

# Personnel Policies of the First Congregational United Church of Christ

***Asheville, North Carolina***

***Revised August 2023***

**Approved by Board August 2023**

The following policies are revisions to those developed by the Personnel Committee and approved by the First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC) Board of Directors in 2012, and initially revised in 2016. Revised policies will be effective the date of approval of the FCUCC Executive Board (the FCUCC Board or Board) and supersede all previous policies. These policies can be amended as required by the FCUCC Board. Revisions must be developed by the Personnel Committee (PC) and approved by the Board in order to take effect. FCUCC staff should be notified of any and all changes within ten days of date of any changes to assist them in fully understanding the applicable policies.

Any staff member who wishes to challenge the interpretation of these policies should first contact their supervisor and the Personnel Committee Chair. If the challenge is not resolved, the staff member may contact the Pastor Parish Relations (PPR) Committee or the Board. The Board will have final authority over policy interpretation. For purposes of clarification, since the Senior Minister reports directly to the Board, the Senior Minister's supervisor will be the Chair of the Board.

These policies are designed to help staff members and FCUCC volunteer leadership understand the roles and responsibilities of individuals and elected leaders. Policies are designed to provide a positive guidance in staff member's working life. We encourage all staff and volunteer leaders to read this document carefully and use it as a guide. Since it may not be all encompassing, staff should ask the Senior Minister or Chair of the

Personnel Committee about any areas needing clarification. The Personnel Policies Statement is not an employment contract and may not be all-inclusive. Revisions will be made based on employee and volunteer leadership input for the changing needs of the organization. Therefore, the FCUCC reserves the right to modify policies in whole or part as needed. The only exception is any change to the FCUCC employment-at-will policy permitting employees or FCUCC to end an employment relationship for any reason at any time, which may not be modified. Official policies and procedures most recently approved by the FCUCC Board are the governing documents.

Approval signatures/dates:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator of FCUCC Board

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of FCUCC Personnel Committee

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Minister

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## **1.0 Definitions**

For this document, the following terms are understood to mean:

*administrative staff*—a general term for any church employee or contract staff whose duties involve the day-to-day operations of the church offices or physical plant, including the building and grounds. Such positions may include, but are not limited to, the administrative coordinator and the building and groundskeeper.

*contractor*—any independent individual contracted by the church to provide specific, church-related services under a contract agreement and for whom no benefits or withholding taxes are paid.

*employee*—a general term for any individual hired by the church into an hourly or salaried position for whom benefits may be paid and payroll taxes withheld.

*exempt employee*—any individual hired by the church into a position defined under the Fair Labor Standards Act as a salaried or professional position at an agreed upon annual wage, and for whom benefits and withholding taxes are withheld and paid by the church.

*non-exempt employee*—any individual hired by the church into a position defined under the Fair Labor Standards Act as an hourly position at an agreed upon hourly wage, and for whom benefits and withholding taxes are withheld and paid by the church.

*program staff*—a general term for any church staff member whose duties involve the development and implementation of education, ministerial or worship programs within the church. Such positions may include, but are not limited to, ordained or commissioned ministers, educators, youth coordinator, music director and organist/accompanist.

*staff member(s)*—a general term used to include both contract workers and employees of the church.

*PBUCC*—the Pension Board of the national United Church of Christ, which governs and administers all pension and insurance plans offered through the national church

## **1.1 Guiding Personnel Principles**

These policies and staff/congregation/board/contractor relationships are guided by the following principles:

**Mutuality:** We strive for an employment climate of mutuality. This means that staff members will be provided with compensation and benefits, professional development, working conditions, respect and support in ways that are mutually beneficial to staff members and to the mission and vision of FCUCC. We continually strive for a fair balance as we seek ways to support staff members and our current and emerging ministries.

**Responsibility:** Each staff member will be given a copy of these Policies & Procedures and is accountable for adhering to them in addition to carrying out his/her roles and responsibilities. They are also accountable for supporting the responsibilities of others, including other staff members, employees and volunteers. “Supporting others” does not mean doing others’ tasks, but does mean maintaining open and

respectful dialogue, collaborative and proactive problem-solving, candid assessment of results, teamwork and encouragement. We are not alone; our work is connected to a larger whole.

