

GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE
Of
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

January 1, 2021

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Purpose

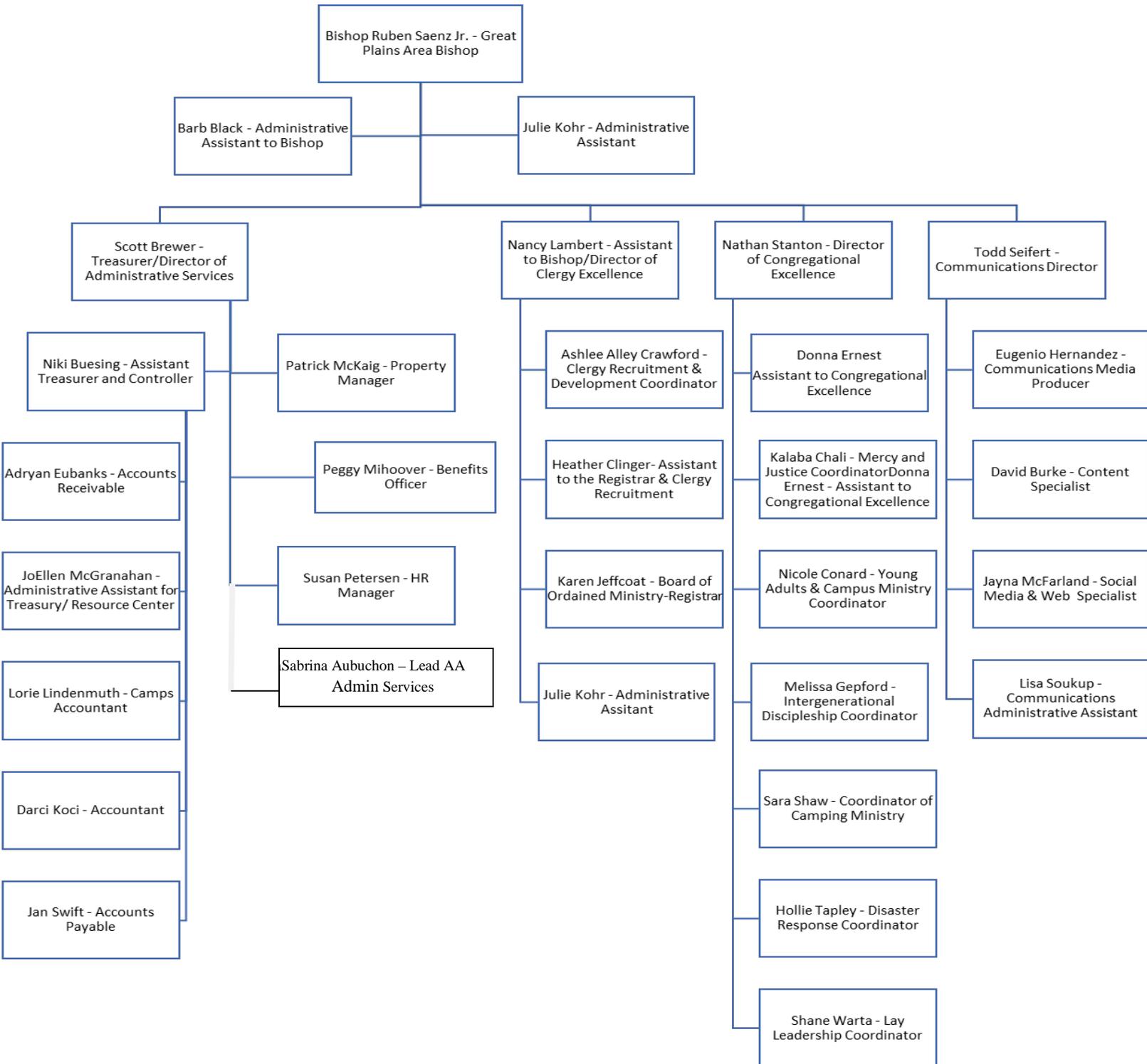
The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church states that “The purpose of the Annual Conference is to make disciples for Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.” The Great Plains Conference functions in the connectional system of the United Methodist Church as a link between the local church and the denomination.

The Great Plains Conference is incorporated as a Not-for-profit religious corporation according to the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c) (3).

The Conference is organized around four ministry areas. The ministry areas are:

- Episcopal Office
- Assistant to the Bishop / Director of Clergy Excellence
- Director of Congregational Excellence
- Treasurer / Director of Administrative Services

Great Plains Organizational Chart



Personnel Policies

These personnel policies are adopted by the Uniting Conference of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference (GPUMC) and will be effective January 1, 2021. Revisions to the policies after January 1, 2021 shall be proposed by the Personnel Committee and approved by the Connecting Council.

I. Open Door Policy

Good communications and feedback within any organization are important. Beyond the day-to-day interaction among Great Plains United Methodist Conference (GPUMC) staff, the GPUMC encourages an “open door” atmosphere between every supervisory person and those under one’s supervision. This means that an employee of the GPUMC should feel free to discuss with his or her immediate supervisor, any personal employment situation, suggest additions or amendments to current policies and procedures; bringing new innovative ideas related to the work, providing a cost savings that the GPUMC might take, or anything that might help the GPUMC better achieve its purposes and meet its responsibilities to the Annual Conference and all its many connectional parts. Many of these items will come up in staff meetings or in the normal course of daily GPUMC activities. However, there may be occasions or subjects that an employee may wish to discuss with his or her immediate supervisor, one-on-one. The employee needs only request and schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

II. At - Will Employment

All employees of the GPUMC are employed at their own will and at the will of the GPUMC, and are subject to termination at any time, for any reason, and with or without cause or notice. Similarly, employees may terminate their employment with the GPUMC at any time, for any reason, and with or without cause or notice. The employee specifically states and understands that the policies set forth in this Handbook do not limit this policy in any way or constitute a contract.

III. Equal Employment Opportunity

The GPUMC maintains a strong policy of equal employment opportunity. We ensure equal opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment, subject to our rights as a religious organization. Our equal employment opportunity philosophy applies to all aspects of employment with the GPUMC including recruiting, hiring, training, transfer, promotion, job benefits, pay, dismissal, educational assistance, and social and recreational activities.

Applicants and employees will be evaluated solely based on their conduct, their compliance with the GPUMC policies and legitimate expectations, and their performance.

We also believe in the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That Act prohibits employers from unlawfully discriminating against employees or job applicants with disabilities when making employment decisions. We will provide reasonable accommodation to otherwise qualified disabled employees or applicants.

IV. Background Checks

It is the policy of the Conference to perform pre-employment background checks through Safe Gatherings. The purpose of performing these checks is to determine and/or confirm, within appropriate legal and professional limits, the qualifications and suitability of a candidate for a particular position for which the candidate is being considered. The candidate will be required to sign appropriate authorizations and consents prior to performing the background check. In addition to performing background checks on all candidates for employment, background checks may be performed when an employee changes positions within the GPUMC for any additional required background checks for that position that was not done previously.

The components of each candidate's background check will depend on the position. Depending on the particular position, the GPUMC performs any or all of the following background checks:

1. Identity and address related searches
2. Various types of criminal background checks (including sexual offender)
3. Employment credit checks
4. Driving record
5. Education
6. Prior employment
7. Professional license verifications

The GPUMC complies with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and similar state FCRA laws in the jurisdictions in which the GPUMC does business, federal and state Equal Opportunity laws, and all other applicable legal authority that affects the performing of pre-employment background checks.

The results of the pre-employment background check are confidential and are not shared with staff members of the Conference except on a strict "Need to Know" basis.

