

First United Methodist Church

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Lay Personnel Handbook and  
Employee Orientation Guide

September, 2000

## A WORD OF WELCOME

We are pleased to have you as part of the staff at First United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. You have been chosen to become part of our “family of employees,” with an important role to play in keeping our church a high quality place to work.

We hope you find your employment here a satisfying and fulfilling experience. It is our hope that your attitude is one of investment of abilities, skills and personality in the service of others. If so, you will find contentment.

To a very great extent, the quality of First Church as a place to work depends upon the quality of persons who work here. We pledge to you an open spirit and honest effort on our part in seeking to make this a great place in which to work.

Gary and Laurie Haller, Co-Pastors

## **Mission Statement**

### **First United Methodist Church**

It is the mission of First United Methodist Church to call people into relationship with Christ, to experience God's love and to make all of our actions a response to that love.

Our mission is shaped by the Wesleyan emphases of a vital personal faith, social justice, ecumenism, and a global concern.

We will accomplish this mission by:

- \*Being a large and friendly downtown church, drawing members from all areas of metropolitan Grand Rapids
- \*Embracing all people as sisters and brothers
- \*Engaging in a broad range of ministries
- \*Offering inspiring worship
- \*Providing challenging educational experiences
- \*Involving people in service
- \*Nurturing one another

*The above Mission Statement was adopted by the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church on February 11, 1992.*

## **A Brief History of First United Methodist Church**

The First Methodist Church of Grand Rapids was organized in 1835 by pioneers in the Grand Valley and became part of the Grand River Mission which extended from Grandville to Portland and was served by circuit rider preachers.

In October, 1840, a lot was purchased on the corner of Division and Fountain Streets and a building was completed in 1843. Built by church members of hand-hewn timbers cut from nearby forest, it was a crude meeting house with wooden benches. A year later, it was painted white and then called the "Old White Church." The complete cost was \$200.

In 1867, the "Old White Church," with a membership of 140 and a Sunday School of 340, was replaced by a new building with a pipe organ at a cost of \$43,000. About this time, splinter groups left to form several Methodist churches in other parts of the city. By 1910, the church had outgrown this building known as "The Division Street Methodist Episcopal Church."

A lot on the corner of Fulton and Barclay Streets was purchased and a new building, of a modified fourteenth century Gothic style, was completed at a cost of approximately \$212,000. The new church was dedicated on April 9-16, 1916.

In 1969, a Building Committee studied the physical needs of the church and decided to increase the educational facilities, office space and provide space for community service. As a necessary adjunct to the total program, the church acquired two lots on Barclay Street for parking facilities. The first Church School classes in the new building were held on September 10, 1972.

## WE ARE A CONNECTIONAL CHURCH

The United Methodist Church proudly calls itself a “connectional church.” The phrase grew out of the language of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, as he referred to his band of religious societies as “the connexion.” Today, at First United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, we still take pride in being a part of the United Methodist connection.

Connectionalism refers to United Methodism’s global, yet close knit organization. The well-defined administrative and programmatic structure of the United Methodist Church, as outlined in the Book of Discipline, provides its churches with the ability to participate in world-wide ministries that independent churches could never accomplish. Literally thousands of grass-roots missional programs are enabled around the world by the spiritual and administrative connection of the United Methodist Church.

Spiritually speaking, connectionalism is a covenantal relationship among United Methodists, which enables us together to be much more productive and strong than we would be singly. It is a pledge to share our resources of time, talents, prayer, and money in mutual support of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a declaration of faith among a similarly-minded people. We all individually give what we can to the whole, so that the work of Christ may proceed in many wonderful ways.

At First United Methodist Church we participate in “the connection” in a number of ways. Through service in world-mission projects, support of special offerings, sponsorship of local mission agencies, volunteerism at Henry Paideia Academy and payment of apportionments, the members of FUMC are engaged in vital ministries locally, nationally and globally. Whether it is supporting U.S. missionaries in Africa and India, feeding hungry people in Rwanda, traveling to our sister church in Herradura, Cuba, helping a native epidemiologist in Nicaragua, shoveling mud from homes in Georgia, or providing “parking lot picnics” in Grand Rapids, the connection of the United Methodist Church puts us in the forefront of missional opportunities at home and around the world.

We at First United Methodist Church are proud to be a part of the United Methodist connectional system.

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## **General Expectations**

Each member of the lay staff is a representative of the church. We ask the staff to remember that our mutual task is first and foremost that of ministry. It is our desire to communicate the love of Christ in all that we do.

With respect to staff relationships, it is our goal to work as a team. This means that we recognize the need to ask for help and to receive help, to listen to each other and to appreciate our different styles, talents, and backgrounds.

Personal initiative is a significant ingredient in the ministry of our church. We need to offer new ideas and alternative solutions to challenges in our daily work tasks.