**Community:** FCUCC is a church community within a much larger community, aiming to be a welcoming, caring, inclusive family where all staff members and the congregation minister to one another. We also are striving to be a prophetic voice for justice, peace, compassion and wisdom where we engage in ministries throughout our community. We expect staff members to embrace the community spirit as a vital part of the work and services we collectively provide.

**Engagement:** We are a *congregational* church and believe in engaging and empowering our congregation to follow passions for ministry in accordance with their roles, gifts and board policies. Staff members have a critical role in providing services, helping and communicating with others in ministries, and in executing the daily operations required to support this “shared leadership” framework.

## **2.0. Pay and Benefits**

Compensation and benefits packages will be designed to attract, retain and reward employees with the knowledge, talents and experience FCUCC needs to fill roles supporting its vision and mission. An employee of FCUCC is required to work at least 20 hours per week to be eligible for benefits. Specific pay and benefit provisions should be communicated in writing by the Personnel Committee to each employee at the time of employment and annually after hiring to ensure each employee fully understands the provisions of her/his position. Independent contractors and volunteers are not considered employees and are not eligible for benefits.

A summary of the benefits provisions provided to full-time and part-time employees is provided below. Please note that the Executive Board has the authority to modify benefits for each eligible employee based on the specific needs of each employee and the Church.

Benefit	Full-Time Employee 40 hours per week	Part-Time Employee 20 or more hours per week
Medical Insurance	Eligible, individual plan paid by FCUCC; family coverage may be subsidized Employees are eligible to pursue subsidized coverage under the ACA if they choose	Can choose between retirement and UCC medical plans up to annual \$ cap (see Sec. 2.3). Employees are eligible to pursue ACA medical coverage if they choose retirement benefits.
Dental Insurance	Eligible for reimbursement up to \$250.00 per year for prophylactic services	Eligible for reimbursement up to \$125.00 per year for prophylactic services
Flexible Spending Accounts	Eligible under UCCPB health plans; See Section 2.3	Eligible under UCCPB health plans; See Section 2.3
Life insurance	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.6	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.6
Short-term and long-term disability insurance	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.6	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.6
Paid holidays	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.5	Eligible, paid by FCUCC, prorated based on work schedule; see Section 2.5
Vacation	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 2.4	Eligible, paid by FCUCC, prorated based on work schedule; See Section 2.4
Long-term care insurance	Eligible, paid by employee if she/he wants the benefit See Section 2.7	Eligible, paid by employee if she/her wants the benefit See Section 2.7
Retirement plan	Eligible, contribution % preset and paid by FCUCC See Section 2.8	Can choose between retirement and medical plans up to annual \$ cap; See Sections 2.3 & 2,8
Sick leave	Eligible, paid by FCUCC See Section 3.1	Eligible, paid by FCUCC, prorated based on work schedule; See Section 3.1

## 2.1 Pay Provisions

The Personnel Committee (“PC”) is responsible for recommending appropriate compensation rates to the Board (including, where appropriate, all components of compensation such as housing allowances and benefits percentages). The PC is also responsible for ensuring that compensation administration is carried out in accordance with ethical and legal requirements and the programs available and governed by the Pension Board of the United Church of Christ (PBUCC). This is done in partnership with the Finance Committee.

Pay levels of ordained ministers, professional staff and commissioned ministers will also be guided by the Compensation Guidelines of the

Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team in cooperation with the PBUCC, as well as by compensation surveys of similar positions in other churches and applicable nonprofit organizations. FCUCC may elect not to follow each and every suggestion provided by these resources, but decisions will be informed by these guidelines.

The pay plans should provide equitable compensation for all employees, taking into account the duties, responsibilities, required knowledge, experience and accountability of each role, as well as the financial conditions of the church. To this end, at least every three years, the Personnel Committee will conduct surveys and/or analysis of competitive pay rates in the community and/or UCC for similar positions to assess comparable compensation levels and to recommend changes if needed.

## **2.2 Overtime/Flexible Time**

Salaried and hourly staff compensation is intended to be fair and adequate to the demands of each position. As a certified “living wage” employer, FCUCC is committed to provide a minimum level hourly wage that a full-time worker must earn to afford her/his basic necessities without public or private assistance. This sets the bar for the minimum entry level of pay for both part time and full-time positions.

Employees in positions that are not exempt from the wage and hour provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be compensated at hourly rates. If such employees work in excess of 40 hours per week, they will be compensated at 1.5 times their base hourly rate for all hours worked over 40 in a work week. Note that overtime must be approved by the supervisor in advance.

