00 for 2021.

**Excerpt from Book of Discipline Para 4380**

**Pension Plan**

A. The Board of Administration by authorization of the 1964

General Conference has established a defined contribution

pension plan which became effective January 1, 1969 and covers

ministers, general officers, and other persons as described in the

pension plan. On January 1, 1981, a defined benefit pension plan

was added.

B. The pension plan was created for the exclusive benefit of

employees of the employer and their beneficiaries and shall be

interpreted in a manner consistent with its being a qualified

pension plan as defined in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue

Code of 1986, as the same may be amended from time to time.

C. The trustees of the pension plans shall be the Board of Directors

of the Free Methodist Church – USA, who shall be responsible

for seeing that the plans are administered in accordance with

the plan documents.

D. The pension plans shall be administered by the Board of

Administration serving as the Pension Board, in accordance

with the rules and regulations of the plans. The details of

this administrative responsibility may be delegated to a

Benefits Committee that is elected from nominations from the

Nominating Committee by the Board of Administration.

E. If established, the Benefits Committee shall make

recommendations concerning the administration of the plans,

and shall regularly review the plans and their administration for

needed clarification, procedural adjustments, or amendments.

The Benefits Committee’s work is subject to the approval of the

Board of Administration.

F. Benefits Committee. The Benefits Committee shall:

1. administer and monitor the Free Methodist Church – USA

Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution pension plans

in a manner consistent with the definition of a qualified

pension plan in section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code

of 1986 as amended. The pension plans may be amended

by the General Conference or the Board of Administration.

The text of such amendments shall be communicated to

the participants of the plans in writing. No amendment

shall abridge or annul the rights of members in respect to

their accumulations as of the date of the adoption of such

amendment.

2. administer an overall policy regarding enrollments,

contributions and retirement benefits that will ensure that

all appropriate personnel receive a benefit;

3. regularly review the plans’ provisions and provide

clarification, adjustments or amendments;

4. receive and review annually the plans’ audit and valuation

for any possible benefit improvements;

5. periodically meet with the plan actuary to review the

plans’ financial profile related to current and future plan

participants and refer participants’ issues to legal counsel

when appropriate;

6. periodically meet with the Free Methodist Foundation

to receive and review reports of the plans’ investment performance and fee structure;

7. communicate with the plans’ participants on a regular

basis regarding plan changes and accrued benefits, and in

conjunction with the Free Methodist Foundation, provide

retirement financial planning.

8. provide any necessary reports and recommendations

for the plans to the Board of Administration which has

ultimate responsibility for the plans’ administration; and

9. work with the administration of the World Ministries

Center on benefit issues that are outside of the retirement plans.

G. Each United States society shall contribute to the support of the

defined benefit pension plan in accordance with the rules and

regulations of the plan. The contribution paid by the society

shall be in addition to the pastor’s earnings, not a deduction

from them.

H. Any qualifying person serving a Free Methodist Church in

another country shall be granted a leave of absence and shall

not forfeit any pension benefits which have accrued.

I. No participant in the pension plans shall have any right to

assign, alienate, anticipate, or commute any payments from the

plans; and, except as otherwise prescribed by law, no payment

shall be subject to the debts, contracts, or engagements of any

payee, nor to any judicial process to levy upon or attach the

same for the payment thereof.

**Maternity & Medical/Mental Wellness Leave Policy**

The following policy is intended to provide guidance and set the standard for local churches as it relates to pastors and pastoral staff members. In adopting the maternity and medical/mental health leave, the local church shall endeavor to uphold a biblical emphasis on the family and affirm the pastor in his or her calling.

**Eligibility for Leave**

All appointed ministers in the Harvest Conference of the Free Methodist Church who have completed a minimum of one-year service under appointment are eligible for the following leave of absence.

**Reasons for Leave**

Leave may be granted for Medical/Mental Health or Maternity reasons.