Working together in this way, we will be able to offer continuously better services to church members.

### **Notice That This Handbook is Not a Contract - Employment is "at will."**

The information contained in this Employee Handbook applies to all First United Methodist Church staff and is intended to provide general information pertaining to the Church and its policies and benefits. Nothing stated in this handbook is to be considered a contract or a guarantee of employment with the Church. Employment can be terminated, with or without cause, at any time at the option of either the employee or the Church. The policies contained in this handbook may be amended, deleted, modified or added to from time to time as is necessary or desirable by the Church.

## **Role of the Lay Personnel Committee**

The Lay Personnel Committee is responsible to the Administrative Board for recommending personnel policies and procedures. The Committee also recommends the level of lay professional and other staff positions needed to carry out the work of the church and the training and development of the current staff. The Committee is also responsible for overall personnel policy and for wage and salary recommendations to the Administrative Board.

The Committee does not directly supervise the lay staff, but is available as a source of personal support and assistance. This support and assistance may take many forms, including assisting the staff in responding to suggestions or complaints from the congregation. In this regard, most members of the lay staff will have a designated support person from the Lay Personnel Committee.

## **Employment**

### **A. Policies**

1. It is the policy of First United Methodist Church to fill staff vacancies with the best qualified candidates.
2. It is the policy of First United Methodist Church to apply recruiting, hiring, promotion, compensation, evaluation, discipline and professional development practices without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, creed, handicap, veteran status, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law. The Church is also committed to adhering to and enforcing its obligations under the Americans With Disabilities Act.
3. It is intended that a working environment will be maintained for all staff members that is free from intimidation or harassment based upon race, religion color, national origin, sex, age, creed, weight, height, marital status, veteran status, qualifying disability or any other status protected by law. All staff members are responsible for helping the Church maintain a climate that provides equal opportunity for all.

**B. Pre-Employment Procedures**

1. All job candidates must complete and sign an employment application, and may be asked to submit a resume. Concealment or falsification of information on the application form shall be grounds for termination.
2. Interviews, reference checks and final selection will be the responsibility of the Lay Personnel Committee and the Pastors.

**C. Employee Classification and Procedural Matters**

1. Full-time lay employees are hired by the church to work staff positions involving 35 or more hours per week. Specific hours are agreed to by the employee and the Lay Personnel Committee.
2. Part-time lay employees are hired by the church to work fewer than 35 hours per week. A specific number of hours is agreed upon by the employee and the Lay Personnel Committee.
3. Regular Staff Employees are employees who are employed fifty-two (52) weeks per year.
4. The work schedule of both full-time and part-time employees will need to be flexible to meet the requirements of the job.
5. Contract persons are engaged by the church to perform specific duties for the church. Contract employment implies that the employee is responsible for his/her own tax accounting and the church does not pay Employers' Social Security Tax. These employees will receive a 1099 Form for tax purposes at year-end.
6. All staff employees will have an immediate supervisor. The role of the supervisor will be to provide support, guidance, evaluation and feedback to staff members and to make decisions on issues and questions listed in this handbook. Staff members will normally receive at least one performance review per year from their immediate supervisor.



7. A staff employee has the right to terminate his/her employment at any time for any reason. The Church, an employer at will, maintains a similar right to terminate employment at any time and for any reason.
8. When resigning, staff employees are requested to provide written notice to the immediate supervisor at least two weeks before the final day of work. The supervisor will determine whether the employee should finish the two weeks, or be released with salary paid through the two-week notification period.

## **Pay and Benefits**

### **Payroll Information**

Staff employees are paid every two weeks (26 paychecks per year). Paychecks are available in the church office. If a payday falls on a holiday, checks will be released on the previous workday.

### **Pay Reviews**

Each year the Lay Personnel Committee prepares a wage and salary budget for review and approval by the Administrative Board. Each member of the lay staff will have a wage or salary review annually as part of the budgeting process. If a pay adjustment is approved by the Administrative Board, staff employees will be informed of the amount of the pay adjustment and the effective date no later than 10 days after Board approval.

## **Time Recording**

All hours worked by hourly-paid staff will be recorded weekly by the staff member on an Attendance Report and approved by the immediate supervisor. In addition to hours per day, the report should list reasons for absences such as: vacation, sick, personal and other.

## **Holidays**

A full-time year around employee is entitled to the following 10 paid holidays. Part-time hourly employees who work at least 15 hours per week and who are unable to work because the church is closed for a holiday will be entitled to pro-rated holidays based on total hours worked. The holidays are:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day
Good Friday	Day after Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Christmas Eve
Independence Day	Christmas Day*
Labor Day	Floating Holiday**

\*When Christmas falls on a weekend, both Friday and Monday will be paid holidays.

\*\*To be determined annually by the pastors and the church administrator.

## **Benefits**

### **Social Security**

The Church will comply with the provisions of Social Security law.