Overtime will not be paid unless a non-exempt employee has worked more than 40 hours per week, even if the employee is regularly scheduled to work fewer than 40 hours. Paid time off, holidays and other time away from work that is compensated by FCUCC will not be counted as hours worked for purposes of calculating overtime, unless an employee actually works on that day. Employees who are exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act will not be paid for overtime, regardless of the number of hours worked in a work week. 6 Salaried employees in positions exempt from FLSA provisions will not be compensated with additional income for overtime hours but may be offered schedule flexibility if approved and arranged with the Senior Pastor. Salaried positions typically demand a minimum of 40 hours per week and are rewarded for professional results rather than time worked



per se. Should demands result in an extraordinary number of hours worked in excess of 40 per week, it is expected that the matter will be reviewed with the Senior Minister first, then the Personnel Committee if needed. Note that the Senior Minister reports to the Board (with the Board Chair as the supervisor), so concerns about the Senior Minister's work hours should be addressed with the Board Chair, with assistance of the Personnel Committee Chair.

### **2.3 Health and Dental Insurance**

Individual health insurance coverage is offered for each employee working a minimum of 20 hours per week. As noted in the table under Section 2.0, full-time employees may receive a subsidy for family coverage, and part-time employees may choose between retirement and health insurance plans up to an annual cap. The portion of the premium costs paid by FCUCC will be negotiated at the time of hire and reviewed annually.

Full-time program and administrative staff and are eligible to participate in the healthcare plans offered by the UCC Pensions Board. FCUCC agrees at a minimum to cover the full cost of individual coverage of a Board approved plan. Additional coverage will be negotiated at the time of hire and reviewed annually.

For hourly employees who work at least 20 hours per week, FCUCC will provide a pre-set amount per year to offset the premium costs of a Board approved plan. An annual cap approved by the Board (currently \$5,000) will be set for all full-time employees. Part-time employees will receive prorated amounts to assist with medical and dental insurance.

Employees working 20 hours per week will receive 50% of current annual cap for full-time employees, and those working 30 hours per week will receive 75% of current annual cap for full-time employees. Part-time employees will be given a choice between applying the benefit toward their health insurance premium and/or out-of-pocket medical and dental care, OR toward a retirement benefit contribution, but not both. Note that the UCC Pension Board offers a group healthcare and dental plan available to any employee who works at least 20 hours per week.

Employees are not obligated to participate in the plan through the UCC Pension Board and may choose an alternative plan where applicable.

The Personnel Committee in partnership with the Finance Committee should review the cap amount annually as part of the compensation review for all employees.

## 2.4 Vacation

A vacation week is equal to the number of hours the employee is regularly scheduled to work per week. Contract staff vacation requests should be negotiated at the time, and as a part of, the contract agreement.

For part-time employees **working 20 hours per week**, the following vacation benefit is provided:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>No. of Hrs Off Per Year</b>	<b>Equivalent Work Weeks</b>
2 thru 4 Years	40	2 (20 hr work weeks)
5 thru 9 Years	60	3 (20 hr work weeks)
10+ years	80	4 (20 hr work weeks)

For part-time employees **working 25 hours per week**, the following vacation benefit is provided:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>No. of Hrs Off Per Year</b>	<b>Equivalent Work Weeks</b>
2 thru 4 Years	50	2 (25 hr work weeks)
5 thru 9 Years	75	3 (25 hr work weeks)
10+ years	100	4 (25 hr work weeks)

For part-time employees **working 30 hours per week**, the following vacation benefit is provided:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>No. of Hrs Off Per Year</b>	<b>Equivalent Work Weeks</b>
2 thru 4 Years	60	2 (30 hr work weeks)
5 thru 9 Years	90	3 (30 hr work weeks)
10+ years	120	4 (30 hr work weeks)

For full-time, hourly, administrative employees **working 40 hours per week**, the following vacation benefit is provided:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>No. of Hrs Off Per Year</b>	<b>Equivalent Work Weeks</b>
2 thru 4 Years	80	2 (40 hr work weeks)
5 thru 9 Years	120	3 (40 hr work weeks)
10+ years	160	4 (40 hr work weeks)

The vacation year is the calendar year. During the first year of employment, vacation time shall be granted on a prorated basis, normally  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the equivalent week per quarter. Vacation does not carry over from year to year, so all time not used by December 31 will be forfeited with one exception. Up to one equivalent week of vacation may be carried over to the next year but must be used by January 31 or will be forfeited. It is expected each employee will plan ahead and use vacation during a time which will not be in conflict with the anticipated church calendar.

