



# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

## FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE, CONGREGATIONAL, UCC

11 Garden Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138  
617-547-2724 [www.firstchurchcambridge.org](http://www.firstchurchcambridge.org)

Approved by the Staff Policy Committee  
28 March 2022, as amended 29 March 2023 and 30 April 2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who We Are.....	4
Definitions .....	6
Staff Positions .....	6
Categories of Employment.....	7
Committees and Benefit Administrators.....	7
Conditions and Expectations .....	8
Equal Employment Opportunity .....	8
Annual Reviews .....	8
CORI Policy.....	8
Compensation .....	10
Benefits – Time Off .....	12
Paid Holidays.....	12
Support Staff Breaks and Meals.....	12
Vacation .....	12
Sick Leave, <i>as amended March 2023</i> .....	13
Massachusetts Paid Family & Medical Leave, <i>as amended March 2023</i> .....	13
Study Leave.....	13
Sabbatical Leave .....	14
Unpaid Leave .....	14
Family and Medical Leave Act .....	14
Parental Leave.....	14
Small Necessities Leave Act.....	15
Leave of Absence .....	15
Benefits - Insurance .....	16
Health Plans .....	16
Dental Plan .....	16
Vision Plan .....	16
Life and Disability Insurance.....	16
Workers’ Compensation Insurance .....	17
Unemployment Insurance -- FUTA, SUTA .....	17
Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act -- COBRA .....	17
Benefits - Retirement .....	17
Social Security and Medicare .....	17
Pension Plan.....	17
Employee Retirement Contribution (Tax Sheltered Annuity) .....	18

Expense Reimbursements.....	18
Debit Card Policy .....	18
Discretionary Allowances.....	18
Travel and Parking .....	19
Communications.....	19
Electronic Communications .....	19
Personal Use of Computers & Cell Phones.....	19
Social Media.....	20
Telephone Calls .....	20
Employee Termination .....	20
Resignation of Employees.....	20
Resignation without Notice.....	20
Termination of Program or Support Staff .....	20
Revocation of Call (Dismissal of Clergy).....	21
Termination for Cause.....	22
Appendices .....	23
Appendix A: Personnel Record .....	23
Appendix B: Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy.....	24
Appendix C: Debit Card Policy .....	25
Appendix D: IRS Section 125 Plan ( <i>updated annually</i> ) .....	26
Appendix E: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) .....	27
Appendix F: Harassment and Abuse Prevention Policy.....	29
Appendix G: Safe Church Policies and Procedures .....	31
Appendix H: Our Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community.....	33
Appendix I: Processes for Termination of Staff.....	35
Appendix J: The Process for Revocation of Call.....	36
Appendix K: Guidelines for Calling the Minister to be Senior Minister .....	40

## WHO WE ARE

### First Church Covenant Testimony

We believe that our covenant with God and each other calls us

To love God with all that we are, and close and distant neighbors as ourselves;

To seek peace through justice and equity for all people;

To engage in nonviolent resistance to evil;

To respect and preserve God's earth;

To foster community across every barrier and division;

To attend to God's unfolding and reconciling Word;

To support each other in our frailties and strengths, that we may embody that love which overcomes fear and death.

This we testify, confessing always our reliance on God's grace in Christ, and on the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Statement of Openness and Affirmation

WHEREAS, "In Christ Jesus we are all children of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26, 28); and

WHEREAS, we believe that our value as human beings is given to us by God, and that God calls us to relate to each other as whole persons, with love, responsibility, accountability, trust, and mutual nurture; and to work for justice and wholeness in the world; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that our individual and collective fears or prejudices about other people are dispelled by the grace of God and the commandment to love our neighbors; and

WHEREAS, our Covenant Testimony calls us to foster community across every barrier and division;

THEREFORE: We declare that First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is an open and affirming congregation which does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, race, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, economic class, marital status, or physical/psychological differences; that we welcome all who would participate with us in Christ's mission; and

We commit ourselves to the struggle against homophobia, racism, and all individual and systemic attitudes and acts of injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred that work against peace and wholeness.

## **Our Vision for Being an Antiracist Church**

First Church in Cambridge commits to being an antiracist church. We reject white supremacy and racism in all forms and believe this work is our call to follow Jesus and exercise faithfulness to God.

We commit to the spiritual practice of fighting racism; to ongoing reckoning with our history; and to transforming our personal, social, and professional lives by educating ourselves and intervening when harm is threatened or done.

We repent of white supremacy culture, anti-Black racism, and all forms of racial hierarchy within our church, and we will uproot them. We are working to shift the harmful narrative of race and white supremacy that has too often been reinforced by distorted and destructive political, economic, and theological beliefs and structures.