**Maternity**

1. Maternity leave may be granted for the birth of a minister’s child; or, because of the placement of a child in a minister’s home for adoption.
2. The minister may receive a total of sixty (60) days of leave, with full pay and benefits, for the birth or adoption of a child. Up to thirty (30) days may be taken prior to the anticipated birth of a child. The maternity leave may be supplemented with vacation time at full pay. An earned sabbatical may not be used for this purpose.
3. After sixty (60) days of paid maternity leave, the minister may request an additional thirty (30) days of unpaid personal leave. The local BOA may grant this request and the local church will continue to pay all benefits.

**Medical/Mental Wellness**

1. A medical or mental health leave may be granted because of a minister’s own serious health or mental health condition that makes them unable to perform their job; or because a minister needs to care for their spouse, son, daughter, parent or the parent of the spouse who has a serious medical or mental health condition.
2. The minister may receive a total of sixty (60) days of leave for medical/mental health with full pay and benefits. An additional thirty (30) days of unpaid leave may be granted if necessary. When the leave is due to the minister’s own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a spouse, child or parent, the Conference may require certification from a medical and/or mental health care provider before approving the leave.
3. When a leave is foreseeable, ministers must give the Harvest Conference at least thirty (30) days’ notice. Ministers must provide the Conference with sufficient information to determine whether the leave should be granted. A form may be provided for this purpose. When ministers cannot give thirty (30) days’ notice, they should give notice as soon as possible. Generally, this means ministers should notify the Conference Office within one or two business days after they learn they have need of a leave.
4. While a minister is on leave, he/she must periodically report to the Conference his or her status and intention to return to work. During this time the Conference may require periodic re-certification by a medical and/or mental health care provider.
5. After ninety (90) days the minister may request an extended unpaid leave of absence beyond the ninety (90) days. This decision must be approved by the Conference Ministerial Appointments Committee. The minister’s appointment to the church shall be retained for up to one hundred eighty (180) days. When such a leave is granted, medical insurance shall be offered for up to eighteen (18) months under the “group continuation benefits” provision of the conference health plan, with the minister responsible for the payment of premiums. Where health needs indicate, a pastor may apply for disability benefits after a total of one hundred eighty (180) consecutive non-working days (or according to the current provisions of the conference employee benefit program).
6. Ministers desiring to return to active service as a senior pastor in the conference after an extended leave of absence of more than one hundred eighty (180) days shall be given consideration for appointment at the time of the next annual conference.
7. Any intermittent leave or part-time arrangements for a senior pastor must be agreed upon by the minister, the local church BOA, and the Conference Ministerial Appointments Committee. For an associate, assistant or youth pastor, the minister and the local church BOA may consider a part-time position which allows a more flexible schedule.

**Benefits During Leave**

1. If the church provides any group insurance coverage for the minister, these benefits are to continue to be paid for up to one hundred eighty (180) days while the minister is on leave. If the minister pays for the coverage, it is the responsibility of the minister to continue paying for coverage while on leave.
2. If the church provides a parsonage and the pastor is granted an extended medical leave, the pastor may continue to live in the parsonage for up to one hundred eighty (180) days. Any extension beyond one hundred eighty (180) days must be approved by both the Conference Ministerial Appointments Committee and the local church Board of Administration.
3. During the leave the appointed minister’s Annual Conference relationship will remain unchanged and the leave will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for retirement purposes with the Harvest Conference and/or the Free Methodist Church of North America.

**Returning to work**

1. When a minister has been on leave due to his or her own medical and/or mental health condition, the Harvest Conference will require medical and/or mental certification that the minister is able to return to work before they return back to work.
2. If the leave has been for more than one hundred eighty (180) days, the minister will be considered for appointment at the next annual conference.

**Personal and Family Counseling**

**Counseling at the Request of the Pastor:**

A. Any Pittsburgh Conference pastor under active appointment may request financial assistance for personal and/or family counseling.

B. This counseling is to be done with counselors either approved by the Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance or listed on the Board’s list of suggested Christian counselors.

C. Financial assistance is to be provided as specified in item II.

D. The Conference Superintendent is authorized by the Board to grant approval for counseling without Board action.

E. No attempt will be made by the Board to secure information from the counselors regarding the content of sessions or suitability for ministry.