All full-time program staff shall be eligible for 4 weeks (20 days) of vacation per year. Part-time program staff are eligible for vacation days based on their percentage of a full-time schedule. During the first year of employment, vacation earned will be prorated based on the portion of the year the employee works. For example, an ordained minister hired on July 1 would earn two weeks of vacation during the first year of

employment. (See above schedule for full-time, administrative staff.) Staff members will negotiate in advance with supervisors how much vacation time can be taken at any one time and when the vacation is scheduled. All employee requests for vacation must be submitted to the Senior Minister on a Leave Request form for advance approval at least two weeks prior to the start of leave to ensure that all duties are covered. Contract staff are requested to notify the Senior Minister under the same time frame. The Senior Minister maintains the discretion to negotiate or deny a requested vacation if the needs of the church would suffer.

Upon termination of employment with FCUCC, the departing employee shall be paid on a prorated basis for vacation allocated but not taken for the current year. The value of vacation time taken but not allocated, if any, at the time of employment termination will be deducted from the departing employee's final pay.

## **2.5 Holidays**

There are 11 paid holidays per calendar year for full-time employees. Part-time employees working 20 hours or more weekly are entitled to holiday pay for the scheduled work hours if the holiday falls on a normally scheduled workday. Another day may be substituted only if an employee must work on a paid holiday. The 9 holidays include the following:

New Year's Day  
Martin Luther King Day  
Easter Monday  
Memorial Day  
Juneteenth  
July 4  
Labor Day  
Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday (2 days)  
Christmas (2 days)

## **2.6 Disability Income Benefits and Life Insurance**

This plan, offered through the Pensions Board of the UCC, has three parts:

1. A term life insurance plan
2. A short-term disability plan that replaces a portion of income for up to five months
3. A long-term disability plan that replaces a portion of income when

a disability continues beyond six months.

All employees, including part-time working at least 20 hours per week, are eligible for this benefit at no cost. FCUCC pays the full premium amounts. The value of this benefit is based on the normal scheduled work hours of each employee. For example, a part-time employee will receive term life insurance equal to their part-time normal pay each year.

### **2.7 Long-Term Care Benefits**

All employees who work at least 20 hours per week are eligible to participate, at their cost, in a group long-term care benefit plan. Each employee selecting this benefit is responsible for payment of her/his premiums. For more information, visit the LTC Financial Partners web site of contact LTC toll free at 1.866.471.4072, ext. 2305.

### **2.8 Retirement Benefits**

FCUCC will match contributions a full-time employee makes to their retirement account dollar for dollar up to 3% of such employee's gross salary. The contribution percentage is reviewed annually as part of the total budget compensation review by the Personnel Committee and the Executive Board.

Part-time employees who regularly work at least 20 hours per week may choose between receiving a capped health insurance contribution or a retirement contribution equivalent to 14% of their salary, but not both.

### **3.0 Leave Policies**

Note that the following leave policies do not preclude the possibility to consider on an individual basis the need for compassionate leave above and beyond the prescribed policy limits. Any request for additional paid or unpaid leave must be reviewed and approved by the Personnel Committee Chair, the supervisor and the Senior Minister and the Board. Note that any such request made by the Senior Minister for additional leave must be approved by the Board.

### **3.1 Sick Leave/Family Leave**

Sick pay is available to all employees who work at least 20 hours per week during periods of illness or short-term disability that prevent the employee from performing her/his job duties. Sick pay and disability leave are to be used only as authorized below and are granted only on the basis of medical justification as prescribed by a licensed medical

practitioner.

Sick leave accrues at the following rates per month:

<b><u>EE's Regular Hrs/Wk</u></b>	<b><u>Hrs Accrued/Month</u></b>	<b><u>Total Hrs/Days</u></b> <b><u>Accrued Per Year</u></b>
40	4	48 (6 days)
20	1	12 (3 days)
30	2.5	30 (5 days)

Sick leave may be accumulated up to a total of 480 hours (60 days) for full-time employees and program staff. This will be adjusted accordingly for 20 hr & 30 hr employees. Sick leave that is accrued above the maximum 480 hours is forfeited. In the event that an employee incurs a long-term injury or illness and exhausts his/her earned balance of sick leave, additional sick pay may be considered provided it is recommended by the Personnel Committee, the Senior Minister and the Board. For the Senior Minister, additional sick pay would require approval of the Board.