V. Safety in the Workplace

Safety is everyone's responsibility and the GPUMC expects its employees to conduct themselves in a safe manner. The use of good judgment and common sense in matters of safety while following reasonable safeguards will help ensure safe working conditions and support the safe and efficient development of all work activities.

Worker's Compensation Insurance is provided to cover on-the-job injuries or illnesses, which result in lost time and/or medical treatment. The GPUMC pays the full cost of Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage. Any injury occurring while on the job, or any job-related illness must be promptly reported to the employee's supervisor.

VI. Information Technology Systems

The GPUMC is committed to providing an environment that encourages the use of computers and electronic communications as essential tools to support the Conference's ministry of administration. In utilizing the GPUMC's computers and electronic communications systems including, but not limited to, electronic mail and access to the Internet, it is important for all employees ("Users") to be aware of the GPUMC's policy

regarding responsible use. It is the responsibility of each User to ensure that this technology is used for proper business purposes and in a manner, that:

1. is responsible, professional, and legal;
2. does not compromise the confidentiality of proprietary or other sensitive information;
3. does not compromise the security of the Great Plains Conference's computer resources;
4. is consistent with good stewardship and the mission and ministry of the Conference.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the appropriate use of computer resources, to monitor and maintain productivity of employees, to assist in preventing harm to the interests of the GPUMC and its employees, and to prevent the violation of various state and federal laws. The GPUMC adheres to all licensing and authorization agreements in its use of software.

The GPUMC **does not**:

1. Allow a single license to be loaded into multiple computers or a server.
2. Make, distribute, or sell copies that appear to be from an unauthorized source.
3. Rent software without permission from the copyright holder.
4. Distribute or sell software that has been separated from the products with which it was intended to have been bundled.
5. Download copyrighted software from the Internet or bulletin boards without permission from the copyright holder.

Managers and employees of the GPUMC are educated about copyright law. Violation of the software policy will result in disciplinary action and/or termination. Computers are audited for illegal software.

No Privacy

Users do not have a personal privacy right in any matter created, received, sent, or stored on the GPUMC's computer resources, whether or not the matter is designated as private or confidential. The GPUMC reserves the right to access all computer resources for the purpose of supporting its mission and ministry, assuring compliance with statutory requirements, as well as internal policies supporting the performance of internal investigations, and assisting with the management of the GPUMC 's information systems.

All aspects of the GPUMC 's computer, technology and communications systems, including but not limited to hardware, software, and all files and message contents are the property of the GPUMC. The computer, technology and communications systems, including e-mail and Internet access, are business tools provided by the GPUMC, which should be used for business purposes only.

The GPUMC reserves the right to monitor and review e-mail messages and Internet access without prior notice. This includes the right to monitor Internet sites visited, duration of employee's Internet use and files viewed, accessed or downloaded. E-mail messages and Internet access are not private, and employees should not consider their e- mail messages and Internet access to be private. An employee's access code or password does not give him or her any right to privacy with respect to using the agency's e-mail and Internet systems.

Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. An employee who discovers a violation of this policy is expected to report it to the Director of Administrative Services or the Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee.

Internet Access (General)

The GPUMC provides the ability to access the Internet through an Internet browser. GPUMC employees designated to have access to the Internet are required to use their access to the Internet in a legal, responsible and informed way, conforming to network etiquette, customs and courtesies. Internet e-mail access/usage is subject to the GPUMC 's policies and guidelines related to e-mail. GPUMC management will determine:

1. The extent to which an employee may use the Internet to accomplish job responsibilities; any questions about the appropriateness of a particular use of the Internet should be discussed with the employee's supervisor;
2. The appropriateness of using the Internet for professional contacts and career development activities during office hours;
3. Training required of staff using the Internet and work time that may be used to practice/acquire skills needed to effectively access and uses the Internet.

The Internet is not a secure communication channel and should not be used for sending or receiving confidential or sensitive information without appropriate security measures.

Use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct. Misuse of Internet access by any employee may result in other disciplinary action, including but not limited to, termination of employment.

Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to: use of inappropriate or offensive or abusive language in either public or private messages; unlawful activities; gambling; defamation; infringement of copyrights; misrepresentation of oneself or the GPUMC; logging onto or accessing obscene, pornographic, sexually explicit, racist or violent sites; pirating software or transmitting software programs or other copyrighted or trademarked material; engaging in transactions or activity for personal financial gain; jeopardizing the GPUMC 's tax exempt status; creating unauthorized contractual liability for the GPUMC; violating any GPUMC policy or procedure; engaging in any activity or communication that is inconsistent with norms of professional and business conduct; and sending messages that might result in congestion or disruption of networks and systems.

Employees must abide by security policies, procedures and guidelines in their use of the Internet, and are to refrain from practices, which might jeopardize the GPUMC 's computers, data, network, systems security or work in general. Employees must guard against computer viruses and security breaches of any kind. Employees who use the Internet:

1. May not transfer or install any software or files from the Internet to any Conference computers or information systems except in consultation with appropriate technical staff (i.e. no downloading of software, programs, games, etc.)
2. May not use the Internet to connect to secure accounts (accounts requiring proprietary password login) on computer systems outside the Conference network without prior approval from your supervisor.

Personal Use

The Internet is not "free." Valuable and scarce resources are used to establish, operate and maintain the GPUMC 's access to the Internet including the valuable use of staff time needed to make inquiries, send and

receive e-mail, and participate in discussion groups on the Internet. All employees are expected to be good stewards in the use of these valuable resources. Personal use may be allowed in consultation with a supervisor. Personal use should not occur during working hours.

Electronic Discussion Groups, Telnet and FTP

Staff members who participate in electronic discussion groups (listservs, Usenet news groups, etc.) must abide by the rules and etiquette of those groups. When using Telnet or FTP (File Transfer Protocol) to access remote computer systems, users must remember they are guests on another organization's machine.

All policies (i.e., use, security, conduct and disciplinary action) outlined for users of e-mail and Internet also apply to Electronic Discussion Groups, etc.

Electronic Mail

Electronic mail (e-mail) has been established for purposes related to the mission of the GPUMC. The GPUMC offers the use of e-mail by its employees as an opportunity to enhance their ability to carry out their job responsibilities. Electronic communications, including internal and Internet e-mail, other forms of electronic media and all of their component parts, such as hardware, software, messages and other data ("e-mail"), are the property of the GPUMC. Such personal use does not make the communication private, and the employee should have no expectation of privacy for such use. It may be used for personal purposes only in accordance with GPUMC guidelines and may never be used in any way that may be disruptive or offensive to others. E-mail may not be used to solicit participation in any activity not directly related to or sponsored by the GPUMC (i.e., personal, religious, political or charitable causes).

E-mail is to be used as a tool. E-mail should be drafted with the same thought and concern devoted to written or verbal communications, such as letters and memoranda. The e-mail system should not be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages. Users must identify themselves with their full e-mail address or legal name. The GPUMC neither assumes nor shares responsibility for incidents of harassment, slander, malice, or defamation of character, copyright violations, or any civil or criminal actions that occur or are alleged to have occurred through any personal or inappropriate use of e-mail. The responsibility for and defense against such actions or claims is solely that of the individual.

E-mail is not a private, confidential communication. The confidentiality of any message should not be assumed. Messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve nor read any e-mail messages that are not sent to them. Any exception to this policy must receive prior approval from the employee's supervisor. In the use of e-mail, employees should not use pass codes, access a file, nor retrieve any stored information unless authorized to do so. All computer pass codes must be provided to supervisors and the Director of Administrative Services. No passcode may be used that is unknown to the GPUMC.

