

The logo for The Harvest Conference Policy Manual. It features the word "The" in a cursive font, followed by "HARVEST" in large, bold, orange block letters with a white outline. A large, stylized orange cross is positioned behind the letter "T" in "HARVEST". Below "HARVEST" is the word "CONFERENCE" in the same orange block letters with a white outline. To the left of "CONFERENCE" is a graphic of a golden wheat stalk inside a heart shape, with the text "Luke 10:2" written below it. Below the entire logo is a solid orange rectangular box containing the words "POLICY MANUAL" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

The **HARVEST** **CONFERENCE**
Luke 10:2
POLICY MANUAL

REVIEWED AND UPDATED 2021
APPROVED:

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TERMS TO KNOW:

FMCUSA - Our denominational family, the Free Methodist Church USA. We are led by 3 Bishops who oversee 3 segments of the US, plus our mission regions which are not yet independent. More info is available at: fmcusa.org.

The Book of Discipline - This is the Free Methodist document that outlines our doctrine and structure. It's updated every four years, in response to our "General Conference" (below). Copies of the most recent Book of Discipline can be purchased from: <http://fmcusa.org/bookstore/> Copies of past Disciplines are available for free download at: <http://fmcusa.org/bookofdiscipline/>

General Conference - Every four years, elected representatives from all over the world gather to worship, pray, learn, and vote on essential legislative matters and to elect bishops.

Annual Conference - Our annual regional meeting where pastors and "delegates" (non-clergy leaders voted into this role by the congregation) meet for worship, prayer, training, and voting.

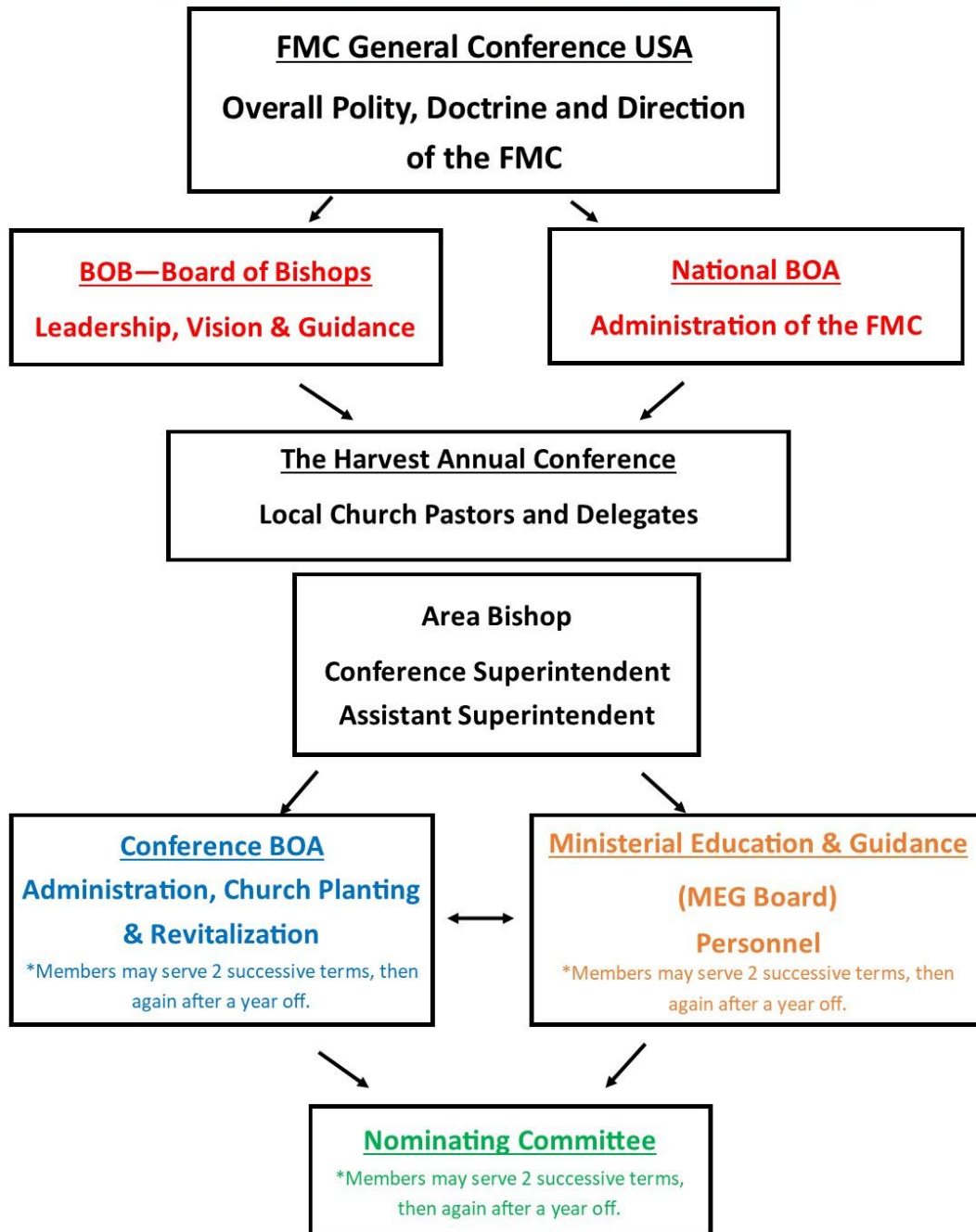
BOA / Board of Administration - Each local church has a BOA (although some will call it something else, like "Leadership Team"). In addition, both the FMCUSA and Harvest Conference have a BOA. The Harvest Conference BOA handles conference finances, conference policies, and more.