Sick leave is granted for absences caused by conditions requiring medical attention including illness, injury, hospitalization, surgery, pregnancy, adoption or childbirth. Such pay is granted for absence due to outpatient treatments as well as doctor, dentist or medical appointments that cannot be made outside of regular working hours. Sick pay is also granted for absence necessary to attend the illness of immediate family members. Accumulated sick leave will not be paid out in the event of resignation, retirement or termination.

Flexible Time: At the Senior Minister's discretion, a staff member may work flexible time during the same or following pay period to make up for hours not worked due to illness, injury or medical appointments. For example: If a staff member is absent 3 hours for a doctor's appointment, those hours can be made up on one or more days during that same or the subsequent pay period.

### **3.2 Parental Leave**

After one year of employment, each employee is eligible, upon approval, for parental leave up to six weeks, unless negotiated otherwise at the time of hire. Eligibility for paid or unpaid leave follows: Full-time employees are eligible for paid leave upon Board approval. Part-time employees are eligible for unpaid leave and will be allowed to make up lost hours in future weeks with approval from their supervisor.

### **3.3 Funeral/Bereavement Leave**

Should a death occur in the immediate family of any staff member, time off to attend the funeral and/or support the family must be pre-approved by the supervisor. For purposes of this policy, “immediate family” means: spouse, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, and grandchildren. Up to three days leave may be granted by the supervisor (or the Personnel Committee Chair in the absence of the supervisor), based on individual circumstances. Full-time employees receive paid funeral leave. Part-time employees receive unpaid leave with the opportunity to make up the lost hours in future weeks.

### **3.4 Other Leave**

In the event that leave covering an extended time period (up to a maximum of 12 weeks) is requested beyond routine vacation or family leave, allowance for unique professional development opportunities, and/or a period of spiritual discernment for the program staff), the request will be reviewed by the Personnel Committee and, if approved, presented to the Board for final approval. This type of leave is generally without pay and would be limited to a reasonable time period taking into account the impact on other employees, the well-being and vitality of the church, the availability of temporary replacements, budget and reasons for the leave request.

## **4.0 Recruitment and Employment**

Selection processes should be fair and effective in order to recruit, select and hire the best qualified person for any open position. Employment decisions will be guided by these policies.

### **4.1 Equal Opportunity Employer**

FCUCC is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, age, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, financial means, nationality or ethnic origin, or disability.

### **4.2 Employment of Immediate Family Members or Persons in an Intimate Relationship**

The hiring of immediate family members of an FCUCC employee, or persons in an intimate relationship with an FCUCC employee is not permitted. For purposes of this policy, “immediate family” means: spouse, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, and

grandchildren. Also, under this policy, “intimate relationship” means: a consensual romantic, sexual or dating relationship.

No potential employee will be eligible for hire who bears such a connection to a present employee of FCUCC.

#### **4.3 Employment of Members of FCUCC**

A staff member who wants to become a member of FCUCC may do so after one year of employment. The hiring of a current member of the congregation is possible when a prospective employee has been a member for one full year. The senior pastor, in consultation with the Board, will advise employees who are members as to whether they should vote on specific items in congregation meetings.

#### **4.4 Approval of New Positions**

All new employment positions must be approved by the Board in accordance with the overall staffing model and organizational plans shaped to achieve the mission and vision of FCUCC. Organizational plans should be developed in conjunction with the Personnel Committee and reviewed by the Finance Committee to determine budget implications and receive final approval by the Board prior to starting the recruiting process.

#### **4.5 Recruitment/Selection Processes**

The Personnel Committee is responsible for designing and facilitating staff recruitment through effective and legally sound selection processes. These processes should respect the dignity of and gratitude for those who apply, including honest and helpful feedback to those hired as well as those not selected. The Board must approve the selection process, taking into account any applicable Bylaws which describe the role of the congregation in approving the search committees and/or the selected candidates.

Search committees in general will consist of at least one representative from the Personnel Committee plus members of the congregation who are interested in participating in the process. Size and scope of each search committee will be based on the position being filled and must be approved by the Board and congregation. Any person meeting at least the minimum required qualifications may apply and be considered, provided the individual does not present a conflict of interest or the perception of unfairness (for example, a relative who would report directly to his/her family member or who would be selected by a family

member on the search committee).