The GPUMC reserves the right to access and disclose all messages, for any purpose, at any time for legitimate GPUMC reasons without the permission of the employee.

VII. Nepotism

Prospective employees shall not be interviewed or hired by an immediate relative currently employed by the GPUMC, nor shall an immediate relative who is also employed by the GPUMC supervise an employee. Related employees shall not serve in positions where they may directly or indirectly influence decisions related to

each other. Their respective positions shall not involve related financial transactions. The GPUMC Personnel Committee must authorize any exceptions to this policy prior to employment.

A relative is defined as follows: Husband/wife, son/daughter, father/mother, brother/sister, grandson/granddaughter, and grandfather/grandmother, father-in-law/mother-in-law, son-in-law/daughter-in-law, brother-in-law/sister-in-law, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew with adopted, step or half relationships treated as full relationships.

VIII. Other Employment

When employment is accepted with the GPUMC, the first responsibility is to the GPUMC and efficiently performing assigned duties. The GPUMC depends on employees to devote their full attention and effort to the duties to which they have been assigned. The GPUMC does not object to employees' accepting outside work, as long as it does not:

- conflict or appear to conflict with the interests of the Conference;
- interfere with regular Conference work hours;
- affect the efficient performance of regular duties with the Conference; or
- cause the employee to be an accident hazard to self or co-workers through fatigue, worry or other conditions.

Outside employment is not considered an excuse for poor attendance, absenteeism, tardiness, or refusal to work overtime if required. Employees are expected to discuss any outside employment with their supervisors. Non-job-related, voluntary activities shall be done on the employee's own time.

IX. Sexual Ethics/Harassment

A. Sexual Ethics Policy for Staff and Volunteers of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference

Statement of Policy

Staff members and volunteers of the Conference shall not engage in sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

Theological Foundation

God creates all people. God intends all people to have worth and dignity in their relationships. We are one connected body, and when one part of the body is injured physically, emotionally or spiritually, the entire body is rendered less than intended by God. Misconduct of a sexual nature of any kind violates a person's wholeness and is an unjust use of status and power and a sinful behavior against God and one another.

The Scripture witnesses to a God who brings justice, mercy and grace. The Church is called to express God's love in concrete actions of compassion and healing for all God's people.

Definitions

1. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse means unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, sexual contact or sexualized behavior and may include, by example, touching, fondling, other physical contact and sexual relations.

2. Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demanding, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination based on gender.

Implementation

Staff members and volunteers of the GPUMC shall be provided a copy of this policy and shall receive training information to assist in the understanding and implementation of this policy.

Making a Complaint

People who have knowledge of a possible violation of this policy by staff members or volunteer may report the same to the Human Resources Manager. Upon any complaint, the GPUMC will investigate, consider any response, and take action to seek justice.

B. Workplace Harassment

The GPUMC is committed to providing a work environment that ensures that every employee is treated with dignity and respect and afforded equitable treatment.

The GPUMC is committed to promoting a work environment that is conducive to the professional growth of its employees, provides a professional atmosphere and promotes equality of opportunity.

The GPUMC is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure that employees are not subject to harassment and will not tolerate any form of harassment.

The law guarantees employees the right to employment in a workplace free from illegal harassment.

Harassment is any physical or verbal abuse of a person because of race, religion, age, gender, disability or any other legally protected status. Harassment in the workplace can further be clarified as any conduct that creates significant anguish to another person, with the intent to bother, scare or emotionally abuse.

There are other federal and state harassment laws that further outline what does and does not constitute harassment for various situations.

Resolution/Investigation

1. Informal Resolution Options

When an incident of harassment occurs, communicate your disapproval and objections immediately to the harasser and request the harasser to stop.

If the harasser does not stop or you are not comfortable with addressing the harasser directly, notify your supervisor of the harassment, and the nature of the harassment. The GPUMC will provide advice and support as requested to undertake any investigation necessary to resolve the matter.

2. Complaints

Any staff member of the GPUMC with a harassment concern not satisfied with the informal resolution options or who has exhausted all the options may bring a formal written complaint to the Human Resources Manager. All such complaints will be promptly investigated.

If after an investigation it is determined that an allegation of harassment is valid, appropriate action will be taken.

Corrective action may include any of the following:

- a. Formal apology;
- b. Counseling;
- c. Written warning in the employee's personnel file;
- d. Change of work assignment;
- e. Suspension or discharge of employee

Confidentiality

The GPUMC understands that it is difficult to come forward with a complaint of harassment and recognizes the complainant's interest in keeping the matter confidential.

All records of complaints, including contents of meetings, interviews, results of investigations and other relevant material will be kept as confidential as possible by the GPUMC except where disclosure is required (civil lawsuits or human rights case).

No Retaliation

The GPUMC is committed to ensuring that no staff member who brings forward a harassment concern is subject to any form of retaliation. Any act of retaliation will be viewed as a disciplinable matter.

X. Drug and Alcohol Abuse

To ensure the health and safety of the employees and the workplace, the GPUMC expects employees to report to work able to perform their job free from the effects of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the abuse of controlled substance, which can impair job performance. Controlled substances include prescribed drugs not being used for prescribed purposes or in a prescribed manner.

The GPUMC forbids the possession, sale or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on GPUMC property.

The GPUMC recognizes alcohol, drug, and substance abuse and dependency as an illness and major health problem. The GPUMC provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through the GPUMC health insurance for employees to deal with substance abuse and other personal problems that can affect work performance.

Our commitment is to help employees remain productive members of our team. Employees needing assistance to access EAP benefits or information regarding counseling or substance abuse programs should contact the GPUMC Human Resources Manager. Conscientious efforts to seek help will not jeopardize any employee's job or be noted in any personnel record.

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination.

XI. Code of Conduct

It is not only fair play, but also good business to observe the rules of any game, and the same is true of the necessary rules of the GPUMC. Employees are expected to behave in a mature, responsible, and professional manner with their best efforts made on behalf of the GPUMC. Employees are hired to serve the

church, the conference, and the denomination. All employees need to be kind, sympathetic, and empathetic to all people who contact the office.

Employees are expected to perform their duties with care and attention to the members' needs as well as the GPUMC 's quality standards and requirements. Employees' acts, even if unintentional, which fail to reflect these standards constitute workplace misconduct. Violations of work rules, instances of unacceptable behavior or misconduct, poor performance, or the failure to meet all quality and production standards will subject employees to discipline. The decision as to whether conduct warrants discipline, and if so, the nature of the discipline up to and including termination is solely with the GPUMC. This applies whether the conduct is a first offense or not.

Not all types of misconduct and responses can be enumerated. The ultimate determination as to what constitutes a violation of work rules, workplace misconduct or unacceptable behavior and what discipline will be used will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and rests in the discretion of the GPUMC.

The following, while not to be considered exclusive, are strictly prohibited on GPUMC property: alcoholic beverages, weapons, explosives, illegal or dangerous drugs and gambling.

This policy in no way alters the at-will relationship between the employee and the GPUMC. Statements or actions of the GPUMC that it will be fair or that it has a reason for its actions or the implementation of discipline shall not be construed as altering the at-will relationship of the employee and the GPUMC. Employees and the GPUMC mutually understand that a Court shall not construe any statements or actions (except as stated in writing and signed by both the employee and the GPUMC) as altering the at-will relationship.