**Counseling at the Request of the Conference:**

A. On occasion, the Pittsburgh Harvest Conference Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance may require personal counseling as a condition of continuing conference membership and/or appointment.

B. In the event of this requirement, the pastor may be asked to sign an “Authorization to Release Information” form, if circumstances warrant it, that will confer upon the counselor the right to make necessary, appropriate, yet measured responses in areas mutually agreed upon by the pastor and counselor to the Board and/or Superintendent.

C. In the event of this requirement, the pastor will be given at least two recommendations regarding Christian counselors from which he/she may select.

D. Financial assistance is to be provided as specified within ‘Procedure for Financial Assistance’

**Procedure for Financial Assistance:**

A. To provide funding for counseling services, the Conference Superintendent should be notified before the counseling relationship begins.

B. If a change in counselors becomes necessary, the Conference Superintendent should be notified before the change takes place.

C. All claims should first be processed through the insurance carrier before submission to the Conference Superintendent.

D. Balances not reimbursed by the insurance carrier should be mailed directly to the Conference Superintendent who will process them to maintain confidentiality. If the above guidelines have been observed, a check will be forwarded to the counselor or pastor so that payment can be made. Fees will be covered at 100% up tothe limits defined below.

E. Spouse and child individual counseling may be included in this policy if it is directly applied to a family counseling experience.

F. A calendar year limit of $1,500 will be observed for a pastor/family.

G. A lifetime limit of $5,000 will beobserved for a pastor/family.

H. The MEG Board isauthorized to interpret these guidelines and make necessary exceptions.

**Pastoral Workweek & Vacation Policy**

**Workweek & Connectional Responsibilities**

1. It is to be understood by a pastor and congregation that pastors are to have a minimum of 1 day per week of free time. This day should be so designated in advance by the Pastor and communicated to the congregation. This is not to be cumulative except by consent of the Local Board of Administration.
2. Attendance at church-sponsored or recommended seminars, workshops, ministerial meetings and meetings of church related boards and committees of which the Pastor is a member are to be considered part of the Pastor’s work week.
3. As an additional part of a pastor’s connectional responsibility, there will be certain specified events at which his/her attendance will be required.
4. In addition to Annual Conference & Camp Meeting, a pastor should, in most instances, limit himself/herself to 1 week of conference related activities such as Youth or Children’s camp.
5. Time spent by appointed pastors in fulfilling academic requirements toward conference membership or ordination shall b e considered part of the pastor’s workweek.

**Availability**

When the Pastor is away overnight, for vacation and for other extended periods, he/she should make arrangements so that he/she may be reached in case of emergencies. (Suggestion: through an announced member of the congregation, a fellow pastor, or answering service.)

**Vacation Guidelines**

1. All vacations should be taken within the conference year, and the conference year shall be used to determine eligibility, etc.
2. The Pastor shall consult the local BOA in determining vacation dates. During vacation absences, the pastor, if at all possible, should make arrangements with another minister to handle emergencies requiring pastoral attention.
3. Each local church should establish a vacation policy, based upon the length of vocational service within the Free Methodist Church, not this particular ministry assignment. Experienced ministers transferring into the Free Methodist Church likewise should have their years of service considered. **The Harvest Conference minimum guidelines are as follows:**

**0-10 years of service --------3 weeks’ vacation**

**11-19 years of service --------4 weeks’ vacation**

**20-30 years of service -------5 weeks’ vacation**

**30+ years of service --------6 weeks’ vacation**

It is the understanding of the MEG Board that this policy is for all appointed pastors in the conference, including bi-vocational pastors.

1. Regarding item c above, it is recommended that at least one week of a lotted vacation time be used in consecutive days. (i.e., taking 5-7days as a full vacation, not split up).