The only exception may be for any person employed in an interim ordained minister position which was created for the sole purpose of providing temporary support either in searching for a new minister or in replacing the minister during the time of a prolonged absence (for example, a prolonged illness or for an approved sabbatical leave). In these cases, any candidate for such an interim position should be informed that he/she cannot be a candidate for the settled (non-interim) minister position. The scope of the interim role, terms of employment and pay and benefits for the interim minister will be specified in writing prior to hiring. Furthermore, FCUCC discourages the practice of hiring an interim minister for an indefinite time frame in order to assess her/his candidacy for a settled minister position.

The search processes for recruiting and hiring an ordained minister will follow those outlined by the National UCC for a national search. Other positions will typically be filled by advertising via local media.

An annual employment letter and position description will be required for each position. All employees will participate in annual reviews.

#### **4.6 Background Checks**

Prospective employees must pass a comprehensive background check prior to employment being finalized. The Personnel Committee is responsible for ensuring that the background check is completed.

#### **5.0 Conditions of Employment**

Employment with FCUCC is “at will” and can be terminated with or without cause, with or without notice, at any time at the option of either FCUCC or the employee, except as otherwise prohibited by law.

FCUCC, through the Personnel Committee and Board, retains sole discretion to exercise all managerial functions, including the right:

To dismiss, assign, supervise and discipline employees;

To determine and change working hours;

To transfer staff members within the organization;

To determine and change the number and qualifications of employment positions;

To determine and change methods by which FCUCC operations and mission are to be carried out;

To determine and change the nature, location, services rendered and



continued operation of the organization; and  
To assign duties to staff members in accordance with the church's needs and requirements.

Nothing in these Personnel Policies should be considered as altering the employment-at-will relationship or as creating an express or implied contract or promise concerning the policies that FCUCC has implemented or will implement in the future. Accordingly, FCUCC retains the right to establish, change and delete its policies, practices, rules and regulations "at will" and as the church sees fit.

### **5.1 Work Schedule/Other Employment**

Work schedules shall be established by the supervisor to enable successful execution of duties and responsibilities. Flexibility and family/work life should also be considered when establishing schedules. Staff members' schedules (including calendars showing available office hours) should be provided in the Church office and posted on the staff member's office door at all times to inform the congregation and other staff how and when they may be contacted.

All outside employment by full-time employees must be approved by the supervisor and Personnel Committee. The employee will submit a written request to the supervisor which must then be approved in writing by both the Supervisor and the Chair of the Personnel Committee. It is important that there be no conflicts of interest or conflicts of schedule pertaining to outside employment opportunities. The employment responsibilities with FCUCC and the use of church property shall have precedence over any other employment.

### **5.2 Sexual Harassment and Exploitation/Safe Church Policy**

FCUCC is committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which all persons can work and worship together free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. Sexual exploitation and harassment in any form is prohibited. It is therefore the intention of FCUCC to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy.

FCUCC has developed and implemented a "Safe Church" policy. The policy includes details pertaining to our procedures related to this topic. Any church member, friend or staff member who believes he/she has been harassed or exploited, or who has witnessed such acts is encouraged to report the perceived abuse of policy to any one of the

following: Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Board Moderator, Personnel Chair, Deacon Chair or PPR Representative.

### **5.3 Workplace Safety**

FCUCC aims to promote safe working conditions and, also, provide a safe, inviting sanctuary and workplace for the congregation and employees. All staff members and volunteers are to report any work-related accident or illness immediately to their supervisor or the senior minister, regardless of how minor it may seem. The Senior Minister will report the incident to the Personnel Committee. The Senior Minister will also ensure the appropriate employee or designated representative completes an accident report in a timely manner. A follow-up investigation must be carried out (including medical checkups and remedial measures) should a safety hazard be identified. This safety policy should also align with the “Safe Church” policy and all legal and insurance requirements for responding to and reporting workplace accidents.

Workers’ compensation insurance is carried by FCUCC in accordance with applicable workers’ compensation laws and regulations. FCUCC pays the total cost of this program.

If entitled by law to workers’ compensation, the employee will receive payment from the insurance carrier under the direction of the North Carolina Industrial Commission or other applicable state agency.

Failure to report a work-related accident in a timely manner may result in the denial of benefits.

