

# Michigan Conference Human Resources Policy

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The vision of the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church is:

*The Michigan Conference equips and connects through:*

- *Christ-centered Mission and Ministry*
- *Bold and Effective Leaders*
- *Vibrant Congregations*

The vision identifies what we want to be known for across the state. It helps inform strategies, alignment of resources, making decisions and evaluating ministry. It becomes the lens and foundation for determining staffing models and organizational structures.

## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

1. The purpose of this document is to provide policies for the employment of staff by agencies of the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church (“MC”).
2. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* is the final authority for clergy and takes precedence over any policies which may be at variance with it as set forth in this document with respect to clergy employees.
3. These policies shall be applicable to staff employed by the Conference Leadership Council, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, the Committees on District Superintendency, the Board of Pension and Health Care. Representatives of each of these agencies shall be called together by the Director of Connectional Ministries every two years to review this policy. Each employing agency shall make provisions for its own personnel committee as it relates to specific job and associated responsibilities under their purview.
4. This document of policies and practices is not intended to create a contract of employment between the employer and employee. The employee should not and cannot rely on this document as a contract of employment.
5. Staff employees of the MC and its agencies are “at will” employees. Employment is at the will of the employer, and either the employer or employee may at any time terminate the employment relationship with or without reason, and with or without notice. The MC will follow state and federal laws that are applicable to a faith-based organization.

## AMENDMENTS AND CORRECTIONS

The Michigan Conference Human Resources Committee is authorized to amend and/or correct this policy between sessions of Annual Conference if needed to conform with changes in federal, state and local laws, and with Human Resources best practices in accordance with the mission of the Church. All such changes will be approved by the Conference Leadership Council and reported to the next session of the Annual Conference.

## **GENERAL EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS**

For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the most effective witness to the Christian Gospel, all persons employed by the MC or its agencies will seek to live according to the highest ideal of Christian life.

The following are offered as a reminder to all employees:

- First and foremost, each employee is a representative of the United Methodist Church. There is, therefore, a need to practice self-discipline because each employee's actions and attitudes are often before the public.
- Each employee will maintain a helpful relationship with other employees, maintain a spirit of unity, and show an interest in understanding and furthering all work.
- While there may be less formality in the office due to the spirit of Christian fellowship among employees, there is no lessening of the need for maintaining dignity with all who come to the offices to transact business.
- Respect confidential matters.

## **HIRING & EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES**

Agencies and/or their personnel committees shall develop job descriptions for each of its paid positions. Each agency shall be responsible for the hiring and dismissal of its employees. When clergy persons are involved, consultation must be conducted with the Appointive Cabinet.

Candidates for employment shall be interviewed by the hiring agency. Salaries or wages are determined by the hiring agency in accordance with its guidelines and in keeping with budgeted amounts allotted to that agency. Fair pay for substantially similar work shall be a guideline in setting salaries or wages, with allowance for special skills, training and relevant experience.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, all new employees will be required to present documented proof of identity and eligibility to work in the United States.

### **Performance Evaluations**

Improvement and development in employee performance is a continuous process. The employee is expected to perform tasks in a satisfactory manner as defined by his/her job description and his/her supervisor. The supervisor is expected to monitor the employee's performance and to notify the employee when performance is not in accordance with expected standards.

#### **1. New Employees**

During the employee's first 90 days of employment, the supervisor will verbally discuss the employee's performance with him/her approximately every 30 days. The purpose of these meetings are to give guidance and coaching during the initial phases of employment and to make sure that the employee is properly performing the duties of the position. Should there be any issues or problems of performance during this period, the supervisor should document those issues and contact the agency executive for advice and coaching on how to proceed.

#### **2. Existing/Regular Employees**

Each employee will have an annual evaluation of his/her performance that will coincide approximately with his/her hire date. This evaluation will be in writing and will be conducted by the employee's immediate supervisor, with copy to the agency executive. It will cover job duties as defined in the employee's job description. The supervisor should consult with the agency executive for guidance and coaching prior to the evaluation to make sure that critical job factors are covered. If the supervisor believes that an employee's work at any given time is not being

done satisfactorily, the employee will be notified in writing through an interim evaluation. Prior to this notification, the supervisor should contact the agency executive to discuss the performance issues for guidance and coaching in how to conduct the employee meeting.

### 3. Available Process for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Employee Performance

Nothing in this section shall be construed to imply that there is any probationary period of employment, that progressive discipline applies, or to alter the “employment at will” doctrine of the MC:

- a. The supervisor should write a report of the deficiency and share it with the employee, discuss how the deficiency can be corrected, determine the date when the correction is to be completed, and advise the employee as to what action(s) may be taken if the deficiency is not corrected by that date.
- b. On the date set for the correction to be completed, the supervisor should advise the employee if the deficiency has been sufficiently corrected, as determined solely by the supervisor.
- c. If the deficiency has not been corrected sufficiently, the supervisor should confer with the agency executive to determine whether disciplinary action is appropriate. The agency executive may also confer with the chair of the agency personnel committee or the Conference Human Resources Committee.
- d. Within five (5) working days of the date set for the correction of the deficiency, the determined disciplinary or other action should be shared with the employee.
- e. Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, the following: oral reprimand, written reprimand, disciplinary lay-off, suspension for a specific term or while other disciplinary action is being considered, or termination of employment. This action is not to be considered progressive, and any action may be used which the employer deems appropriate.
- f. Written documentation for the above process should be constructed.

### 4. Personnel Records

An employee’s personnel file is confidential and will be kept in a secured place by the executive staff person assigned human resource responsibilities. The personnel file may be viewed by the employee upon written request. Upon receipt of a written request, the agency executive will share the personnel file with the employee within a reasonable time. Personnel files may not be taken out of the building, and the agency executive will remain with the employee while the file is reviewed. The employee may request a copy of the entire file or any part thereof. The agency executive or executive assigned human resource responsibilities may charge a reasonable fee for copies of the file. In general, the personnel file will include the Employment Application, hire-in documents, acknowledgement of receipt of the employee manuals, performance evaluations, education certificates and any letters or documents pertinent to his/her employment with the MC. All employee medical information must be kept in a separate, confidential and protected file.