**Pulpit Supplies**

1. The Pastor and the local BOA should agree on pulpit supplies
2. Renumerations of pulpit supplies:
3. Guidelines for renumerations relative to honorariums and/or travel expenses shall be formulated and approved by the local BOA. Also, guidelines shall be established for renumerating pulpit supplies in case of emergencies that necessitate the pastor being away from his/her pulpit.
4. The church is responsible for the renumeration of the pulpit supply while the pastor is on vacation, involved in Conference activities, and during an illness or hospital experience.
5. The pastor is responsible for the payment of the renumeration of the pulpit supply when away for revivals, or other speaking engagements.

**Continuing Education and Self-improvement:**

1. The Pastor shall be permitted a minimum of 6 weekdays annually (Church – sponsored seminars, etc. that provide continuing education are not to be included) for research and self-improvement. If it is necessary to use additional time this shall be done cooperatively by the pastor, local BOA and the Superintendent. If this is done, guidelines under AVAILIBILITY and PULPIT SUPPLIES shall be observed.
2. Permission may be granted by the local BOA for the pastor to hold 7 days of special meetings to include no more than 1 Sunday during the conference year. If additional time for the purpose is desired, this shall be decided cooperatively by the pastor, local BOA and the Superintendent.

**Paid & Non-Paid Staff: Hiring, Resignation, and Termination Guidelines**

**Hiring Guidelines**

The following policy is intended to provide guidance and set basic standards for local churches as it relates to hiring persons for pastoral and lay staff positions. Pastors and lay leaders of our local churches are urged to prayerfully consider and thoroughly examine any candidate who is interested in working in the FMC. Special care should be taken to ensure that the candidate meets all biblical requirements for leadership in the Church (see Free Methodist Church Book of Discipline paragraphs 3402, 6200.E, 6700, 6710, 6720 & 6730).

**Pastoral Staff:**

If a local church is considering hiring someone for a pastoral staff position, the superintendent should be contacted in the early stages of the process to offer guidance and explain protocol. The MEG must interview and approve all pastoral candidates before the local church can complete the hiring process. The MEG will require an "Application For Ministry", a Job Description including responsibilities and salary, and assurance from the local church that it can support the staff member's salary for a minimum of one year. In most cases, the MAC will need to make an official appointment for the pastoral staff member.

All pastoral staff candidates should be informed that the MEG Board will require the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis personality test, participation in pastoral training events, and government clearances (child abuse and criminal). The MEG Board may, at its discretion, make additional requirements of the candidate. If the candidate is not familiar with our appointment process, it should be explained. If the candidate has been divorced, they must receive a Divorce Clearance *before* they can be hired.

**Lay Staff:**

In general, the local church has the authority to hire lay staff within the guidelines of the Free Methodist Church Book of Discipline. Those who qualify as full time may be eligible for some of the benefits listed above. The conference office should be contacted to explain the benefits available at the time of hire. Lay staff members are required to obtain updated clearances as well. Forms can be obtained from the conference office.

*Rev. 5/17*

**When a New Pastor is Appointed to a Church:**

1. The breakdown of their pay must be decided by the pastor and the Conference Office should be contacted to explain existing policies concerning benefits available to clergy including life, health, dental & disability insurance, and the Free Methodist Church Pension Plan.
2. All Pastors should be a W-2 employee.
3. This must all be put in the minutes of the board or society meeting before they are given their first paycheck.

**When the W-2 is Done at the End of the Year:**

1. The portion designated as “housing” by the pastor should not be placed in box 1 of the W-2.
2. It should be placed in box 14 and marked “Housing.”
3. Any love gift given the pastor (like for pastor’s appreciation or Christmas) should go in box 1.
4. We have been told that an electronic tax return cannot be done if there is nothing in box 1. We have been advised by a CPA to put at least $25 of what would normally be placed in box 14 “Housing” in box 1 instead.

**Any Time there is a Moving Expense Involved:**

1. All receipts must be submitted to the Conference Office.
2. The Conference will then write a check to the church they are moving to or from (if they are leaving the conference) for the amount of the receipts plus 15% additional to help cover the taxes.
3. The church should then write the pastor a check and put the amount on their W-2 in box 1.