### **5.4 Employee Relationships with Others in the Congregation**

Members hired as contract workers must be approved by the Board. FCUCC also does not permit any employee to work under the direct supervision of an immediate family member. For purposes of this policy, “immediate family” means: spouse, romantic partner, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, and grandchildren, FCUCC prohibits relationships between employees, ministers and congregants. If any employee enters into an intimate sexual relationship, in keeping with professional ethics and guidelines, she/he will contact the Personnel Committee Chair or the Board Moderator as soon as possible to inform them of the relationship. Such a relationship will result in one of the parties being asked to suspend attending all church activities for a minimum period of six, and up to 12, months. Such a relationship could also serve as potential grounds for termination.

### **5.5 Alcohol, Drug and Controlled Substance Work Place Policies**

FCUCC prohibits the use, possession or distribution of alcohol, illegal drugs or other controlled substances (other than prescription medications for recipients of prescriptions) in the workplace. Staff members in violation of this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment or contracts.

Staff members are encouraged to ask for help should they be subject to the undue influence of these substances. The principles of mutuality and responsibility will govern church responses, but in general, we will consider such a problem with compassion, while also expecting the staff member to address the issue to prevent any interference with job performance.

### **5.6 Adverse Weather**

In the event of severe adverse weather, the Senior Minister in consultation with the Moderator or designated representative may choose to close the church offices and/or the building to promote the safety of employees and the congregation. In such situations, the Senior Minister (or their designated representative in the Senior Minister's absence) will notify all staff members and congregants and the local television station (WLOS). The closure of the offices/building will not affect the pay of salaried employees. Staff members paid on an hourly basis will be given the opportunity to make up the hours missed due to a weather-related closure.

### **5.7 Smoking Regulations**

Smoking is not permitted inside the church buildings. Smoking is permitted only in designated outside areas of the church.

### **6.0 Training and Professional Development**

FCUCC is committed to providing sufficient training and professional development for employees to complete position requirements as effectively as possible. Employees are encouraged to explore and discuss opportunities and budget allocations for professional development and training with their supervisors. Requests to attend professional development programs or seminars must be made to and approved by the appropriate supervisor in writing.

## **6.1 Performance Assessment Process**

At least once per year, a performance assessment of each employee will be completed. The assessment process will include the employee, their supervisor and a member of the Personnel Committee. At the Annual Review, all employees will sign an annual letter of employment to which will be attached the current job description and Personnel Policies.

The Personnel Committee will be responsible for designing the annual performance assessment process to ensure that it is fair, timely, objective and candid. It will also provide an opportunity for the employee being assessed to provide feedback to their supervisor and Personnel Committee member on ways the supervisor and church can support them in performing duties at an optimal level. Strengths in performance and areas needing improvement should be identified along with possible remedies to address professional development needs and any additional changes to enhance job performance.

An annual evaluation of the overall church ministry will also be completed by the Board as part of its performance assessment of the Senior Minister, with assistance from the Personnel Committee and with input from the congregation.

## **6.2 New Hire Evaluation Period**

For the first six months of employment for part-time staff members working 15 hours a week or less and 90 days of employment for full-time staff members and part-time staff members working more than 15 hours per week, each staff member will participate in a “new hire” evaluation period. During this period, the staff member and FCUCC can evaluate their ability to work together and assess the member’s interest, qualifications and performance on the job. At the end of the evaluation period, or at any point during the evaluation period, a determination will be made whether the employment or contract relationship between FCUCC and the staff member will continue. This determination will involve a meeting with the staff member, the staff member’s supervisor, and a member of the Personnel Committee. A representative of the appropriate hiring committee may also be asked to join this meeting. The decision to continue a staff member’s employment following the “new hire” evaluation period does not alter the at-will nature of the staff member’s employment or contract.

## **7.0 Resignation/Separation**

While recognizing the “at will” conditions of employment in Section 5.0, FCUCC asks that when feasible, employees provide four weeks’ notice of their intent to resign their employment.

FCUCC reserves the right to terminate an employee. In accordance with Bylaws and as approved by the Board (and by the congregation where so noted in the Bylaws), FCUCC will ensure that an individual ending employment receives all due compensation. Any employee who is terminated or asked to resign will also be required to absent themselves from the church and all church-related activities for a minimum period of one year.