### 5. Social Security Numbers (SSN)

Documents containing an employee’s SSN shall be kept in confidential files. Except as required for necessary legitimate business purposes, no employee is permitted to have access to SSNs, including documents that contain SSNs, or to keep, view, use, copy, disclose or distribute another person’s SSN. The MC limits access to SSNs to those employees whose duties require that he/she use this information in connection with MC business. Whenever possible, only the last four digits of the SSN should be used. When documents containing SSNs are no longer needed and are to be discarded, such documents must be disposed of in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of the SSNs.

### 6. Lost Items

The MC is not responsible for employees’ personal items brought into the work place which are

lost, left behind or otherwise misplaced.

#### 7. Department Specific Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures relative to individual departmental needs, unless otherwise directed by the current *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, may be established, but should not be in conflict with the Conference Human Resources Policy and Procedures. These departments may include, but not be limited to:

- Connectional Ministries
- Communications
- Finance and Administrative Services, including IT services
- Benefits
- District Administration
- Episcopal Administration Team

### **TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT**

There are two basic categories of employment: Exempt and non-exempt.

#### **Exempt Employees**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) lists and defines the following general exemptions: Administrative, Executive, Professional, Out-Side Sales and Ministerial (i.e., clergy and those who perform essentially religious functions).

An exempt employee is not subject to the minimum wage or overtime pay requirements of the FLSA.

Exempt employees of MC agencies may include, but not be limited to Clergy, Director of Connectional Ministry, Director of Administrative Services and Conference Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer.

#### **Non-Exempt Employees**

A non-exempt employee is subject to the minimum wage requirement and must receive overtime pay for hours actually worked above forty in each workweek. Overtime is paid at time-and-a-half of the employee's "regular rate."

Each agency shall identify its exempt and non-exempt employees, according to compliance with the FLSA regulations.

#### **Full-Time Employment**

A full-time employee regularly works thirty or more hours per week. A full-time employee is entitled to fringe benefits which include health coverages, disability income insurance, retirement benefits and worker's compensation. A full-time employee shall also be granted vacation, sick days, personal days, bereavement leave and paid holidays.

#### **Regular Employment**

This is an employee who is full-time or part-time, exempt or non-exempt, whose employment is not time-specific, i.e., not in temporary or project specific status. Permanent employee is a synonym used in some conference documents, such as in Wespath documents. Permanent or regular means the position does not have a pre-determined end date. This language in no way implies a promise of continuing employment or in any way invalidates or changes the at-will nature of Conference employment.

#### **Hourly Employment**

An hourly employee is an exempt or non-exempt employee whose base pay is described as a per hour rate.

**Part-Time Employment**

A part-time employee is one who regularly works less than thirty hours a week. She/he receives only wages as compensation and is not entitled to most fringe benefits other than vacation days, holidays and sick days, which will be provided on a pro-rated basis according to hours worked. The exception to this is that part-time employees working more than 20 hours per week shall participate in the Conference Retirement Benefits Program. Part-time employees are also eligible for worker’s compensation coverage, should he/she sustain a work-related injury or illness.

**Temporary Employment**

A temporary employee is one who works full- or part-time for a specific, limited project or period of time, for instance, 3 to 6 months for a surge in workload. Temporary employees are not typically eligible for coverage under our fringe benefits package. College work-study students shall be included in this category.

**Flex-Time Employment**

An employee may apply for consideration of flex-time, which is an exception to the stated regular office hours. The decision for approval shall be made by the supervisor in his/her discretion.

**Time-Specific Employment**

The MC may hire persons for a specific period of time to complete a specific task or project. The provisions of this Personnel Policies Manual shall be applicable to such agreement only to the extent they are specifically incorporated into the agreement by its express terms, and to the extent that it describes conduct and behaviors established for our workplaces.

**Permanent Employment**

See “Regular Employment”

**Job Description/Flexibility**

All job descriptions are subject to change or modification by the agency Executive Director in consultation with the appropriate direct supervisor.

**COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS**

Employee compensation shall be established on a salary or hourly basis. Salary, which is established on an annual basis will be divided into equal pay period allocations. Any confirmed failure to pay overtime, overpayment or other error in pay, whether discovered by the employee or the MC, and whether to the employee’s detriment or benefit, will be corrected with a deduction or credit in the employee’s next regular paycheck or as soon as practicable. Any employee who believes his/her pay is wrong must immediately report it to his or her supervisor and the Conference Benefits Department. There will be no early release of paychecks. All employees will be paid via the employee's choice of either direct deposit or payroll debit card, once provided with information regarding payroll debit cards.

**Work Periods**

Office hours will be set by the employing agency in consultation with the supervisor and related personnel committee. The Conference Ministry Center will be notified of those hours. As a general rule, MC staff offices are open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The

work week officially begins at 12:00 a.m. on Sunday and concludes at 11:59 p.m. the following Saturday. An employee is allowed to take a one-hour unpaid lunch period each work day. Hourly employees must record his/her time "off the clock" for lunch. Furthermore, an employee is allowed two fifteen-minute paid breaks during a full work day. Normally, one break would occur in the first half of the work day and one in the second half of the work day. Breaks cannot be combined with each other or with the lunch period, nor can they be used to leave early at the end of the workday or arrive late at the beginning of the workday.

If an employee believes it is necessary to leave the office during working hours, he/she must notify and secure the consent of his/her supervisor prior to leaving.

### **Overtime**

The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines a normal work week for overtime standards as 40 hours. Overtime pertains to hourly and salaried non-exempt employees only. Employees classified as salaried exempt are not eligible for overtime payments. Employees may occasionally work more than 40 hours in a work week, which must be preapproved by the supervisor in advance. When a non-exempt employee actually works more than 40 hours in a work week, he/she will be compensated at 1.5 times his/her hourly rate of pay for those excess hours.

### **Time Reporting**

All non-exempt employees need to report all hours worked in the manner prescribed by the Benefits Office and Conference HR Committee. An employee is responsible for recording his/her time records and, with his/her supervisor, ensuring the record's accuracy. This includes time worked at off-site functions and time spent traveling to such functions. All employees are required to record and report to his/her supervisor the use of vacation, personal or sick time for approval in advance (including sick leave when possible) in accordance with the Conference time reporting policies.