MEG / Ministerial Education and Guidance Board - This board is also voted on at Annual Conference and consists of half clergy and half laity. The MEG board oversees the ordination process, interviewing and tracking candidates. It also is the board which oversees pastoral health, any necessary disciplinary actions, and keeping pastoral credentials in good order (handling transfers and annual reports).

Nominating Committee - The Committee which identifies candidates and determines nominations for the above committees, in addition to delegates to General Conference which are elected every 4 years.

ORGANIZATION

The Harvest Conference Structure



ANNUAL CONFERENCE - Annual conferences are the normative Free Methodist organization at the regional level that provides for reasonable spans of care for ministers and congregations, as well as the structure for effective kingdom expansion. Each annual conference in the Free Methodist Church shall be a member of a general conference. (Excerpt Book of Discipline 2019, para 200A)

BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION (BOA) – General Conference Level

Organization:

- A. The Board of Administration shall meet immediately at the close of the General Conference to organize itself by electing a chair, vice chair and the Nominating Committee, from its membership. The incoming Board of Bishops will nominate the chair and vice-chair of the Board of Administration.
- B. A Nominating Committee of not less than six persons, including two bishops and consisting of equal lay and clergy representation shall be elected by the Board of Administration to subsequently nominate the members and chairs of the committees and task forces of the Board. In the selection process, sensitivity to regional, ethnic and gender diversity should be demonstrated.
- C. The Nominating Committee shall nominate a person who is not a member of the Board of Administration to serve as secretary of the General Conference. This person shall also serve as the secretary of the Board. The Board shall elect the secretary, who shall serve with voice but no vote, unless his/her vote is needed to establish lay-clergy balance.
- D. It shall be the secretary's duty to make a full report of the proceedings of the Board of Administration to the General Conference.
- E. The Board of Administration may employ a general church secretary as a denominational executive who shall then assume all the responsibilities and authority of the secretary of the General Conference and other duties as may be assigned by the Board.
- F. Termination of membership in the Free Methodist Church shall automatically terminate membership on the Board of Administration.
- G. No General Conference officer other than the bishops and the secretary may be a member of the Board of Administration.
- H. The Board shall assign its work to committees and boards as it shall determine and may elect an Executive Committee. The Board may determine the rules and regulations for the conduct of its business.

BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION (BOA) –Regional Level

The Board of Administration (BOA) acts as the executive committee of the conference in the interim between annual conferences. The BOA is responsible for administration, church planting/revitalization, assisting at-risk churches, supporting fruitful ministries and all the duties as described in the Free Methodist of the Book of Discipline. (Book of Discipline, Para 5200)

- A. The Board of Administration shall oversee all church property (Book of Discipline Para 6400).
- B. The Board of Administration shall have the power to establish the time and place for the meeting of the Annual Conference. It shall make appropriate arrangements for the Annual Conference.
- C. Offices of the BOA and executive team are comprised of: Chair (Conference Superintendent), vice chair, secretary, & assistant Superintendent.
- D. BOA Composition: 6 ministerial & 6 lay people making up 3 classes on staged 3-year terms.
- E. Members may serve 2 successive 3 year terms, then may serve again after at least 1 year off the board
- F. Financial Reporting
 - 1. The Nominating Committee will nominate and the Annual Conference will elect an auditor to annually review the financial records of the Conference. The auditor will make an annual report in writing to the Board of Administration with recommendations, if any.
 - 2. The proper officers shall publish in the Yearbook annually full and detailed statements of the assets, liabilities, net worth and financial standing of the General Church and its corporations.

CONFERENCE FINANCE TASK FORCE– Regional Level

The role of the Conference Finance Task Force is to prepare the budget for action and submit it to the BOA for review. Once the BOA ratifies a budget it will then go to Annual Conference for a vote and approval. Conference Finance Task force is created by Conference BOA and reports directly to the BOA.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION & GUIDANCE BOARD (MEG) – Regional Level

The MEG is responsible for guiding, training, ordaining, supporting, disciplining & appointing pastors and all the duties as described in the Free Methodist of the Book of Discipline.

- A. Officers of the board- Chair, Vice Chair, secretary, Superintendent & assistant Superintendent.
- B. The chair is elected by the MEG (unless area Bishop is present, who would then serve as chair)
- C. Composition: 6 ministerial & 6 lay people
- D. Members may serve 2 successive 3 year terms, then may serve again after at least 1 year off the board.

MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (MAC)- Regional Level

The MAC is responsible to appoint and monitor the progress of lead and staff pastors to the churches of the Harvest Conference and to perform all the duties as described in the Free Methodist of the Book of Discipline.

- A. The composition of the committee shall be the area bishop who serves as chair, the superintendent as vice chair, the assistant superintendent, an additional elder and three lay persons.
- B. The additional elder and the three lay persons shall be members from the MEG Board.
- C. Members may serve 2 successive 3 year terms, then may serve again after at least 1 year off the board.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE – Regional Level

- A. Each annual conference will have a standing Nominating Committee approved by the annual conference of not less than six members, giving consideration to equal representation of ministerial and lay members.
- B. Nominating Committee members are nominated by the BOA.
- C. The Nominating Committee is responsible for recruiting gifted & spiritual pastors and lay persons for the conference BOA, MEG, General Conference and all the duties as described in the Free Methodist of the Book of Discipline.
- D. Officers of the board- Chair (Conference Superintendent), Vice Chair, secretary, & assistant Superintendent.
- E. Composition: 4 ministerial & 4 lay people
- F. Members may serve 2 successive 3-year terms, then may serve again after at least 1 year off the board.

ELECTRONIC VOTING - Regional Level

Votes of Conference boards and committees may be taken between scheduled meetings by electronic means. Electronic voting must include a voting option to delay the vote until the next scheduled or added in person meeting. If two or more board or committee members request waiting until the next in person meeting, the electronic vote will be suspended.