It is expected that any employee leaving for any reason will participate in an exit interview to be conducted by a Personnel Committee member. Once removed from the payroll, the employee shall be paid for earned vacation not taken for the current year, prorated based on months worked that year. No other compensation shall be automatically paid. Final pay will be mailed to the employee’s home address. Direct deposit does not apply to final pay.

## **8.0 Pastor Parish Relations Team Purpose**

The Pastor Parish Relations Team (PPR) supports the healthy communication and relationship between the Pastor, Board, Personnel Committee and the FCUCC congregants to promote faithful and shared ministries.

The PPR provides a setting of mutual trust and respect for one another and a confidential outlet for congregants and staff members to raise concerns in connection with other staff or church members. All deliberations of the PPR are kept in confidence, while recognizing the need to involve multiple parties at times, to help resolve or minimize emerging issues. Matters presented to the PPR are shared with Personnel when safety, legal, ethical or performance issues dictate. Action related to staff may be reported to Personnel for consideration in performance evaluations or other interventions deemed necessary. Confidential records of the PPRT are maintained in a locked file in the Senior Minister’s office.

## **8.1 Composition of PPR**

The Pastor Parish Relations Team will include five members selected from a list of suggested candidates provided by the Pastor, Board and

Personnel Committee. The Pastor will select three and the Board will select two members.

These candidates should possess and model the following skills, traits, and characteristics: spiritually mature, thoughtful, discerning, prayerful, truthful, perceptive, compassionate, reliable, trustworthy, confidentiality, able to appreciate differing points of view and reconcile differences, vitally interested in the life and mission of the church.

## **8.2 Responsibilities of the PPR**

The Pastor Support Group (PPR) shall be the primary body within the church to hear, in confidence, concerns held by the Pastor, individual members, the Board, staff or other committees. The PPR is tasked with the responsibility to deal creatively and supportively with conflict and to reach out to the Association or Conference, in its discretion, should it deem outside mediation to be helpful.

## **8.3 General Resolution Process**

The FCUCC staff, congregants, and Pastor covenant to honor this communication and conflict resolution process:

- If a congregant or group of congregants has a concern with a staff member, another congregant, or the pastor, they should first bring that concern directly to the individual.
- If hesitant to do so, or if more assistance is needed in resolving the matter, the congregant(s) or staff member shall share their concern with any member of the PPR who will bring it to the entire team. The PPR will work in confidence with the pastor and the congregant(s) or staff member, engage in honest and open discussion, reflection, and conflict resolution, and seek a creative solution to the issues.
- In the event the matters presented to the PPR may relate to safety, legal, ethical or job performance concerns, the PPR shall request consultation with the Personnel Committee. Actions related to staff may be reported to Personnel for consideration in performance evaluations or other interventions deemed necessary.
- At the PPR's discretion, in consultation with the Personnel Committee and the Board, they may seek assistance from the Conference to help mediate the situation.
- FCUCC Members and the Pastor commit to this process and agree not to bypass this process by taking issues directly to the Conference without going through the PPR.

#### **8.4 Problem Resolution Steps**

Congregants and staff are encouraged to communicate concerns or complaints about another congregant or a staff member using the following steps:

1. Speak directly with the Congregant or staff member; if either party feels that the issue has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily,
2. Both parties meet with the Pastor; if either party then feels the issue has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily, or
3. If a staff member's concern or complaint is with the Pastor and, after speaking with him or her, the staff member feels the situation has not been resolved, the staff member should consult the PPR and,
4. Both parties meet with the PPR; if either party feels the issue still has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily,
5. Both parties meet with Personnel which has responsibility for resolving the situation,
6. At the PPR's or Personnel Committee's discretion, they may seek assistance from the Board and, if necessary, the Conference, to help mediate the situation.
7. Any issue received by the Conference shall be referred back to First Congregational UCC's Board, Personnel Committee and PPR for resolution, per these guidelines.

#### **8.5 Staff Grievance Process**

A complaint by any staff member pertaining to relationships within or among staff shall be addressed directly with the staff member involved first. If resolution is not achieved, the parties will meet with the Senior Minister.\*\* If resolution is still not achieved and action needs to be taken, the parties involved will meet with the PPR. If there is still no resolution, the parties and the PPR shall meet with the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee is responsible for a final resolution, subject to Executive Board approval.

*\*\*If the staff member's concern or complaint is with the Senior Minister and, after speaking directly with her or him, if the staff person feels the situation has not been addressed or resolved, they should consult the PPR.*