### **Health Insurance**

A regular staff employee who regularly works more than 30 hours per week is entitled to coverage under the group health plan. Specific coverage options will be provided to each eligible employee.

An employee who does not elect to be covered by the Group Health Plan will sign a waiver to be filed in the church office with a copy in the employee's personnel file.

### **Worker's Compensation**

An employee is covered under the Worker's Compensation Act for work-related injury or disability. The employee is responsible for immediate notification to his/her immediate supervisor of the injury or disability.

### **Unemployment**

As a religious organization, the Church is not required to provide unemployment insurance. Therefore, a person whose employment is ended for whatever reason does not qualify for unemployment compensation.

### **Retirement**

A regular staff employee who regularly works more than 20 hours per week is entitled to enroll in the United Methodist Pension program after completing one full year of service.

### **Long-Term Disability**

Long-term disability benefits are also provided for regular staff employees who regularly work more than 35 hours per week.

### **Vacation**

A regular staff employee who regularly works 30 hours per week or more is entitled to vacation time at a regular rate of pay after the first anniversary of the employee's hire.

Full-time employee vacation is granted on the following basis:

1. An employee with one (1) to four (4) years of completed service may take fifteen (15) working days with pay annually.
2. An employee with four (4) or more years of completed service may take twenty (20) working days with pay annually.
3. Vacation must be scheduled through the supervisor at a time that will not impose a hardship on the work of the church. Any other requests for changes in the vacation schedule must be approved by the pastors and the church administrator.

### **Compassionate Leave**

Regular full-time staff and regular part-time staff will normally be granted paid time off for a limited number of days for the time necessarily involved in conjunction with the death of an immediate family member. Each situation will be assessed individually as to scope and extent of reimbursement and must be approved by the pastors and the church administrator. If compassionate leave days fall on a church-observed holiday, staff will not be paid additional time but will receive holiday pay as normal.

“Immediate Family Member” is defined as spouse, parent, child, siblings, grandparents, in-laws, step relatives, an individual who resides in the same household and in special situations other close relatives or special friends. Normally, compassionate leave will be limited to a maximum of three days.

### **Personal Leave of Absence**

Personal leaves for maternity or paternity purposes, adoption or education may be requested through supervisors and presented for approval by the Lay Personnel Committee.

### **Jury Duty**

An employee required to serve jury duty will be paid the difference between regular compensation and the remuneration received for jury duty.

## **Standards of Conduct**

Staff employees serve as a reflection of First United Methodist Church to the community. Courtesy and respect to fellow staff members, church members and members of the community-at-large is always an expectation.

1. Honesty, integrity, loyalty and confidentiality must be observed regarding all relationships, documents, conversations and church involvements.
2. Professional personal appearance and hygiene are essential.
3. Use of alcohol and illegal drugs while on the job will not be tolerated.
4. The Church is a smoke-free environment.
5. The Church equipment and supplies are to be used only for purposes relating to the church.
6. Church telephones are for church work. Personal use of the phones should not interfere with your work. If you must make a personal long-distance call, notify the church administrator and pay the charges.
7. If you are unable to report for work, contact your immediate supervisor. Failure to notify your supervisor of absence is considered to be job abandonment.
8. Staff employees are expected to follow the schedule of working days and hours as agreed upon. Any change is to be approved by your immediate supervisor and the Lay Personnel Committee.
9. Keys are to be used only by the staff employee to whom they are assigned and are to be returned when the employee leaves the employment of the Church.

10. It is neither possible nor necessary to list all of the types of conduct that are inappropriate for employees of the Church. Each employee must always be aware that he or she is employed in the ministry of the United Methodist Church and of First United Methodist Church. His or her conduct must always be consistent with that ministry.

Although either the employee or the Church has the option of terminating the employment relationship at any time, and for any reason, with or without cause and with or without notice, the Church, in its sole discretion, may decide that corrective action should be utilized prior to termination in order to assist an employee who exhibits inappropriate conduct or behavior, inadequate performance or who fails, in any way, to meet the Church's standards. However, employees should not expect that they have a right to a certain number of disciplinary measures prior to termination or to any progression of discipline.

### **Performance Management and Professional Development**

Our goal is to create a learning environment where everyone can participate in the work of the church and grow personally and professionally.

All staff members will, in most instances, receive periodic feedback on their performance and a formal appraisal at least once a year.

Formal and informal continuous learning opportunities will be available to all staff members within constraints of time and budget. We encourage staff members to increase their skills and knowledge.

Key work processes are to be documented over time to allow for professional development through cross-training and a broader understanding of how the total work of the Church is accomplished.

Professional development will be enhanced through regular communication processes such as regular staff meetings.

Participation in church and community activities will be encouraged as a way to enhance staff development, but never in a way that inhibits the individual in their pursuit of a balanced work and family life.