A. **Ethics Statement - General Principles**

1. *Application*. The General Principles and Standards of Conduct, apply to all Conference employees in all matters relating to the performance of their duties and responsibilities in the operation of the Conference
2. *Stewardship and fiduciary responsibility*. God entrusts all funds and property received and administered by employees of the Conference to them through the faithful financial support of Church members and friends. The highest degree of Christian stewardship and fiduciary responsibility is expected of all employees, including to the receiving, reporting and use of funds and property.
3. *Integrity*. Integrity should be the centerpiece of hiring, promotion, leadership, performance measurement and reward, communication, and training.

B. **Standards of Conduct**

1. *Duty of Loyalty*. Each employee owes a duty of loyalty to The United Methodist Church and to the Conference, which duty shall mean acting in the best interest of the Church and the Conference. That duty should be acted on as reflected by the following paragraphs in this Standards of Conduct section.
2. *Conflicts of Interest*. All employees must avoid conflicts of interest.
 - a. Conflicts of interest shall mean, with respect to employees of the Conference: any situation in which the employee by virtue of a financial interest or of some other personal interest, present

- or potential, directly or remotely, may be influenced or appear to be influenced in decision making or business dealing by any motive or desire for personal advantage other than the success and well-being of the Church or of the Conference.
- b. All present and potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed: a) if known, in advance of any meeting, business transaction or other activity at which the issue may be discussed or on which the issue may have a bearing on the employee's approach to the issue, whether directly or indirectly; or b) if not known in advance, when the actual, potential conflict becomes apparent. Disclosure must be made to the person in charge of the meeting or activity and to the full meeting, or to the employee's supervisor, as appropriate. The employee should recuse him/herself from the room to avoid all discussion, voting and deliberation on the issue. All such actions should be recorded in any minutes or records kept. Following full disclosure of the present or potential conflict, the board or equivalent may decide that no conflict of interest exists and invite the participation of the employee. When in doubt, the employee should assume there might be a conflict.
 - c. All employees should likewise disclose matters and relationships, which have the potential for giving rise to the appearance of a conflict in business dealings with the Conference. Examples include, among others, financial and/or leadership roles with vendors and other organizations doing business with the Conference.
 - d. Business dealings with friends and family will not be engaged in because of the potential for inferences of tangible or intangible personal advantage and the resultant appearance of impropriety.
 - e. To avoid appearances of impropriety, employees will not accept any gifts, gratuities and hospitality such as free travel, hotel or residential rooms and meals from any people or organizations that sells, delivers or receives any goods, materials, services to or from the Conference. All individual gifts will be reported to the appropriate Conference representative (see Section B.2.b). Exempt from this section are gifts that primarily benefit the Conference and not an individual, such as gifts of hospitality given to the Conference by hotels or other businesses in exchange for Conference business.
 - f. Employees, in all relationships with the Conference, should place the Church and the Conference ahead of personal advantage, whether the advantage is of a financial nature or whether it arises from a desire for other personal advancement, such as promotion.
3. Confidentiality. Employees shall not disclose information about the Conference's activities unless the information is already known to the public or becomes a matter of public record. Action and activities taken in closed meeting sessions will be handled in accordance with *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church-2012*, ¶721.
 4. Duty of care. The obligation of good stewardship is imposed on employees and requires that they act first in the best interests of the Church, and then in the best interests of the Conference, at all times. The duty requires them to:
 - a. Exercise all reasonable efforts to inform themselves of the mission and ministry of the

- Conference, of the nature of the fiduciary duty owed to The United Methodist Church and to the Conference, of their duties and responsibilities, and of the issues that come before them, so that they can be effective and efficient employees through their service to The United Methodist Church as represented by the Conference;
- b. Act as a reasonably prudent employee would act under the same or similar circumstances;
 - c. Inform themselves reasonably of matters about which they make decisions;
 - d. Exercise their independent judgment.
5. *Duty to Disclose*. Employees have a duty to disclose breaches of fiduciary duty, whether by themselves or by others. Likewise, concerns about the appearance or possibility of breaches should be reported. Care must always be taken not to be accusatory. Breaches may be reported to the employee's supervisor or Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee who is pledged to confidentiality.
 6. *Nature of Disclosures*. All disclosures of the nature described in section B-2 will be made with candor and openness. All responses to inquiries by legal counsel and by external and internal auditors will be full, complete, and directly responsive.

XII. Assisting Employees with Life-Threatening Illnesses

The Conference recognizes that employees with life-threatening illnesses including but not limited to cancer, heart disease, and AIDS may not be covered by the short-term and long-term disability benefits. As long as an employee is able to meet acceptable performance standards, and medical evidence indicates that his/her condition is not a threat to self or others, employees with life-threatening illnesses should be treated consistently with other employees. Education, counseling, referrals to agencies, and benefit consultation to assist employees in effectively managing health, leave and other benefits is available through the GPUMC Senior Benefits Officer.

The GPUMC seeks to provide a safe work environment for all employees. Therefore, precautions should be taken to ensure that an employee's condition does not present a health and/or safety threat to self or to other employees. The immediate supervisor of an employee with a life-threatening illness will be responsible for determining that the employee's condition does not present such a threat. An employee may be required to provide a medical report from the attending physician for assisting the supervisor in making this determination.

There is no medical basis for employees' refusing to work with fellow employees or agency clients with life-threatening illnesses. The concerns of employees who fear fellow workers or agency clients with life-threatening illness will be taken seriously and addressed with appropriate information. Where such measures are unsuccessful and where the administration determines an employee's refusal or threat of refusal to work with an employee or GPUMC client is impeding and disrupting the GPUMC's work, the employee's supervisor will consider appropriate corrective or disciplinary action against the threatening or disruptive employee(s). Such disciplinary action may include transfer and/or dismissal from employment.

XIII. Confidentiality

The GPUMC will treat all medical information with the confidentiality as required by the law (HIPAA).

XIV. Honoraria

Official travel of the staff of the GPUMC shall be interpreted to include all travel that is necessary in the performance of official duties directly related to the conference functions. No staff person shall accept honoraria for such official duties.

XV. Payroll Advance/Loans

The GPUMC will not provide payroll advances or extended credit to staff members.

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Operating Rules & Procedures

Covered Employees

The Personnel Committee recommends updates to the personnel policies, provides for a favorable work environment, and recommends to the Annual Conference budgets for personnel and guidelines for salary setting.

The policies described in the Handbook are decision-making guidelines, which require discretion on the part of the Personnel Committee. No Handbook can anticipate every question or circumstance about every employment issue.

Revisions to the policies shall be proposed by the Personnel Committee and approved by the Connecting Council. This Handbook is not intended to be a contract or enforceable promise of employment of any specific term, condition or duration of employment between the GPUMC and employees but is solely intended to give employees a general description of the working conditions at the Conference.

The information in this Handbook applies to the lay staff of the GPUMC. Clergy members that are appointed to staff positions of the GPUMC are governed by *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* and the GPUMC Standing Rules.

I. Classification of Employees

For purpose of salary administration, overtime and benefits the Conference classifies its employees as follows:

Exempt: For common understanding, but not necessarily legal interpretation, an exempt position is one with administrative, supervisory, or professional responsibilities that may require unusual work hours and meetings of schedules, travel and extended work hours. Such positions are exempt from overtime compensation.

Non-exempt: For common understanding but not necessarily legal interpretation, a non-exempt position is one in which a specific number of hours is worked. Non-exempt employees will be paid overtime compensation in accordance with applicable law. Compensation will be provided for additional time worked only when the additional time is approved in advance.

Fulltime: Normal fulltime positions are 40 (forty) hours per workweek, although positions requiring a minimum of 30 (thirty) hours of work per week are considered fulltime for benefit purposes, while vacation and sick leave are prorated by the number of hours worked.