### **Paid Holidays**

A full-time regular employee is entitled to twelve (12) paid holidays each year. They are:

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

\*\*Generally, when Christmas falls on a weekend, both Friday and Monday shall be paid holidays of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The same shall hold true for New Year's Eve Day and New Year's Day. If Christmas Day falls on Monday and Christmas Eve on Sunday, the holidays will typically be Monday and Tuesday.

A part-time employee is entitled to holidays on a pro-rated basis, according to the typical number of hours in his/her working schedule. If a holiday falls during an employee's scheduled vacation period, that will count as a paid holiday and not be counted as a vacation day.

### **Pension**

All eligible, regular employees, lay or clergy, are enrolled in the United Methodist Pension Program beginning on the first day of employment.

### **Worker's Disability Compensation**

Employees are covered under the Worker's Disability Compensation Act for work-related injury or illness. Employees are responsible for immediate notification to his/her supervisor of the injury or illness.

### **Unemployment Insurance Benefits**

As a religious organization, the MC and its agencies are not required to participate in the state or federal unemployment insurance program. Therefore, a person whose employment ends for any reason will not qualify for unemployment compensation.

## **SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

An employee must abide by the following minimum standards of employment conduct. A breach of these standards will result in disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions will be taken based on individual circumstances of the situation and may include termination from employment. These standards are not all inclusive and do not change the "at will" status of employment, nor do they create a progressive disciplinary policy:

- Reporting to work as scheduled.
- Complying with all MC and agency safety and security regulations.
- Maintaining confidences and privacy regarding confidential information.
- Performing job duties as assigned.

The following are some examples of actions which will not be tolerated and may be grounds for immediate termination. ***This list is not all inclusive but highlights areas of emphasis.*** Policies affecting the workplace and employment relationship are detailed in the section that follows, "Policies Which Guide Our Employment."

- Sexual harassment or abuse in the workplace or at any work-related function.
- Discriminatory behavior or disparaging remarks which are based on age, gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, veterans' status, weight, height, familial status, or pregnancy.
- Bullying and/or intimidating behavior.
- Theft, destruction, defacement or misuse of an agency's property or another employee's personal property.
- Falsifying or altering any agency records, applications or reports.
- Misrepresenting the MC's, agency's or employee's position.  
Any act of violence or the making of a threat of violence.
- Breach of confidential matters and/or disclosure of private information.
- Not maintaining confidences.

## **POLICIES WHICH GUIDE OUR EMPLOYMENT**

### **Confidentiality Policy**

The MC expects all employees, whether clergy or laypersons, to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality with respect to matters seen, heard or read about in the course of employment. During their employment at the Michigan Conference, employees may have access to confidential and/or proprietary information and work product. This information may include trade secrets and business information of the Conference or its business partners. This information may also include personal information about

Conference employees or Conference members. Employees must maintain that information in confidence, not use or disclose it directly or indirectly, and use it only as necessary in the interests of the Conference.

The Conference respects obligations to its vendors, licensors, volunteers, and others with whom the Conference may have similar obligations regarding confidentiality and work products.

Information acquired by an employee in the course of employment with the Conference must not be used for the employee's individual purposes or benefit. Access to the Conference's confidential information does not provide personal benefit or advantage to the Conference's employees, even though the Conference may share that information with its extended constituent members, whether or not there is financial contribution for such material. Part of that distinction lies in the personal benefit of disclosure of that information gained through employment with the Conference.

Employees will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement as a condition of employment, and from time-to-time thereafter as a reminder of the high responsibility we have as members and/or employees of the MC.

The church is a place of forgiveness, healing and grace, and it is the expectation that all employees will behave in a trustworthy manner to foster those ideals.

### **Social Media Policy**

Social media includes work-related electronic media, such as email, texting, "chat" programs, telephone, the MC Website and other media that facilitate communications throughout the MC. Social media also includes non-MC personal activity, such as 'blogs', chat rooms, forums and programs/media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and any other similar type of program. Employees are not authorized to use non-conference social media in his/her capacity as an employee of the MC, or for personal use during working hours. Personal social media use in an official MC capacity must be authorized in advance and approved in writing by the department supervisor.

When using MC social media (primarily computer resources and email programs), employees must adhere to standards of civility and decency. Emails should always be business-like in tone and responded to promptly.

Employees often use social media for personal reasons. This should be done outside of normal working hours. Employees should refrain from posting information, comments, opinions or other information which would identify him/her as an employee of the MC or would be identifiable as conference-related. While the MC cannot curtail employee use of social media relating to terms and conditions of employment, we hope that concerns and suggestions for changes desired by the employee would be discussed with his/her supervisor. If further discussion is warranted, the employee or supervisor may also bring the matter to the attention of the agency executive or the chairperson of the related personnel committee.

### **Equipment Use/Electronic Devices Policy**

The MC will maintain and make available to select employees various electronic devices for use on the job. This may include, but not be limited to, devices such as computers and cell phones. Additionally, it is recognized that employees may also possess and utilize his/her own personal electronic devices. The following are guidelines for use of all electronic devices while at the work place or for use in conjunction with MC related matters:

- MC provided media should only be used for MC related matters, except in emergency situations or when prior authorization for personal use has been obtained from the appropriate level of supervision.
- Employees should not be "surfing the web", making internet purchases, downloading materials or
- visiting inappropriate web sites for personal purposes using MC provided resources at any time, or



with the personal devices during work time.