ADMINISTRATION

FINANCIAL POLICIES:

- 1) Conference boards, committees, and task groups shall organize without a treasurer except for the Board of Administration.
- 2) The fiscal year for the Conference and its churches shall be the calendar year.
- 3) Conference funds shall not be made available to support non-Free Methodist ministries and Agencies.
- 4) Any matter presented on the floor of the Annual Conference involving finances shall be referred to the Board of Administration with power to act unless the bar of the Conference elects to vote on the measure by two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority of the bar.
- 5) The Conference Treasurer(s) and a person elected by the Conference BOA are designated as authorized signatories for the signing of Conference checks.
- 6) All Conference records will be subject to a minimum of an annual review. The review is meant to be a process that provides reasonable assurance that good stewardship is being used in handling and accounting for the funds and other assets of the Conference. The ultimate goals of the audit include:
 - a. Protection for the Conference Treasurer from unwarranted charges of careless or improper handling of funds.
 - b. Trust and confidence of the financial supporters and churches of the Conference in the way their money is being accounted for.
 - c. Fiscal responsibility to assure that through turnover in personnel there will be continuity in accountability and transparency; and
 - d. Assurance that gifts made to the church with restrictions attached are consistently administered in accordance with the donors' instructions and to provide checks and balances for funds received and expended.
- 7.) An audit should: *(Further instructions on this can be found in the Treasurer's handbook pg15)*
 - a. Independently verify the reports of the treasurer(s).
 - b. Follow the money and test how it is treated at different steps.
 - c. Document that donated and earned funds of the Conference have been used as stipulated by the donors.
- 8) The Conference Finance Task Force is a legal sub-committee of the Harvest Conference BOA.
- 9) All churches within the Harvest Conference records will be subject to a minimum of an annual review. The review is meant to be a process that provides reasonable

assurance that good stewardship is being used in handling and accounting for the funds and other assets of the church.

10) The Conference office and all churches should/shall keep records of all financial statements and documents for a minimum of 10 years.

FAIR SHARE(Apportionments):

- A. Fair Share/Apportionments is the monthly amount each church pays to support the Conference Budget and is based on a church's adjusted income.
- B. The Fair Share/Apportionments is approved annually by the BOA and the same formula is used to calculate how much each church owes for E.P.P. or "Home Ministries" to support the budget of the denomination.
- C. Each local church is responsible for making monthly Fair Share/Apportionments payments and Home Ministries to the Conference and separate pension payments to the FMCUSA. Local church treasurers must submit required reports in a timely manner, as designated by the Superintendent and the denomination.

PASS-THROUGH DEDUCTION POLICY:

These are the figures you should be using for the Annual Report, Capital Improvement, And Missions Expenditure forms!

Total Receipts for the year: Enter on this line **ALL** monies received by the local church EXCEPT proceeds from loans, or from the sale of property, or from vendor reimbursements (i.e. if the church overpaid a bill and the vendor returned the amount overpaid). Do not count money transferred from one account to another if the money was originally received in a prior year. **Do include** checks received from the Conference for things other than loans (internship grants, recalibration money, reimbursements for expenses made for things like School of Ministry or training day) Please list the amount from the Conference and what it was for. These amounts should also appear on the Pass -Through Funds.

Free Methodist World Missions: Enter on these lines the total amount the church gave to Free Methodist World Missions. It has been separated into three lines: One for money sent to the Conference Office, one for money sent directly to FMWM, and one for money sent directly ICCM (**or is taken out of your account by ICCM**). Include only those amounts forwarded for support of FMWM missionaries (MSAs), country budgets (CPDs), and other budgeted Free Methodist World Missions uses. Do not include non-Free Methodist Missions work or Home Ministries on this line. Please **see your Treasurer report spreadsheet that is sent to you the beginning of January**. Only those missions amounts received in this office and posted by the Conference Treasurer can be counted. December's amounts will be transmitted to FMWM on December 31. That is what they will use for their EPP (Home Ministries) calculations. These are the **same amounts you should use when doing the Annual Report**. If you send money to FMWM, ICCM, or to the Conference after that for the year, it will not be counted by the denomination or the conference until the following year.

God's Choice Ministry: Enter on this line the total amount the church gave to assisting God's Choice Ministries in advancing new locations under the direction of Pastor Shirley Elish. **Do not place on this line monies used at the local church for the local God's Choice Ministry.**

Loan Payments (principal + interest): Enter on this line the total amount the church has paid in loan expense, both the principal and interest amount, for the current year.