Part-time: Positions with less than 30 (thirty) hours of work per week are considered part-time.

Temporary or Occasional Employees: People employed on an intermittent basis or for a specified number of hours, days or months, or until a specified date (not eligible for benefits).

II. Recruitment

The Conference generally attempts to fill new and vacant positions from within the Conference by promoting qualified employees.

The recruitment process may also include public announcements of vacancies through various news and electronic media, church bulletins, professional organizations, related agencies, and groups with special access to qualified women and racial ethnic minority people who may be potential applicants.

The Conference web site and on-line recruitment media will also be used to post vacancies.

III. Compensation Policies

Compensation is determined at a monthly rate for salaried personnel or by an amount per hour for hourly personnel.

- A. **Pay Period:** For all employees, the standard pay period is twice monthly, with payday occurring on the 15th and the last day of the month (30th or 31st). When pay days falls on a weekend or holiday, paychecks will be distributed on the last working day prior to the weekend or holiday.
- B. **Work schedule:** The workweek is a 40 (forty) hour week with an hour unpaid lunch. The Conference office will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Employees who request and receive approval for alternate schedules may arrive earlier or leave later than these hours.
- C. **Breaks:** Non-exempt hourly employees receive a paid, 15-minute break in the morning and in the afternoon.
- D. **Wage Garnishment:** Garnishment of wages results when an unpaid creditor has taken the matter to court. A garnishment is legal permission for creditors to collect part of an employee's pay directly from the employer. Although the Conference does not wish to become involved in an employee's private matters, we are compelled by law to administer the court's orders.
- E. **Pay Increases:** The personnel committee determines and submits all staff salary budgets.
- F. **Payroll Advances:** The Conference will not provide payroll advances.
- G. **Time Records:** Non-exempt hourly employees are required to complete bi-monthly timesheets in the payroll processing system. Federal wage and hour regulations require an accurate record of hours worked. Immediate supervisor must approve timesheets.
- H. **Overtime:** While we do not encourage hourly employees to work from home or after normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 8-5), we understand there is a time and a place for everything. Should the need arise for hourly employees to work overtime, from home, or outside normal business hours, the employee should receive prior approval from their supervisor.

All hours worked from home must be recorded exactly as worked to ensure hourly employees are properly compensated for their work. Hourly employees who fail to report all time worked from home or after hours may be subject to disciplinary action.

I. Payroll Deductions: Earnings and payroll deductions are shown on a voucher with your check. Deductions required or requested are as follows:

Required by Federal & State	Authorized by Employee
Federal Income Tax	Medical Insurance
State Income Tax	Life Insurance
Social Security Tax	Vision Insurance
Medicare Tax	Dental Insurance
Garnishment/Wage Attachments	UMPIP Contributions
	H.S.A. Contributions
	Other Elections

J. Direct Deposit (Revised 1.1.19): The Conference provides for automatic deposit of payroll earnings when authorized to do so by the employee. On payday, these employees may log into the online payroll portal and view their pay stubs. Direct Deposit is encouraged. Should the employee not elect direct deposit, a pay card will be required.

IV. Business Casual Dress Code

The Conference’s objective in establishing a business casual dress code is to allow the staff to work comfortably in the workplace. Yet, we still need our staff to project a professional image for those we serve.

Because not all casual clothing is suitable for the office, these guidelines will help you determine what is appropriate to wear to work. Clothing that works for yard work, dance clubs, exercise sessions and sport contest may not be appropriate for a professional appearance at work.

Clothing that reveals too much cleavage, your stomach or your underwear is not appropriate for a place of business.

Generally, Fridays are considered as dress down days. On these days, jeans, and other more casual clothing, although never clothing potentially offensive to others, are allowed.

No dress code can be all-inclusive, nor can it cover all contingencies, so employees must exert a certain amount of judgment in their choice of clothing to wear to work. If you experience uncertainty about acceptable, professional business casual attire for work, please ask your supervisor.

V. Personnel Files (Revised 4.1.15)

A personnel file will be maintained on each employee in the Conference office under the custody of the Director of Administrative Services. For clergy on staff an additional personnel file will be maintained in that clergy staff person's District Superintendent's Office. For District Superintendents and Directors another personnel file will be maintained in the Bishop's Office. The personnel file will be maintained in such a manner as to protect the privacy of the employee. The Conference maintains those documents, which are, have been, or are intended to be used in determining a staff person's qualifications for employment, promotion, transfer, additional compensation, discharge, or other disciplinary action.

The employee shall have limited access to his/her own file as described below under the supervision of designated Conference personnel. Access is also available to those who have a "need-to-know" (e.g., Conference Personnel Committee, Bishop or Bishop's delegate).

This information is generally not to be released to a third party. In response to inquiries for references about employee's employment status, only the following information will be disclosed upon request: dates of employment, term and nature of employment. Salary information will be released only with written authorization from the employee.

VI. Contents of Personnel Files (Revised 4.1.15)

Generally, personnel files contain primarily such information as listed above. That is, documents which are, have been or are intended to be used in determining that staff person's qualifications for employment, promotion, transfer, additional compensation, discharge, or other disciplinary action.

- A. Each personnel file usually will include the following items, which are subject to inspection by employee:
- * Employment application
 - * Résumé (when appropriate)
 - * I-9 verification
 - * Plan participant enrollment forms (SPP, MPP, DBP, beneficiary forms, etc. and are kept in a separate file in the benefits administration office)
 - * Employment offer form (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file)
 - * Emergency notification form
 - * Performance appraisals (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file)
 - * Attendance calendars (used for employment transfer, promotion, evaluation, etc.)
 - * Employee benefit verification form
 - * Change of address forms
 - * Post-employment training
 - * Payroll information
 - * Salary history
- B. Documents that may be included in a staff person's personnel file but are not open to inspection by employee:

- * Letters of reference (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file)
- * Tests and results, except cumulative scores (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file)
- * Records that may be produced in a judicial proceeding as part of a pending claim between the employer and the staff person (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file)
- * Information used for management planning, bonuses, operational goals, expansion, future salary increases, job assignments, other wage treatments, development, closing, except when such material relates only to the staff person in question.

- * Information of a personal nature about a person other than the staff person that might be construed as an unwarranted invasion of that other person's privacy
- * Medical records (These records are kept in a separate file)
- * Records regarding an employer's investigation of alleged conduct (except when the Conference acts adversely based on information in those records) (for clergy kept in the DS's or Bishop's file).

All requests for copies of items in a personnel file shall be made in writing to the Director of Administrative Services (or to the DS or Bishop for items in a file held in their office).

VII. Transfers and Reassignments

Upon consultation, employees who are hired directly from another agency of the Church may retain benefits and service years common to the previous employing agency and the current agency, as agreed to by the Conference Personnel Committee and employee. (Refer to Personnel Policies – 1. Open Door).

VIII. Performance Evaluations (Revised 1.1.2019)

A performance evaluation is intended to provide a periodic means of appraising a staff person's performance on the job.

All employees will meet with their supervisor three times a year to review their performance. Approximately two weeks before the end of this period, the supervisor shall conduct a "Performance Evaluation" covering the staff person's performance during the period. The completed form will be included in the staff person's file.

1. If performance is satisfactory, this period will end, although the staff person continues to serve at the pleasure of the Conference. (See - Personnel Policies Section, 2. "At-Will Employment")
2. If performance is not satisfactory, a performance improvement plan may be put into place or the staff person may be terminated.

Employees will be evaluated utilizing the current "Performance Evaluation Form" by December 15th of each year. These reports will be placed in each employee's personnel file. Staff people will acknowledge their review in the online payroll portal system.