- Employees should understand that the MC may, at any time and without prior notice, examine MC provided electronic devices and download or copy files, remove information, reformat or otherwise alter information contained in the device. Unauthorized use of the device for personal matters may result in loss of the information, and the MC will not be responsible for this loss. Employees should never store personal information on any MC owned device or property, as this information may not be secure, and may be accessed at any time, with or without notice to the employee. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using the MC's e-mail, media, electronic and other equipment and resources.
- The use of personal electronic media for personal matters during working time is generally not allowed, except in emergency situations, or as authorized in advance by the supervisor. This includes use of radios or other personal listening devices, mobile phones, computers, computer tablets or readers and other similar media. If radios or other listening devices are approved by the supervisor, then they shall be maintained at a volume level that does not interfere with the concentration of other workers. The MC recognizes that many families stay in touch during the work day via text messaging or email, and supervisors may allow occasional, intermittent and infrequent use of personal media devices for these purposes. However, employees should strive to organize the non-working time so as to handle personal matters, except for emergencies.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

It is the policy of the MC to prohibit its employees from engaging in any activity, practice or act which conflicts with, or appears to conflict with, the interests of the MC. Employees are expected to represent the MC in a positive and ethical manner and have an obligation both to avoid conflicts of interest and to refer questions and concerns about potential conflicts to his/her supervisor.

### **Equal Opportunity/Title VII Preference Policy**

As a Christ-centered faith organization, the MC and its agencies value the rich diversity of cultures, context, life experiences and regional identities that are a part of our local churches, their communities and our wider connection. Therefore, the MC and its agencies are Equal Opportunity Employers, observing employment practices without regard to age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, veterans' status, weight, height, familial status or pregnancy.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, permits religious organizations to give employment preference to those who are members of that religion. The MC reserves the right to employ those who practice and profess faith in Jesus Christ. The MC and its agencies, being a religious organization, will claim these rights granted under Title VII.

In addition to being applicable to MC staff, United Methodist clergy persons are covered by this policy except where *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (current edition) takes precedence.

### **Anti-Harassment Policy**

#### **A. Prohibited Discriminatory Harassment.**

It is the firm policy of the MC to provide and maintain a work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination based on age, gender (see the definition of sexual harassment below), gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, veterans' status, weight, height, familial status or pregnancy. Harassment is any unwelcome or unsolicited verbal, physical, or sexual conduct that unreasonably interferes with an employee's job performance or creates a hostile, offensive, or abusive working environment. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, disparaging remarks about a person's age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, disability, marital status, veterans' status, weight,

height, familial status or pregnancy; unwelcome or unsolicited touching or threats of physical harm; and the use of degrading words, nicknames, pictures, stories, or jokes.

**B. Sexual Harassment Defined.**

1. Basic definition:

For purposes of this policy, the term “sexual harassment” means unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- a. Submission to such conduct or communication is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual’s employment; or
- b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- c. Such conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interfering with an individual’s employment or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

2. Examples:

Examples of unwelcome sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, threatening adverse employment actions if sexual favors are not granted; promising preferential treatment in return for sexual favors; unwanted physical contact; and/or sexually offensive remarks, including the following kinds of prohibited behavior:

- Verbal: sexual advances or propositions or threats; continuing to express interest after being informed the interest is unwelcome; sexual innuendoes; suggestive or insulting comments or sounds including whistling; sexual jokes or teasing of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual’s body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; and any other abuse of a sexual nature.
- Visual: display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or letters; leering; obscene gestures; sexually suggestive or offensive graffiti.
- Physical: unwanted physical contact, including offensive touching, pinching, brushing the body, impeding or blocking movement; unwanted sexual intercourse or other unwanted sexual acts; sexual assault or battery.

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive but is included to provide examples of prohibited action.

**Intellectual Property**

This policy summarizes the Conference employees’ responsibilities as they relate to inventions, work products, course materials, computer works, material developed at the request or direction of the organization, and similar products. The policy applies to all forms of Intellectual Property created or developed, in whole or in part, by employees of the Conference including, but not limited to, when made: making substantial use of Conference resources, as a direct result of Conference duties, while being paid by the Conference, at the direction of the Conference and/or in the course of or related to activities on behalf of the Conference. In no circumstance will the commercialization of such information be acceptable, without bringing it to the attention of Conference officials, and without the Bishop’s approval.

This also includes acknowledgment that we respect obligations to our vendors, licensors, volunteers and others with whom our organization may have similar obligations regarding confidentiality and work products.

By accepting continued employment, an employee acknowledges and agrees that the Conference owns any/all inventions and work products that, in its sole opinion, are made on company time or with company assets, which relate to the Conference’s business, or that are required to meet its obligations. This is in keeping with a standard legal tenet that holds that those who pay for the development of intellectual

property may generally control its use.

During their employment at the Conference, employees may have access to confidential, secret and/or proprietary information. Employees should maintain such information in confidence and use it only in the interests of the Conference.

Information acquired by an employee in the course of his or her employment with the Conference must not be used for the employee's individual benefit. Access to the Conference's confidential information does not carry with it personal benefit or advantage to the Conference's employees, even though the Conference may share that information with its extended constituent members, with or without financial contribution for such materials. Again, a piece of that distinction lies in the personal financial benefit of disclosure of that information gained through employment with the Conference.

Employees should treat all information developed or acquired during employment with the Conference as the property of the Conference. It is not to be used for personal benefit.

In furtherance of the objectives of this policy, an employee will be required to sign an Intellectual Property Agreement in a form prescribed by the Conference.

Any amendments or exceptions to this policy for specific instances of use of intellectual property by a Conference employee will be made in write by the Conference Bishop at the Bishop's sole discretion. Any revisions made to this policy as a whole will be done by the Conference HR Committee.

### **C. Complaint and Investigation.**

Any employee who feels that she or he has been subjected to harassment of any kind, who is aware of conduct prohibited under this policy, or who feels that she or he has been subject to sexual harassment, or has been retaliated against for having brought a complaint of or having opposed sexual harassment and/or for having participated in the complaint process must report or otherwise bring the matter to the attention of either their immediate supervisor, the Director of Connectional Ministry or the Director of Conference Benefits and HR Services of the MC.

The MC will investigate all allegations of sexual harassment promptly. To protect the interests of the complainant, the person complained against, witnesses, any other who may report incidents of sexual harassment, and all other persons affected, confidentiality will be maintained to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances.

If as result of an investigation, the MC determines that a violation of this policy has occurred, the MC will take prompt and appropriate remedial action to eliminate the policy violation and to ensure that it does not recur, up to and including termination of any employee found to be in violation of this policy.