Pass Through Funds: see next page for specific items: Enter on this line the total amount the church gave for the purpose of being distributed to an outside entity and not used for church operational or ministry expenses. The following definitions are to be considered: **You will not be given credit for a pass through amount if it isn't on a detailed list.** Please put an explanation of each item unless it is something easily recognizable (like Gideons or Samaritians' Purse).

1.) **A charitable contribution receipt cannot be given.** An example would be families that sent children to Winter Weekend or Summer Camp, where the families wrote checks to the church and the church consolidated them into a single check to the camp or conference. Also, a group from the church going to an event (Concert, sports game, a play, bus trip, etc.) where the church collects the money from people going and writes a single check for the tickets.

2.) **The funds are designated from an individual to another charity.** Examples would be the Gideons, Operation Christmas Child, local crisis pregnancy center, (an outside ministry) makes a presentation in a service and people wrote checks to the church, and the church consolidated them into a single check written to that ministry. It is strongly suggested people write checks to the organization instead of the church.

3.) **Restricted funds received from an individual or organization.** An example would be a mission trip through the local church where individuals from another church or the local congregation wrote checks to the church for which the church is restricted to use only for their participation in the trip. This includes any donations for a specific person to go on a mission trip. **You cannot give a Charitable Contribution Receipt or Statement for this.** (If money is given for the mission trip group as a whole, a Charitable Contribution Receipt or Statement can be given.)

****Please note: Any ministry sponsored by the local church, for which the church takes legal responsibility, cannot be placed on this line. Any money for which the treasurer can give a charitable contribution receipt, (even if the person doesn't want one) is not eligible to be a pass thru.***

Breakdown of Pass Through amounts in Annual Report:

- Camps
- Conferences
- Concerts
- Mission Trips
- Other:

Remodeling/ Major Repairs over \$1,000.00. Enter on this line the total amount of your church Remodeling/Major Repairs if that figure is \$1,000.00 or greater. An example would be an addition to the church or a repair to the roof, etc. Please list.

Total of Expenses listed above for the year: Enter on this line the total of Free Methodist World Missions; God’s Choice Ministry; Loan Payments; Pass Through Funds; Remodeling/Major Repairs over \$1000.00.

Total Receipts Minus Total Expenses: Enter on this line the amount on the line for Total Receipts minus the amount on the line for Total Expenses.

Pass Through Specific Items

Item	Yes	No	Reason for “No”
Funeral Dinners		X	Ministry sponsored by the church
Group/Study Materials		X	Ministry sponsored by the church
Love Offerings for specific person(s): someone who filled pulpit, Bereavements, visiting missionary, someone in need, concert at church		X	See attached articles
Non-catered Dinners		X	Ministry sponsored by the church
Flowers	X		
Catered Dinners	X		
Winter Weekend, Kids Camp, Ladies Retreat, Teen Camp, etc	X		
Concerts at the church		X	Ministry sponsored by the church
Concert or Conference elsewhere	X		
Sports event, Play, Bus Trip	X		
	X		
Charitable organization: Gideons, Operation Christmas Child, Solid Rock Ministries, Crisis Pregnancy Center, Honeybags, Samaritans Purse, FCCA, Center of Hope, Blessings in a backpack, etc.	X		
Mission Trips	X	X	

If you have a question about any specific item for Pass Through, please call the Conference Office.

Church Credit/Debit Cards/Reimbursement/Expenditures

It is recommended churches use a reimbursement system where the purchaser uses his/her personal card or check and turns in a receipt for reimbursement, but if you choose to use a credit card anyway, here are some important notes and procedures to follow.

Very important point to note:

It is **ILLEGAL** to use church Credit/Debit cards for personal purchases. Pastors do this more often than we think, and it could put your whole Board on the hook for thousands of dollars in fines by the IRS and loss of the church's tax exemption.

Church credit card should be kept **under lock and key** with limited individuals having access.

If the church's credit card must be used to make a purchase for the church, the credit card will be signed out and returned through the church secretary/treasurer as follows:

The church secretary/treasurer will give the card user a copy of these procedures prior to signing out credit card.