IX. Continuing Education or Individual Development Plan

Staff should be granted at least one week of continuing education per year or one month per quadrennium. The employee's supervisor or the Conference Personnel Committee must approve continuing education plans to ensure that absences do not impede job responsibilities. Time used for continuing education shall not be considered vacation. Continuing education vouchers will be paid only up to the amount budgeted for each staff person. In addition to registration/tuition, any travel, lodging or meals for a continuing education event will be charged to this budget line. Any amounts over the budgeted amount will be the personal responsibility of the staff person.

X. Professional Meetings

Staff is encouraged to attend the national and jurisdictional professional meetings that are related to their jobs. A maximum of two professional meetings per year may be attended as a part of regular work duties and not charged against continuing education leave.

XI. Staff Member Qualifications

All staff shall have at a minimum the following qualifications:

1. They shall be people who are sympathetic with the Christian faith and purposes of The United Methodist denomination;
2. They shall possess the special aptitudes, skills and capacities, which are required in their respective fields of work;
3. They shall be people who can win and hold the cooperation and goodwill of the people they serve as well as their associates;
4. They shall have the ability to maintain and keep confidences;
5. They shall be people who can demonstrate the capacity to learn and to improve their abilities.

XII. Record of Attendance and Absence (Revised 1.1.2019)

The employee is responsible for the maintenance of a record of attendance and absence in the online payroll portal system. In addition to providing a record of hours worked for payroll purposes, such record of attendance will be utilized in monitoring employee performance.

Hourly employees are required to accurately record all hours worked and submit these records to their supervisors who will submit time worked to the payroll department.

XIII. Termination and Resignation (Revised 1.1.2019)

A. Voluntary Termination (Resignations)

Should a staff person decide to leave the employ of the Conference, it is requested that at least two weeks written notice will be given. A written letter of resignation should be submitted to the supervisor with a copy to

the Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee stating the date of the resignation and including any additional comments the staff person may wish to make. This letter will be placed in the staff person's personnel file.

B. Involuntary Termination

Involuntary termination, pursuant to the at-will employment policy, can occur at any time, for any or no reason, with or without notice. Involuntary termination is the result of excessive absences and tardiness or unsatisfactory performance. These infractions are known to have adverse effect on the work output and morale of co-workers. Where involuntary termination is the result of excessive absences, tardiness or unsatisfactory performance, the following steps should be taken, when possible.

The staff person's supervisor will discuss the problem with the staff person. Expectations should be clear and precise.

If the problem persists, the appropriate director will consult with the Chairperson of the GPUMC Personnel Committee and GPUMC Chancellor. After consultation, the director will determine what course of action should be taken, including but not limited to termination.

An employee being considered for involuntary termination – except in the case of reorganization, substantial misconduct, or reasons other than correctible performance issues will be placed on performance improvement plan (PIP) and given an opportunity to correct the problem(s). However, the Conference reserves the right to discharge a staff person at any time without a performance improvement plan, or any of the steps set out above.

The Conference reserves the right to terminate the individual's employment at any time during the PIP period if the employee does not demonstrate substantial improvement.

C. Misconduct

Proper conduct is a necessity to assure an efficient, effective and safe working environment. Misconduct is grounds for immediate dismissal. This may include, but is not limited to theft, physical abuse, and verbal abuse, threatening people with bodily harm, gross insubordination, or criminal conduct.

XIV. First and Final Paycheck

When a full-time staff member is hired that elects health benefits, that employee will be charged for the remainder of the months premium from their start date.

When a staff person leaves the Conference, that person's final paycheck will be issued in accordance with the applicable Wage Payment Law. If that staff member has insurance benefits, they will continue through the end of the month and the employee will be charged for the month according to their FTE status.

XV. Complaint/Grievance Resolution (Revised 1.1.2019)

The Conference is committed to providing a working environment conducive to satisfactory work performance and free from discriminatory actions. To this end, the following formal complaint/grievance procedure has been established to assist in the effective resolution of problems arising from the employment relationship or environment. When an employee believes a condition of employment affecting him/her is unjust, inequitable, or a hindrance to effective performance of his/her employment responsibilities, or the employee feels subjected to discriminatory treatment by another employee, the employee should seek resolution through these

procedures without fear of coercion, discrimination or reprisal. Specific types and descriptions of discrimination are contained in other sections of this policy manual.

Any employee who has a complaint related to the employment relationship or work environment, or feels victimized by discriminatory conduct, should discuss the complaint with his/her immediate supervisor to attempt to resolve the matter. If the employee's immediate supervisor is the source of the alleged discrimination, the employee should report the problem to Human Resources Manager. The HR Manager will conduct any necessary or appropriate investigation and inform the employee of a decision based upon full and fair consideration of all the facts within five (5) working days of the initial discussion. The supervisor(s) will assure the decision is clearly communicated to the employee.

If the employee is satisfied with the decision, no additional action is required. If the employee is not satisfied, or if no decision is communicated to the employee within five (5) working days of the initial discussion, the employee may submit a written grievance to the next higher-level supervisor. In the event that the

next higher-level supervisor made the initial decision, the written grievance should be submitted to the Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee. The next higher-level supervisor, or the Committee Chairperson, will provide an answer to the employee within ten (10) working days of his/her written presentation of the grievance.

If the employee is dissatisfied with the solution provided by the next higher-level supervisor, he/she will have an additional ten (10) working days to appeal his/her grievance to the Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee. When the Chairperson receives the Grievance Statement, he/she will determine if the provisions of the Complaint/Grievance Resolution Procedure has been followed. If so, the Chairperson may:

- Talk with the employee to get further clarification of the problem.
- Talk with the immediate supervisor and next higher-level supervisor to get further clarification of the problem.
- If necessary, schedule a meeting with the employee and his/her supervisor(s).
- Present the grievance to the Conference Personnel Committee or get input on the matter from individual Committee members.

After careful consideration of all facts, but within (30) thirty working days, the Chairperson will render a final decision in writing to the employee. Any decision rendered in a problem situation by the Conference Personnel Committee Chairperson must be regarded as final and binding.

Retaliation for filing a complaint or for properly doing one's job is never acceptable. If an employee believes that he or she is a victim of retaliation, then that conduct should be reported in the same manner as if the employee was filing a complaint.

XVI. Workplace Violence

The Conference recognizes that a place of employment safe from violence or the fear of violence is fundamental to the health and well-being of staff. The policy of this Conference is that its staff should work in an environment free from physical attack, threats, and menacing or harassing behaviors.

As used in this policy, violence is defined to include, but not limited to, the following: homicide, assaults, threats, intimidation (harassment, yelling, following, bullying, overt incivility) and property damage.

At any facility of the Great Plains Conference, homicide, assaults, threats, intimidation, and property damage are always prohibited. Any employee who experiences or witnesses such acts, conduct, behavior, or communication must immediately call the police if appropriate, and/or contact his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Manager.

Any supervisor who receives a complaint of violence, assaults, threats, intimidation, or property damage or who has reason to suspect that these acts or behaviors are occurring, must immediately notify the Director of Administrative Services and the Human Resources Manager, except for the Treasurer's Office, which would notify HR and Personnel Chairs.

Upon being informed of an allegation of violence, assaults, threats, or intimidation, the matter will be investigated. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the Conference will determine how to respond. In the interim, the Conference will respond, as it deems appropriate.

Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will be taken in instances of misconduct as judged by the Conference. Employees who know of information about violence, assaults, threats, intimidation or harassment, but did not notify an appropriate person consistent with this procedure will also be subjected to appropriate discipline, up to and including termination.