The MC's employees can and are encouraged to report any and all incidents of harassment without fear of reprisal. The MC prohibits any form of retaliation against any employee for filing a complaint under this policy or for participating in a complaint investigation.

### **At-Will Employment Policy**

All non-appointed employees of the MC are employed at-will, and not by contract. Employment at-will means the employee and the MC are free to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and for any reason. The fact that the employment relationship is terminable at-will may not be modified by any oral agreements or representations unless such is also in writing and signed by the employee, the employing agency executive and the Chair of the Conference Human Resources Committee.

### **Exemption from Unemployment Insurance Policy**

Church related organizations are exempt from participation in state and federal unemployment insurance programs. The MC does not provide unemployment insurance as an employment benefit after employment ceases.

### **Weapons and Dangerous Objects Policy**

All weapons, firearms, and dangerous instruments are prohibited on MC property. The MC strictly prohibits employees, contract or temporary staff, and any other individuals associated with or representing the MC from possessing, transferring, selling, using or threatening to use a weapon or dangerous instrument (as defined below) in MC work locations. These 'locations' include any personally owned vehicles that are parked in any area provided for MC personnel, regardless of whether the individual is licensed to carry the weapon or not. MC personnel are further prohibited from being in possession of weapons off MC or church property when involved in any activity of or for the MC.

For purposes of this policy, any firearm – loaded or unloaded – is considered a weapon. A dangerous instrument is defined as any instrument, article or substance that, under immediate circumstances, is capable of causing serious physical injury or death.

Employees who live year-round in MC owned/leased/rented residences need to secure (under lock) personally owned weapons for use outside of the ministry and that the liability for said weapons are the sole responsibility of the employee. A rider on the employee's home owners/renter's policy is recommended.

Employees who know or reasonably believe that another individual is in possession of a weapon or dangerous instrument must notify a supervisor or manager of the MC. If the individual is found to be in violation of this policy, he/she will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. In cases involving clergy employees, the Office of the Bishop will be notified, and appropriate action taken. Where appropriate, the MC will report the possession or use of weapons or dangerous instruments to local law enforcement authorities.

### **Substance Use and/or Abuse Policy**

All MC public premises are to be drug and alcohol free. Use of illicit drugs and alcohol is not allowed in any of the MC business areas including building, grounds and Conference vehicles. Persons who are found working while intoxicated by illicit drugs or alcohol will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. Under these circumstances, assistance will be provided to ensure that the employee arrives home safely.

### **Right to Search Policy**

The MC and its agencies are committed to providing a safe environment for its personnel. The MC reserves the right at any time, at its sole discretion, to search all Conference-owned property, suspicious packages, lockers, desks, purses, briefcases, personal property or vehicles on MC premises or vehicles used to carry out MC business. This includes the retrieval of any information found on computers or written documents on MC facilities, equipment and/or property. Searches will be conducted by a Conference Director or local law enforcement authorities and may be conducted without notice. Employees who refuse to permit a search under this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including the termination of employment.

### **Issues and Concerns Process**

The purpose of a concerns and issues policy and procedure is to ensure just treatment of all employees and to resolve problems so that constructive working relationships and an effective working environment may be maintained for the benefit of all. Resolution of differences should be accomplished expeditiously and at the lowest level possible by all parties concerned.

Employees will be protected from retaliation for having filed a concern or issue. All persons involved in the concerns and issues process investigation will be advised by the Coordinator of Human Resources (HR) or the chair of the Conference Human Resources Committee against intimidation or retaliation. Employees who believe they have experienced negative employment repercussions as a result of having filed a concern and issue should immediately report their concern to their supervisor. If the issue cannot safely be reported to the supervisor, the Coordinator of HR should be informed. If disciplinary action results from the concern and issue, the concerned individual shall be informed that the matter has been resolved, but shall not be informed of the specific discipline.

There is an addendum describing the process to be used attached to this policy.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to terminate the at-will employment status of conference employees. All resolutions and agreements will not be binding on the Annual Conference.

### **Protection from Retaliation Policy**

Employees who file an earnest report of suspected misconduct or violation of any of the policies, procedures and/or regulations of the MC, as well as those who participate in any such investigation will not be subject to retaliation in the form of adverse employment action, such as compensation decisions, punitive work assignments or termination.

## **LEAVE TIME**

### **Paid Time Off**

During the first year of employment, paid time off (PTO) shall be accrued on a pro-rated basis from hire date until December 31 of the year hired. All full-time non-exempt employees will then accrue on a calendar year basis for PTO schedules. For a full-time employee, a "day" of PTO is equal to the scheduled hours per week of the position divided by a five-day work week (Example: an employee is scheduled to work 35 hours per week and an employee takes a full day of PTO. PTO pay would be 35 hours divided by 5 days = 7 hours of PTO to be paid).

A non-exempt employee's PTO is granted as follows:

- An employee with more than one (1) year of completed service and less than five (5) years of completed service shall be granted 15 days of PTO annually -- that is, 15 days of the equivalent hours of their normally scheduled work hours.
- An employee with more than five (5) years of completed service and less than ten (10) years shall be granted 20 days of PTO annually. (Again, pro-rated by the number of scheduled hours worked per day)
- An employee with ten (10) or more years of completed service shall be granted twenty-five (25) days of PTO annually (pro-rated by the number of scheduled hours worked per day).

An exempt employee's PTO benefits will be established at the time of hire, but if not included in a written agreement signed by the employee and the appropriate MC representatives (supervisor and Coordinator of Human Resources (HR)), the same PTO benefits applicable to non-exempt employees shall apply to the exempt employee in question.

A part-time employee is entitled to PTO hours, holidays and other time off benefits on a pro-rated basis, according to the typical number of hours in his/her weekly working schedule.

Up to the equivalent of five (5) days of accrued PTO may be carried from one year into the next, and no PTO days may be accumulated or carried forward for more than one (1) year. Accumulated PTO in excess of the allowable carry-over is lost if not used by the end of the calendar year. An employee is required to use at least half of his/her PTO accrual annually. Accrued but unused PTO balances will be

paid out upon termination of employment. In certain cases of discharge for misconduct, payment of accrued PTO may not be paid out, at the sole discretion of the Coordinator of HR.