1. The ministry lead should have an estimate of the total expense of the purchases they are requesting **PRIOR** to requesting the card. **The card cannot be taken for open ended purchases.**
2. If the requested charge amount exceeds \$200, approval must be received by the Pastor prior to card purchase. If purchase is being made by the Pastor and exceeds that amount, approval of finance board should be sought.
3. The church secretary/treasurer will compare the estimated expense with the remaining credit available for the billing period. If sufficient credit is available, the card will be assigned to the Ministry Lead.
4. The card user will sign/initial the credit card user log and the church secretary will enter the out date in the log when the card is picked up.
5. The card user will be given the credit card and an Expense Record form. The card must be returned within 4 days of the date it is signed out along with marked receipts and an Expense Record form with a complete description of the items purchased and the ministry for which the purchase was made.
6. When the credit card is returned:
 - a. The church secretary will initial and date the credit card user log to record the return.
 - b. The church secretary will initial the credit card user log to record receipt of the completed Expense Record form.

Professional Reimbursement Account (PRA), Mileage and Other Church Purchases by the Pastor

When the pastor is being reimbursed for church purchases, mileage or PRA, use a form like the ones attached to the Conference's Resource webpage. Do this monthly so that receipts will not be lost, and the pastor forgets what it was used for.

Churches are to reimburse mileage at the current IRS rate.

RISK MANAGEMENT, INSURANCE, & LIABILITY FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PASTORS AND CHURCHES

Awaiting final policy per Denomination

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES

Definition Child Sexual Abuse:

General legal description includes any contact or interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or another person.

Policy Objectives:

The purpose of these policies is to assist your church to:

- Safeguard the children and youth of your church from sexual molestation.
- Protect church staff and volunteer workers from allegations of sexual abuse.
- Limit your church's legal risk and liability due to sexual abuse.

To guard against sexual abuse, every church must implement an effective screening program. As an organization, the local church depends upon both paid workers and a large number of congregational volunteers, all must go through a screening process.

- All volunteers and paid employees in contact with children need to have a state criminal background check done and on file at the church.
- All volunteers and paid employees in contact with children need to complete training/acknowledge that they are a mandated reporter.
- All volunteers and paid employees in contact with children must be compliant with all regulations within their state for contact with children and have records on file at the church. Compliance extends to keeping said records up to date.

Should religious conversion make a difference for a worker who has been guilty of child molestation in the past?

Occasionally, such persons freely admit to a prior incident, but insist that they have since had a conversion experience and that they now present no risk whatsoever. The safest course would be to encourage such an individual to work in the church, but in a position not involving access to children or youth. A church that permits such an individual to work with children or youth, on the basis of the professed religious conversion, will have a virtually indefensible position should another incident of molestation occur. The church's defense—that the molester claimed to have been converted—would likely be viewed with derision by a civil court. Churches that

place a known child molester in a position involving access to children are taking an enormous risk.

Volunteers With Criminal Abuse Violations Not Accepted

Adults who have been convicted of or plead guilty to either child sexual or physical abuse should not work with children or youth in any capacity, volunteer or paid.

Follow The “Six Month” Rule

Volunteers should only be permitted to work with youth or children after they have been regular attenders of the church for six months. Such a policy gives the church an additional opportunity to evaluate applicants and volunteers and will help to repel persons seeking immediate access to children. The only exception to the “Six Month” Rule is a Member Transfer who is in good standing.

Supervisory Policies and Procedures

1. Use a Team Approach — **Consider** adopting a “two-adult” rule. Such a rule says that two adult supervisors should be present during any church activity. Preferably one of these adults would be a parent of one of the participating children or youth, or at minimum, someone over 21 years of age. This rule reduces the risk of sexual molestation and reduces the risk of false accusations of molestation by individuals seeking a quick legal settlement. (If two people are impossible for your churches current situation, adapt the environment for easy group supervision, and work towards this goal.)
2. Discuss Suspicious Behavior Immediately - Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult worker and a child or youth should be confronted immediately and investigated. Prompt warnings should be issued when appropriate and the situation should be monitored very closely. The adult worker’s services should be terminated immediately for continued violation of such warning or for a single serious violation. Church staff should note when a child or youth appears aloof or withdrawn or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention.
3. Provide Adequate Personnel - Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.
4. Use a Church Identification Procedure for nursery, children, and young youth - Procedures should exist for the church nursery that clearly identify the child and the child’s parent or guardian. Children should only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.