Employees will not be retaliated by the Conference for reporting violence, threats, harassment, or property damage.

XVII. Weapons Policy

Possession of firearms, explosives or other dangerous or unauthorized materials, is prohibited in the workplace or while working off Conference property. The prohibition on carrying firearms while working applies even if the employee has a legal permit to carry such a weapon.

XVIII. Conference Credit Cards

Employees who incur frequent expenses for travel and other purposes may be provided a Conference credit card. The policy and procedures established by the Conference Treasurer and the Council on Finance and Administration govern the issue and use of such credit cards.

Employees that have been issued a Conference credit card will receive a copy of the policy and procedures, and a copy can be found in the policy manual in the Benefits Office.

XIX. Rental Cars for Conference Use

When a conference car is not available, and it is not practical to drive a personal car, the Conference will pay for a rental vehicle and related expenses. A rental vehicle may be used to and from airports while traveling when hotel shuttles are not available, and the cost of a cab is prohibitive.

XX. Conference Owned Vehicle Use (Revised 1.1.2020)

A Conference owned vehicle may be provided for Conference staff people based on the number of miles expected to be driven in the conduct of their job. The policy and procedures established by the Conference Treasurer and the Board of Trustees govern the use of Conference owned vehicles.

Employees will receive a copy of the policy and procedures, and a copy can be found in the policy manual in the Benefits Office. When a conference car is available, an employee must get prior approval from their director in order to receive reimbursement for driving their personal car instead of a conference car. Mileage will be reimbursed at the same rate per mile paid to volunteers who drive to conference approved meetings.

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Personnel Benefits

I. Vacation – (Revised 1.1.18)

The Conference recognized the importance of vacation time, which provides employees the opportunity for rest and personal activities. We grant annual paid vacation to eligible employees.

Non-exempt lay employees: Vacation leave for non-exempt lay staff members will be based on the number of years of service and will increase each year in January until the maximum of 20 days off is reached. Except for new employees, all eligible employees will be credited with their annual vacation on January 1.

New employees, vacation time will be prorated the first year of employment from the hire date through December. Subsequent vacation time is allotted on January 1 of each year and is earned throughout the year. During the first 90-days, a new employee cannot take vacation time, but the supervisor may grant time away from work without pay.

Non-Exempt Vacation Schedule

New hire – 10 days prorated from the date of hire thru Dec	
1 year – 11 days	6 years – 16 days
2 years – 12 days	7 years – 17 days
3 years – 13 days	8 years – 18 days
4 years – 14 days	9 years – 19 days
5 years – 15 days	10 years – 20 days

Employees who regularly work less than 40 hours per week receive the same amount of days for years of service prorated per the average hours worked. Employees that are seasonal, temporary, or working less than 20 hours per week, do not accrue vacation.

Exempt lay employees: Vacation leave for exempt lay staff members will set to coordinate with the clergy members; therefore, will accrue twenty (20) vacation days. Vacation time will be prorated the first year of employment from the hire date through December. Subsequent vacation time is allotted on January 1 of each year.

Clergy serving the Conference: Clergy members serving the Conference are subject to the same conditions except their accrual will be on January 1 of each year to be consistent with the lay staff members of the Conference and the 28 days is defined as to include four (4) Saturdays and four (4) Sundays for a net of twenty (20) business days of vacation.

Clergy members who regularly work less than fulltime receive the same number of weeks of vacation prorated to the percent of time worked.

Accrual: Employees can only accumulate or bank a maximum of 1½ times the total amount of vacation time they can earn. When employees reach their maximum number of vacation time, they do not accrue more vacation until the accumulated amount drops below the maximum amount they can accumulate. Accrual calculations only occur on January 1 each year; therefore, if an employee has reached his or her maximum accrual rate and has not taken any additional vacation by January 1, he or she would have to wait until the following year to receive additional vacation time. For example, if an employee with the conference for three (3) years has accumulated fifteen (15) vacation days on January 1, and has not taken any vacation time, he or she would not earn additional vacation time until January 1 of the following year, once his or her accrued vacation time dropped below the fifteen (15) vacation day maximum.

All earned vacation will be paid upon termination of employment, including but not limited to change of appointment, for all clergy members. A local church may require a pastor to use the last weeks of an appointment as vacation rather than paying the unused vacation as an extra check. It is the expectation that the SPRC chair and /or staff person who keeps personnel records will be notified when vacation is being used and will maintain a record of vacation used.

The word **earned** refers to a situation where the lay staff member or clergy member leaves in the middle of the conference year. The vacation granted to that lay staff member or clergy member during the accrual calculations would be reduced proportionately to the percent of the year worked.

II. Leave of Absence – (Revised 1.1.19)

Sick Leave: In cases of illness the absence should be reported to the employee’s supervisor within 30 (thirty) minutes after the start of the scheduled workday. **There shall be no remuneration for unused sick leave.**

Category A: Sick leave with pay will be granted in cases of absences due to personal injury, illness, and visits for medical or dental purposes. Sick leave will be granted to the employee for taking care of family members for whom they are the primary caregiver. An allotment of sick leave of 12 (twelve) days per year is provided on January 1 and new hires’ sick leave will be prorated beginning with the month hired.

Part-time employees (regular employment of 20 (twenty) or more hours per week) receive the same amount of days for years of service prorated according to the hours worked.

Carryover: Up to eight (8) days of sick leave may be carried over to the next calendar year for a maximum of twenty (20) days per year.

Employees that are seasonal, temporary or working less than 20 hours are not eligible for Category A Sick Leave.

Category B: (Please speak with HR for possible FMLA application) For an employee’s illness that requires hospitalization; post-hospitalization recuperative time; pre-certified testing and out-patient surgery or treatment and/or time required at home under doctor’s orders, 44 working days per year of Category B Sick Leave will be provided on January 1 and new hires’ sick leave will be prorated beginning with the month hired. An employee’s

illness of four (4) or more consecutive days is charged to Category B with an authorized doctor's statement. Upon an employee's dismissal from the hospital and/or leave at home of (4) four consecutive working days or more, an authorized doctor's statement describing the reason and probable duration of the absence or time required at home for rest must be submitted to the employee's work supervisor.

If an employee is unable to return to work on or before the date given in the current doctor's certificate, a new certification must be submitted with three (3) working days of the expiration date of the current existing certification. It is expected that the doctor's statement also will certify the employee's inability to return to work and the expected date of return.

Part-time employees (regular employment of 20 (twenty) or more hours per week) receive the same amount of days for years of service prorated according to the hours worked.

Employees that are seasonal, temporary or working less than 20 hours are not eligible for Category B Sick Leave.

Accrual of sick leave benefits will continue during any absence while the employee is receiving salary from the Conference; however, during any period of long term disability, accrual of sick leave benefits will cease and resume upon the employee's return to work.

Maternity/Paternity Leave: (Please speak with HR for possible FMLA application) Maternity or paternity leave, as appropriate, will be available to any employee who requests it prior to a new child's birth, adoption, or assuming parental custody of a minor child. Eligible employees may receive up to eight (8) weeks of paid maternity/paternity leave. The employee may take an additional four (4) weeks of leave that would be charged to sick leave Category B or Category A. If sick leave is exhausted all time beyond that the leave shall be charged against accumulated vacation or shall be without pay.

The request for leave under this provision must, whenever possible, be submitted in writing thirty (30) calendar days or more before the leave is expected to commence.

Personal Leave: Three (3) days of leave will be granted January 1 of each year for personal business or special family duties or occasions. Unused days cannot be carried over or paid out. New hires and part time employees will receive a prorated amount based on the 1st of the month following their start date and/or hours worked.