PTO time must be scheduled in advance and approved by the employee's supervisor, with an exception for a last-minute unplanned inability to work. In general, the MC will grant requests for PTO when possible, taking business needs into consideration. When multiple employees in a work unit request the same time off, their length of employment or the request date may determine priority in scheduling approvals.

By law, PTO application is different for non-exempt employees and exempt employees. If an exempt employee works any part of a day and then is absent for the remainder of that day, the exempt employee will be paid for the full day without PTO deductions. If an exempt employee is absent a full day, then PTO will be applied for that day. A non-exempt employee is paid wages for hours worked, and if they are absent a part of a day, PTO is applied for hours not worked in that day. For non-exempt employees, PTO hours will be used on an hourly basis according to time missed in the day. For example, if two-and-a-half hours of the normal workday are missed, two-and-a-half hours of PTO will be paid. (Note that PTO may be taken in increments as small as an hour by non-exempt employees.)

If a non-exempt employee has used their accrued PTO, so that they have a zero balance, further absences will be unpaid. For exempt employees with zero balances, absences of a full workweek would be unpaid.

The Conference may require that an employee use any unused PTO during disability or family medical leaves, or any other leave of absence, where permissible under local, state and federal law.

### **Sick Time**

Sick leave will be earned and credited on the following schedule for regular full-time employees:

- Full-time employees will earn sick leave at the rate of one work day for each completed calendar month of continuous service from the date of hire.
- Employees may accumulate up to fifty days of sick leave. Employees will not be compensated for unused sick days;
- Current employees who have accumulated sick days in excess of fifty days may use those days for sick leave purposes, if approved, but will not accumulate additional sick days until his/her sick days balance falls below fifty days.
- An employee may donate up to five sick days per year for use by another employee who contracts a serious disease or injury and has used up his/her own earned sick days.

A part-time employee is entitled to sick days on a pro-rated basis, according to the typical number of hours in his/her working schedule.

Sick leave, by definition, is designed to be used for medical reasons. When the employee is ill or has sustained an injury, and is unable to work, sick leave should be utilized. The employee is required to call his/her supervisor and report his/her absence as soon as possible. The employee should thereafter call in each day he/she is unable to work so that the supervisor is aware of his/her impending absence and can make arrangements to cover essential work.

Employees may also be authorized to use sick leave to care for the illness/injury of immediate family members, which include husband, wife, son, daughter, parents, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchildren, guardians and spouse's parents. Step relationships are also included. In these instances, short term (3 days or less) situations should be handled in the same manner as reporting an employee's own illness. The employee is required to call in each day to report his/her impending absence.

Once paid sick leave and donated sick leave have been exhausted, the employee will be required to use vacation, personal and/or donated sick days in order to continue on medical leave. At the end of a total of

180 days of absences, attendance having ended because of the same extended medical issue (sick leave), employment will be terminated. This will occur whether or not the employee qualifies for long-term disability.

During extended absences due to personal illness/injury, pregnancy, adoption or foster care placements, employees may also use personal days and accrued vacation days after sick leave has been exhausted.

Family Medical Leave Act provisions may also be used, if the employee is eligible and if the employer meets the level of requirement for offering FMLA.

### **Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA)**

For eligible employing units and eligible employees, the FMLA will apply.

#### **a. Basic Leave Entitlement**

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

- For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or child birth;
- To care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
- To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition; or
- For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

#### **b. Military Family Leave Entitlements**

Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12 month period. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

#### **c. Benefits and Protections**

During FMLA leave, the MC will maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

#### **d. Eligibility Requirements**

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if they work at a worksite where at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

#### **e. Definition of Serious Health Condition**

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that

involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

f. Use of Leave

An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the MC's operations. Leave due to qualifying circumstances may also be taken on an intermittent basis.

g. Substitution of Paid Leave for Unpaid Leave

Employees are required to use vacation or other accrued paid time-off while taking FMLA leave. In order to use paid time-off for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the MC's normal policies.

h. Employee Responsibilities

Employees must provide the MC with 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days' notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with the MC's normal call-in procedures.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the MC to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave.

Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the MC if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Employees must provide medical certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave when leave is requested for the employee's own serious health condition. Employees will also be required to provide a fitness-for-duty certification upon returning from leave.

i. MC Responsibilities

The MC will inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under the FMLA. If they are, the notice will specify any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, the MC will provide a reason for the ineligibility.

The MC will inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the MC determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the MC will notify the employee.

j. Enforcement

The FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to:

- Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA;



- Discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA.

An employee may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

FMLA does not affect any Federal or State law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any State or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

After five continuous days of sick leave have been taken, an employee may be asked to provide the supervisor with a letter from his/her physician on letterhead paper indicating his/her inability to work, and his/her projected date of release to return to work. A physician's authorization to return to work on the actual date allowed will also be required.

Employees who are eligible may be covered under a disability insurance policy provided by the MC. Eligibility for disability is at the sole discretion of the insurance carrier, and is not controlled by the MC. The insurance carrier may require information independent of that requested by the MC.

Short-term disability benefits (if approved) may be augmented and integrated with unused sick, personal and vacation days. However, an employee shall not receive more than 100% of his/her wages/salary using a combination of short-term disability benefits and available sick, personal and/or vacation days.

#### **Time Off for Illness/Injury – Exempt Employees**

An exempt employee who is not eligible for FMLA leave and is disabled due to illness or injury for more than 50 days in a year may apply for disability leave in consultation with the agency's personnel committee.

#### **Bereavement Leave**

Regular full-time and part-time employees may receive up to five paid days of bereavement leave per year due to a death in the immediate family (includes husband, wife, son, daughter, parents, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchildren, guardians and spouse's parents. Step relationships are also included).

In the year of the employee's hire, bereavement leave days will be prorated based upon the number of full months left in the calendar year.

If more time is needed away from work, an employee may request approval for the use of vacation time, sick leave and/or personal days.