5. Child(ren) Registry - Annually parents will register their children, nursery through eighth grade, for any children programming they will attend including VBS, JR Church, Youth Group and Sunday School. This can be done on one form or as events arise.
6. Department Leaders – Department leaders shall monitor activity in their departments, being present at all functions or appointing designated replacement if they are unable to be there. They should ensure that all volunteers and staff are compliant with policy, procedure, and state regulations.

Bathroom Policy

- (1) No child goes without an adult. (If at all possible/necessary, go as a group having a designated bathroom and hand washing time.)
- (2) Open the door and do a quick glance to see if anyone is in the bathroom.
- (3) Adult waits outside door.
- (4) If wait seems long, open door, but deal with student from the hallway.
- (5) If a young child needs help, leave the bathroom door open, the stall door open, and stay in view. (If you have a group of children with you have them stand at the door)

Suggested Per Denomination

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY:

The Free Methodist church is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment free of sexual harassment. As such, the Church prohibits sexual harassment of its employees in any form. Employees must not engage in such prohibited conduct. Any employee determined to be responsible for unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Sexual harassment is an assault on a person's privacy and integrity. Sexual harassment can also destroy the ministry itself through a decline in morale, loss of respect for the responsible party and through grieving God's blessing. All employees must be allowed to work in an environment free of unwelcome sexual overtures.

- Sexual harassment includes conditioning another employee's job status – continued employment, promotions, salary increases, or work assignments, for instance – on giving sexual favors. It also includes unwelcome sexual advances between co-workers, such as requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.
- Prohibited unlawful sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

- Unwanted sexual advances, invitations, or comments
 - Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings, screen savers or gestures;
 - Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interfering with work
 - Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors; and
 - Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment.
- Any employee who is aware of any instances of sexual harassment should report the alleged act immediately to his or her supervisor. Any employee who believes he or she has been subject to sexual harassment should do the same.
 - If the employee is uncomfortable in discussing the matter with the supervisor or if the supervisor is not available, the employee should report the alleged act immediately to the Superintendent of their CONFERENCE. Employees are encouraged to be prompt in reporting such behavior.
 - Any report or complaint should include details of the incident or incidents, names of the individuals involved and names of any witnesses. A thorough and objective investigation of the allegations will take place immediately and will be handled as confidentially as possible. Upon completion of the investigation, the appropriate parties will be notified of the findings.
 - If it is determined that unlawful harassment has occurred, effective remedial action will be immediately taken in accordance with the circumstances involved.
 - The Church will not retaliate against any employee for filing a complaint and will not tolerate or permit retaliation by management, employee(s) or co-workers.
 - All employees shall sign a disclosure document stating they have read, understood, and will comply with stated policy.

Anti-Harassment, Bullying, and Complaint

The Free Methodist Church is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to work in a Christian and professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment and bullying.

- Therefore, the Free Methodist Church expects that all relationships among persons in the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment. It is sin and, in every way, unacceptable for any employee, whether a manager, supervisor, or co-worker, to harass another employee.
- It is the policy of Free Methodist Church to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment based on race, color, gender, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran.

- Free Methodist Church encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of Free Methodist Church that all such reports be promptly and thoroughly investigated.
- Free Methodist Church prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or who participates in an investigation of such reports.
- Any sexual harassment should immediately be reported to a supervisor, or member of the board, or human resources director. Any report of sexual harassment shall be addressed pursuant to the policies and procedures of Chapter 7 of the Free Methodist Church-USA Book of Discipline and in conformity with local, state and federal law.
- Any abuse or criminal offense must be reported immediately to local and/or state authorities pursuant to respective laws
- Harassment based on any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, gender, national origin, age, disability, citizenship, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates, and that
 - a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
 - b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.
 - c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.
- Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on Company time or using Company equipment via e-mail, phone (including voice messages), text messages, tweets, blogs, social networking sites or other means.
- Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

Suggested Per Denomination

INSURANCE

All churches must be in compliance with the insurance guidelines recommended by the FMCUSA.