**Termination Guidelines:**

The employment relationship can be discontinued by either the employee or the Pastor at any time. The relationship can be ended whenever necessary under the constraints of Biblical due process and responsibility, and in accordance with applicable State or Federal law. Termination of employees who are under appointment by the Harvest Conference must be approved by the MEG/MAC Board *before* implementing.

**Termination**

If the employment position is to be terminated by the church, the decision should first be reviewed by the Lead Pastor and the Pastor’s Cabinet. Reasons for termination could be:

1. Any misrepresentation, falsifications, or material omission in any area of information or data supplied at time of application may result in termination of employment.
2. For moral failure, or any major breach of policy or expectations as determined by the Pastor’s Cabinet, termination can be immediate.
3. For other effectiveness issues, due process will be followed, including documentation indicative of every effort made to bridge effectiveness gaps. Disciplinary action may include the loss of pay for a specified number of hours only if prior notice is given and clearly explained.

At termination, a staff member is to desist immediately from access to the computer network, church accounts, and properties including credit cards and memberships. Keys should be collected and returned to church immediately upon notification of termination.

Any repayment of outstanding debts to the church or return of church owned property is required on or before the last day of work. The Church may withhold from the employee’s final paycheck the cost of any items not returned or debts unpaid.

**Due Process for Termination for Issues other than Moral Failure**

In the event that efforts to resolve issues are unsuccessful, the following three-­‐step process according to the principles in Matthew 18:15-­‐17 will be utilized.

Step 1: The Lead Pastor will make the initial intervention with the staff member. The staff member will be given a written enumeration of the issues. Together they will set an appropriate review period of no more than thirty days. This period may be shortened if the problem escalates, or new problems develop. The Conference Superintendent will be notified in writing when and if the staff member is an appointed person.

Step 2: After the review period has expired, the Lead Pastor and members of the Pastor’s Cabinet will meet with the staff member to review progress. The staff member will be encouraged to present a written response to the issues. If insufficient progress has been made, the Cabinet representatives will alert the staff member that their position is in jeopardy. Together they will establish another review period of no more than thirty days. This review period may be shortened if the problem escalates or new problems develop. The Conference Superintendent will again be notified if the staff member is an appointed person. The entire Pastor’s Cabinet will be apprised of the situation and given copies of relevant written materials.

Step 3: After that review period has expired, the Lead Pastor and the Pastor’s Cabinet will meet with the staff member to review progress of the staff member in question. The staff member will be encouraged to present a written response to the issues. If insufficient progress has been made, the Lead Pastor and Pastor’s Cabinet will then set in motion the process of termination. If the staff person in appointed by the Conference, the first step is to notify the Conference Superintendent. The Cabinet will then call back the staff member in question to ask for a resignation or to give termination notice, and to indicate the contents of a severance package, if any. The Cabinet will then notify relevant ministry teams. The Cabinet or Lead Pastor should then send a letter/notification to the active members and other affected parties announcing the transition.

If the staff member is a ministry intern or a member of the Ministry Support Staff, the letter may be directed to the Board of Administration in lieu of the broader congregation. The Cabinet will use discretion on holding a Society Meeting, on scheduling farewells, and on provisions regarding continued attendance. Chapter 7 of the Free Methodist Book of Discipline highlights further biblical approaches to church order and maintaining a healthy biblical community.

Suggested Per Denomination

**Resignation**

If an employee chooses to leave the employment of the church, it is asked that at least a four-week notice be given to give time to successfully handle the transition of responsibilities. Employees who are under appointment by the Harvest Conference may not resign from their appointment without approval of the MEG/MAC Board.

A resignation notice should be in writing and submitted to the Lead Pastor. Fulltime employees will be paid for unused vacation days on a pro-­‐rated basis, based on the number of months worked in the current year. In the event of the appointment of a new Lead Pastor, all fulltime Pastoral Staff are to tender a letter of resignation to the new Lead Pastor, in compliance with Conference directive and policy.

Suggested Per Denomination