#### **Parental Leave**

Employees may request up to 30 days (6 work weeks) of paid leave at his/her regular rate of pay for the birth/adoption/foster care placement of a child in his/her home. These additional 30 days are available only in these circumstances and are not 'deducted' or charged against the employee's earned leave balances. This paid parental leave will constitute a part of FMLA leave where applicable. If FMLA leave is not available, additional accumulated sick, personal and vacation days may be used to extend the 30 day (6 work weeks) paid leave, if available and if approved by the supervisor, for up to 60 days (12 work weeks) total time away.

#### **Jury Duty**

Eligible full time and part-time employees required to serve on jury duty will be paid the difference between his/her regular average wages and the remuneration received for jury duty by the applicable governmental agency to a maximum of 15 days. The employee shall give notice of his/her potential jury duty as soon as possible.

### **Military Leave**

Military leave will be granted in accordance with state and federal regulations. The leave will be unpaid by the MC; however, employees may use any available vacation time for the absence.

Continuation of the health care premium benefit by the employer is available as required by USERRA, based on the length of leave, and is subject to the terms, conditions and limitations of the applicable plans for which the employee is otherwise eligible.

Benefit Accruals, such as vacation, sick leave and paid holidays will be suspended during the military leave, and will resume upon the employee's return to active employment with the MC.

Employees on military leave for periods up to 30 days are required to return to work for the first regularly scheduled shift after the end of service, allowing for reasonable travel time. Employees on longer military leave must apply for reinstatement in accordance with USERRA and all applicable state laws.

Employees returning from military leave will be placed in the position he/she would have attained had he/she remained continuously employed, or a comparable one, depending on the length of military service, in accordance with USERRA. Returning employees will be treated as though he/she were continuously employed for the purpose of determining benefits based on length of service.

### **Religious / Community Service**

Personnel are encouraged to be a part of the United Methodist connectional system. The employee may be excused with pay to serve and provide volunteer services for United Methodist events/programs agencies if it does not hinder work, and if authorized by the immediate supervisor in advance. In addition, the employee may be excused with pay to provide volunteer services in their own religious community, if not United Methodist, or to volunteer with another not-for-profit community service agency, provided such services are not in conflict with the United Methodist Social Principles.

A full-time regular employee is granted five (5) service days a year. They may not be carried over from one year to the next. Service days that are not used are forfeited.

No compensation will be paid for unused service days at the time of termination or retirement.

### **Personal Days**

Personal days are available to a full-time regular employee to allow the employee to conduct personal business and keep appointments of a personal nature when these cannot be done outside the normal working hours. Personal days must be scheduled in advance. They may not be used to extend vacation time.

A full-time regular employee is granted five (5) personal days a year. They may not be carried over from one year to the next. Personal days that are not used are forfeited.

No compensation will be paid for unused personal days at the time of termination or retirement.

### **Leave of Absence**

Regular full-time and part-time employees who are not eligible for FMLA leave but who have completed a full year of employment may request an unpaid leave of absence. Such leave must be approved in advance by the employing agency. A leave of absence shall not exceed three months. Benefits are suspended during a leave of absence. The employee may pay the medical insurance premiums to ensure coverage continuation. A leave of absence is not considered as service for the purposes of accrual of time-based benefits.

### **Study/Renewal Leave**

After every six years of continuous employment, a full-time exempt employee may be granted a paid leave of up to three months for the purpose of study, renewal and spiritual growth. Requests and plans for such leave must be approved by the employee's supervisor and submitted to the appropriate Conference committee and in consultation with the Conference HR Committee for review and approval at least three months prior to beginning the leave. Unused leave under this benefit may not be accumulated. This policy in no way changes or abridges any of the leave policies described in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.

## **TRAVEL & EXPENSE POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

Employees will be reimbursed for pre-approved business expenses and reasonable expenses incurred while on pre-approved business travel for the MC. All reimbursable expenses must be supported by an appropriate receipt provided to the MC.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

The opportunity for upgrading job related skills through continuing education is provided to regular full-time and part-time employees who have completed one full year of employment. Employees who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity must submit a plan to his/her supervisor for approval.

Up to five days a year will normally be granted to each employee for continuing education. Financial assistance may be made available by the employing agency for tuition, books, travel, lodging and meals in accordance with the CFA travel reimbursement policy.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER AND LOCAL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

As used in this policy, inclement weather generally refers to conditions such as snow, tornadoes, floods, etc. Local emergency generally refers to sustained power outages and downed technology services due to weather, as well as other conditions that substantially interrupt an employee's ability to conduct their work duties. At any given time, this policy may apply to certain employees, but not others, due to varying area conditions in the workplace or home location, as it may depend on relevant conditions in the diverse work bases throughout the State. The direct supervisor will make the decision about office closings, in consultation with the Coordinator of HR (who will work to ensure equitable treatment for employees in different departments/units at nearby locations, as applicable).

This policy is divided into two sections – one for employees who typically work at a UM Conference property and must travel to their workplace, and one for those employees who typically work remotely from another work location, such as from home.

### **Employees who work at a UM Conference property**

If inclement weather or local emergency situations call for closing of the Conference property, so that employees are sent home for the day or are notified not to come into the office, as determined by the supervisor in consultation with the Coordinator of HR, the non-exempt employee will receive hourly base pay (at regular rate of pay times the number of hours missed) for the day. Exempt employees will receive their regular salary for that day. Typically, inclement weather emergency pay will not last more than five (5) days.

### **Employees who work remotely**

If weather or other emergency situations, such as weather-related sustained power outages or

downed technology services, prevent remote working, the employee will receive weather/emergency pay for the number of hours missed in the workday, assuming non-technology-based work is unavailable for the employee. (This includes employees who normally work in the office but happen to be working remotely on an emergency related day.) Again, this work time would be paid at the employee's base wages times the number of hours missed. In this situation, the employee should contact their supervisor to inform them of the outage. The supervisor, in consultation with the Coordinator of HR, will determine whether this request is approved and inform the employee. Typically, an inclement weather emergency will not last more than five (5) days.

### **Process**

For employees working at a UM Conference property, the supervisor, or his/her designate(s), will notify employees of an office closure, a continuation of closure and/or a required return to the office.