- Every local church must carry fire, general liability, sexual abuse coverage, medical, and general comprehensive insurance, per the minimum requirements of the FMCUSA.

- Each local church is responsible for providing/offering workers compensation, life and long-term disability insurance. It is highly recommended that the church consider providing tenant insurance and short-term disability where applicable. Life and long-term disability are available thru the Conference.

LITIGATION

If the local church faces any litigation of any kind, it must immediately inform the Conference Director of Operations and the COO of the FMCUSA.

CHURCH PROPERTY CHANGES – BUYING, SELLING, LOANS, LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS, ETC.

Purchase/Lease/Remodel

When a local church in the Harvest Conference plans to purchase, remodel, or alter properties and the cost for such a project will exceed 10% of its annual income (regardless of available funds), the following guidelines will be followed:

- 1)The Director of Operations serves as the liaison between the local church and conference in all matters relating to church property changes. The Director has no authority to act and all final decisions will be made by the BOA.
- 2)Contact the Director of Operations as far in advance as possible to consult with him/her on the intentions of the church. If a property purchase is being considered.
- 3)Complete, send, and present to the BOA a Building Project/Loan Application. This will allow the Board of Administration opportunity to dialog with the local board, committee, (or another designated group) if deemed necessary. The Director of Operations shall advise the pastor if and when a presentation is required by the church to the BOA.
- 4)If a formal presentation to the Board of Administration is required, the following persons from the local society will be present when the presentation is made: pastor, trustee, chairperson, and any other representative involved in property improvement, unless waived by the BOA.
- 5)When the presentation is made, written evidence of the vote of the society or the governing body (in instances where the society has transferred power to act for them) will be presented, including the society's or governing body's vote, written material regarding the number of eligible voting members, number of those members actually present, and the numbers casting yes and no votes on a project.

6) Working drawings and plans must be presented for proposed new structures and for alterations to existing structures.

7) If changes involve purchasing property, written evidence of equal property values must be presented (local realtor, bank appraiser, etc.).

8) Evidence of the local society's ability to secure needed finances and its ability to repay, along with the impact of same on the local budget, and the Conference obligation will be shown. Also, if indebtedness is anticipated, the local church will be required to process the FMCUSA Application for Permission to Mortgage

9) History of average worship attendance and finances for past two years plus current year's attendance and income/expenses and performance against budget to see growth trends and church health will accompany application.

10) The Board of Administration may act on the application, table it for further review, or approve it contingent upon obtaining further information or documentation.

Application to Sell

Property Application to Sell Property should include a written appraisal of value, rationale for sale, and disposition of funds so received. Local churches must present written evidence of the vote to sell including how many are eligible to vote, the number who actually voted, and the number voting yes and no. Approval for the sale must come from the Conference and Free Methodist Church USA in Indianapolis.

Abandoned Property

The Board of Administration shall have authority to dispose of abandoned properties at their discretion for the best use of the conference and in conjunction with the guidelines specified in the FMCUSA Book of Discipline.

PERSONNEL / HUMAN RESOURCES

Minimum Pastoral Support Package

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 to the 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 be observed for a pastor/family.

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

Pastoral Workweek & Vacation Policy

Workweek & Connectional Responsibilities

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. As an additional part of a pastor's connectional responsibility, there will be certain specified events at which his/her attendance will be required.
- D. 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.
- E. Time spent by appointed pastors in fulfilling academic requirements toward conference membership or ordination shall be 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

- a. All vacations should be taken within the conference year, and the conference year shall be used to determine eligibility, etc.

- b. 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.
- c. 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.

- d. 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

- a. The Pastor and the local BOA should agree on pulpit supplies
- b. Renumerations of pulpit supplies:
 1. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. 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:

- a. 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 AVAILABILITY and PULPIT SUPPLIES shall be observed.

- b. 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 is 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