Leave without Pay: The supervisor may grant leave without pay at their discretion for periods not to exceed one month. Such leave for periods longer than this shall require the approval of the Personnel Committee. Requests for such leave without pay must state definite inclusive dates.

Military Leave: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994. USERRA spells out conditions of leave that the employers must grant based on the type and duration of leave. Additionally, the Act spells out the responsibility of the enlisted employee to notify the employer of the need for absence and to return to work within a limited time. The USERRA is complex and conditional. Any employee requiring a military leave must notify the supervisor as soon as possible.

Jury Duty: Employees will be excused with pay for jury service. No reimbursement of money received by employee as compensation or expense allowance for jury duty will be required to be made to the Conference.

Family Illness/Funeral/Death: In the event of critical illness or death of parents, children, spouse, grandparents, parent-in-laws, or significant other person, a leave of absence of up to five calendar days per incident may be granted, after consultation with the employee's supervisor. Additional days may be granted, without pay, by the supervisor or taken as vacation days.

Inclement Weather: The safety of our staff is paramount in any emergency situation. Fortunately, emergencies and inclement weather days are infrequent, but when they are needed the Treasurer (or your District Superintendent for District offices) will make the determination. A message will be placed on the main phone line, an email will be sent out and text messages sent to supervisors to notify their own staff in the event of the office closing.

III. Holidays

The Conference observes eleven (11) holidays for which the office is closed and for which fulltime employees are paid. These days are:

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

When a holiday falls on Saturday, the Friday before is observed as the holiday. When the holiday falls on Sunday, the Monday after is observed as the holiday.

Employees working less than 40 (forty) hours are granted holiday pay prorated according to the hours worked and is based on the schedule outline above for full-time employees. They will receive pay regardless of whether they regularly work on that day.

IV. Health Insurance

Health insurance benefits are available to employees to the extent and pursuant to the terms of the Conference's current contract. Employees should contact the Conference Benefits Officer for a written Summary of Benefits.

Staff members working (30) thirty hours, or more are eligible for coverage. Once enrolled in benefits the employee will be advised of the monthly amount, they are responsible to pay through payroll deduction. If the employee does not work enough hours or submit paid time off to cover the cost of benefits, the employee will be contacted to collect the premium due.

Payment schedule for coverage as of 1/1/18

Coverage Size	Payment
Employee Only	Employee pays 3% of salary
Employee + 1 (one child or a spouse)	Employee pays 4.5% of salary
Employee + Children/Family	Employee pays 6% of salary

Upon completion of an annual physical the employee will receive reimbursement of one month's staff share of health coverage.

When an employee's position has been eliminated, the Conference will offer to pay the employer's portion of three months' health insurance premiums beyond the date of termination. (This does not apply when the employee is terminated for misconduct). Thereafter, the employee may elect to continue their health insurance coverage, including dependent coverage, by enrolling in COBRA.

Employees who have voluntarily terminated may elect to continue their health coverage, including dependent coverage, by enrolling in COBRA.

V. Retirement (Pension) (Revised 1.1.2019)

Staff members working (20) twenty hours a week or 1,040 hours a year are eligible for pension. The Conference will contribute into staff pension at the rate of (6) six percent of salary with a (3) three percent required match on the employee's part. If the staff elects not to contribute their (3) three percent, then the employer portion will be forfeited.

The pension benefits are subject to the terms and conditions of the current contract with the Wespath Investments. A summary of benefits is available from the Conference Benefits Officer or the Human Resources Manager.

VI. Short Term Disability (STD) (Revised 1.1.2019)

Lay staff members of the Conference working at least (30) thirty hours per week and who are unable to work due to illness or accidental injury that last longer than (30) thirty days, should contact their HR Manager or Conference Benefits Officer to apply for the Conference's short-term disability (STD) plan.

The STD will cover the employee for (60) sixty days and will receive a benefit of 60% of basic monthly compensation as defined by the Plan. Vacation time will not accrue while out on STD.

The Conference will continue all health care and optional benefits at the level of coverage the employee is enrolled into at the time of the disability. The employee will be required to submit payment to the conference for the employee's cost for health insurance and all optional benefits.

VII. Long-Term Disability (LTD) (Revised 1.1.2019)

Lay staff members of the Conference working at least 30 (thirty) hours per week and who are unable to work due to illness or accidental injury that lasts longer than 90 consecutive days, should be in contact with their HR Manager or the Conference Benefits Officer to apply for the Conference's long-term disability (LTD). Vacation time will not accrue while out on LTD.

You are considered totally disabled when you are unable to perform the material duties of your position solely due to illness or accidental injury. Qualifying employees who are disabled receive a benefit equal to 60% of basic monthly compensation as defined by the Plan.

You may be eligible to receive funds up to the allowable maximum of the disability health care grant amount per month to assist in healthcare costs for two years. When you receive your Medicare card for being disabled you are no longer eligible to receive this grant.

VIII. Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) and Life Insurance

Life Insurance and AD&D benefits are available to employees working (30) thirty hours or more per week. The Plan describes the terms and conditions.

IX. Annual Conference Attendance

Staff who are clergy or lay members of the Annual Conference shall be granted time off with pay to attend the conference.

At the request of their supervisor, and in order to provide support to the operations of the conference sessions, staff may be present at Annual Conference and will be compensated for their actual time worked in accordance standing policies and procedures.

X. Jurisdictional and General Conference Attendance

Staff who are elected delegates or reserve delegates to a jurisdictional or general conference shall be granted time off with pay to attend the conference.

XI. Volunteerism Policy (new 1.1.2020)

The Great Plains Conference encourages employees to become involved in their communities, lending their voluntary support to programs that positively impact the quality of life within the communities we serve.

The following guidelines are for staff who serve as volunteers in community programs that are of personal interest.

Employees may take up to eight (8) hours of paid time off each year to participate in a specific volunteer program. Volunteer time must be requested in advance. All full-time employees are eligible for this benefit

XII. Volunteer in Mission Participation by Staff

To enable staff participation and involvement in United Methodist Church Volunteer in Mission projects, the Conference will grant up to a week with pay per year to join a VIM team. The staff person's supervisor must give authorization for participation in a VIM trip.

XIII. Payment in Lieu of Health, Retirement, STD, LTD, Life or AD&D

Cash payments may not be received in lieu of participation in any or all of the benefit programs described above.

XIV. Unemployment Compensation

The Great Plains Conference offers connectional services within the United Methodist Church and its operation is for religious purposes. Therefore, no unemployment benefits are available from employment through the Conference.

XV. Severance or Transition (Revised 4.1.15)

A staff member removed involuntarily from his or her position may receive a separation payment at the discretion of the Conference. The eligibility and amount of such payment shall be as determined by the Bishop and/or his or her representative(s) and may be contingent upon the receipt of reasonable consideration in exchange.

Before leaving the Great Plains Conference's employment, the Chairperson of the Conference Personnel Committee plus the employee's immediate supervisor or another Personnel committee member will conduct a formal Exit Interview. This document will become part of the existing staff person's personnel file. This policy does not apply to temporary/seasonal employees.

XVI. Outplacement Assistance (Revised 1.1.2019)

Upon request and at the discretion of the Conference, the Human Resources Manager may provide assistance to an employee affected by the downsizing, relocation, or closing of his/her place of employment in locating outplacement services to assist with career option analysis, résumé preparation, application completion, interviewing skills, networking, access to job banks, skill training, etc. Such assistance by the Human Resources Manager will be limited to information about available resources and, as needed, referral to an appropriate organization.