For employees who work remotely, if the home/work location is subject to sustained power outages or technology outages due to weather, the employee should notify their direct supervisor, to advise him/her of the outage, and gain pre-approval for claiming weather-related emergency pay. The employee shall keep the supervisor advised of the continuance or cessation of the power/technology outages in subsequent days. The supervisor may require documentation of the outages from the employee(s).

## **TERMINATION, LAY-OFF AND RETIREMENT**

Even though employees of the MC are "at will employees", the following is recommended as treatment befitting The United Methodist Church:

### **Employee Resignation**

When resigning, the employee is requested to provide written notice to the supervisor at least two weeks before his/her final day of work. The supervisor shall determine whether the employee shall finish the two-week notification period or be released with wages paid through the two-week period.

Abandonment, or non-approved absence from work, is considered a voluntary resignation.

### **Involuntary Termination**

Should it become necessary to terminate a regular, full-time employee due to a workforce reduction through no fault of the employee, the supervisor will provide written notice to the employee affected at least two weeks before the effective termination date.

Regular full-time employees subject to a workforce reduction will receive a severance offer, based on anniversary date of hire as follows:

- Ten (10) days wages shall be paid if the employee has completed one (1) year, but less than four (4) years' service;
- Twenty (20) days wages shall be paid if the employee has completed four (4) through nine (9) years' service;
- Forty (40) days wages shall be paid if the employee has completed ten (10) or more years' service.

The employee must sign a Confidential Severance Agreement and General Release in order to receive the severance pay offered.

Employees terminated by the employing agency for any other reason, including for misconduct or performance issues, may not be provided notice and will not be offered severance.

When clergy are involved in a potential termination or lay-off, consultation must first take place with the Appointive Cabinet.

**Retirement**

On his/her date of hire, all eligible, regular employees are enrolled in the pension program of Wespeth Benefits & Investments. Details of the plan are available from the Conference Benefits Office.

Eligible retired persons shall have a portion of his/her health care premiums paid by the MC in accordance with the rate established by the MC and contained in the Pension and Health Care Policy of the MC, as it may from time to time be established and re-established. The retired employee will be responsible for the other part of the premium.

All active and retired employees must enroll in Medicare at age 65, or the earliest date of eligibility. Active employees must enroll in Medicare Part A. Retirees must enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. See the Conference Health Care Plan for more information.

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**ADDENDUM 1**  
**PROCESS FOR CONCERN AND ISSUE RESOLUTION**

The purpose of a concerns and issues policy and procedure is to ensure just treatment of all employees and to resolve problems so that constructive working relationships and an effective working environment may be maintained for the benefit of all. Resolution of differences should be accomplished expeditiously and at the lowest level possible by all parties concerned.

Employees will be protected from retaliation for having filed a concern or issue. All persons involved in the concerns and issues process investigation will be advised by the Coordinator of Human Resources (HR) or the chair of the Conference Human Resources Committee against intimidation or retaliation. Employees who believe they have experienced negative employment repercussions as a result of having filed a concern and issue should immediately report their concern to their supervisor. If the issue cannot safely be reported to the supervisor, the Coordinator of HR should be informed. If disciplinary action results from the concern and issue, the concerned individual shall be informed that the matter has been resolved, but shall not be informed of the specific discipline.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to terminate the at-will employment status of conference employees. All resolutions and agreements will not be binding on the Annual Conference.

**PROCEDURE:** Concerns and issues not forwarded within the specified time limit at each level shall be considered settled upon the basis of the decision last rendered unless both parties agree in writing to extend such time limit.

**Step 1 (informal)**

Employees are encouraged to resolve employment concerns at the lowest level possible. If possible, employees should discuss the matter with the person with whom they have issue in an effort to resolve the situation. The supervisor, Coordinator of HR, or the Conference HR Committee chair will provide conciliatory assistance on request when a direct approach does not seem feasible. Employees are expected to initiate Level I within ten (10) days of the time that they first knew or should have known of the concern.

**Step 2 (formal)**

1. If an informal procedure does not result in satisfactory resolution, the employee shall put the concern and issue in writing to the immediate supervisor providing the information below within ten (10) working days of the employee's attempt to achieve informal resolution, but no later than twenty (20) working days following the employee's knowledge of the circumstances giving rise to the concern and issue.

The written concern and issue must clearly state the following:

1. Name of grievant.
  2. Date.
  3. Alleged date of incident(s).
  4. Description of concerns and issues (facts).
  5. Policy violated (if relevant).
  6. Names of other parties that may have relevant information.
  7. Relief sought.
2. If the individual with whom the employee has a dispute is the employee's supervisor, the employee may initiate the formal concerns and issues at Step 3.
  3. The supervisor shall meet with the employee within five (5) working days of receipt of the concerns and issues. The supervisor shall provide the employee with a written response within five (5) working days following that meeting.
  4. If the aggrieved is a clergy person, the process for complaint is section XV of *The Book of Discipline of The*

**Step 3 (formal)**

The employee may appeal the decision of the supervisor to the Coordinator of HR providing the information below within the next five (5) working days, if the employee believes there were relevant facts not considered or erroneous conclusions that resulted in the supervisor's decision. As early as possible and no later than one (1) month after receiving the appeal, the Coordinator of HR shall begin an examination of the evidence and (potentially) hear testimony and witnesses related to the complaint. The conclusions will be discussed with the chair of the Conference HR Committee once the investigation is completed. It is recommended that the investigation be completed within ten (10) working days and a written decision presented, which shall be final and binding.

The written appeal must clearly explain, in detail, the basis for the appeal. Include all the original information the information above in Step 2. And then provide the basis for the appeal. The basis for the appeal must address one or more of the following, stating all relevant facts to support the assertion:

1. Failure to obtain or consider relevant information.
2. Failure to comply with agency policy.
3. Failure to follow appropriate investigative procedures.
4. Failure to render appropriate, reasonable or just decision.
5. Failure to support decision with evidence.
6. Relevant information unavailable at time of original meeting to consider the complaint.

**Step 4**

At the discretion of the Coordinator of HR, in the spirit of seeking reconciliation, the parties may agree to participate in further dispute resolution through mutual discussion, mediation, binding arbitration or involvement of relevant church officials. In the absence thereof, the decision of the agency shall be deemed final.