We commit to use, share, and relinquish whatever power and privilege we may have to dismantle systemic racism in our wider community by joining the struggle alongside other antiracist organizations, centering the voices of those who have been traditionally silenced or oppressed, and following the lead of Black and Indigenous people and all People of Color.

We commit to loving others and ourselves by affirming the dignity and beauty of all human beings, who are created in the loving image of God. We commit to welcoming and building relationships across cultural, ethnic, and racial differences.

We do this work because the spiritual health and positive transformation of our church, our community, and our nation depends on it. We do this humbly, with courage, in fellowship with our neighbors, and relying on God's grace to shepherd us towards a just, equitable, and peaceful world.

## **Our Covenant with Each Other**

1 Corinthians 12:18-20: "But as it is, God has set the parts, each of them, in the body, according to his will. And if all were one part, where would the body be? But as it is there are many parts, and one body."

Our relationship with each other is a holy covenant, a sacred promise to do our best for each other. As an employer, First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC (hereafter, FCCC) seeks to provide an environment that is peaceful, just and rewarding, in which everyone's work is regarded with respect.

Each employee has a duty to fulfill the demands of their position, and the Church's leaders and the Congregation have the duty to support each employee by fulfilling their own share of the Church's ministry.

## DEFINITIONS

### Staff Positions

**Clergy - Called Ministers:** An ordained person called to serve as a minister (or ‘pastor’) of the Church.

- Senior Minister
- Transitional Minister
- Other clergy, as called by the congregation

**Clergy - Other Ministers:** Clergy whose ministry is based at First Church, and whose ministry extends beyond First Church

- Minister of Stewardship & Finance
- Minister of Street Outreach
- Other clergy, such as Scholars-in-Residence or Interim Ministers, as recommended by the Head of Staff and approved by SPC and EC.

**Program Staff:** Employees who direct or coordinate programs of the church.

- Director of Creative Worship & Arts
- Director of Operations
- Music Director
- Shelter Director
- Other program staff, as recommended by the Head of Staff and approved by SPC and EC.

**Support Staff:** Employees whose work supports the ministry of the clergy, program staff, lay leaders, and congregation, as well as the buildings and grounds.

- Facilities Manager
- Nursery Staff
- Office Assistant
- Sextons
- Technology Associate
- Other positions, as recommended by the Head of Staff and approved by SPC and EC.

**Shelter Staff:** Employees of First Church whose work supports the First Church Shelter; the Director of the Shelter reports to the FC Head of Staff (see Head of Staff, below).

- Counselors and Overnight Staff
- Shelter Support Staff
- Other positions, as recommended by the Shelter Director and approved by the Shelter Oversight Committee, Head of Staff, SPC, and EC.

**Head of Staff:** The Senior Minister is Head of Staff. When the Senior Minister is away, or the Senior Minister position is vacant, the responsibilities and authority as Head of Staff fall automatically to the Minister who has been designated by SPC to be Acting Head of Staff.

## Categories of Employment

**Exempt employee:** An employee whose responsibilities fit the Massachusetts General Law definition of an exempt employee (with professional or managerial responsibilities). Exempt employees are paid on a salaried basis and are not eligible for overtime compensation.

**Hourly employee:** An employee who is paid by the hour.

**Full-time Employee:** An employee who is hired to work 30 hours or more per week for the entire calendar year. Paid benefits for employees who work more than 30 but less than 40 hours per week will be prorated accordingly.

**Hourly Employee, eligible for benefits:** An hourly employee who is hired to work 20 or more hours per week for an entire calendar year, or for a specified part thereof.

**Hourly Employee, not eligible for benefits:** An hourly employee who is hired to work less than 20 hours per week.

## Committees and Benefit Administrators

**Staff Policy Committee (SPC):** This Committee determines and reviews staff salaries and benefits, initiates and supports annual staff performance reviews, writes and reviews job descriptions, monitors and updates staff policies for the *Employee Handbook*, and administers stated policies concerning the hiring and termination of employees. The SPC consists of, *ex officio*, the Clerk, who keeps the official minutes, and various church leaders who have significant working relationships with staff such as the Chair of Deacons, Chair of Shelter Oversight Committee, and the Chair of Buildings and Grounds. Because the committee makes important financial decisions, the Treasurer is also a member. SPC is co-chaired by the Vice Moderator and another member of the church, chosen by the Moderator, who ideally has expertise in the field of human resources.

**Executive Council:** The Executive Council includes the officers of the church (Moderators, Clerk, Treasurers, Controller, Senior Minister and other called clergy), all members of the Board of Deacons, the Chairs of church Boards and Committees, and a Member-at-Large. It has the powers and duties of a Board of Directors. It transacts the business of the Church; establishes, promotes and coordinates all its activities; supports and assists the Ministers. Executive Council carries out the policies of the Church and recommends new or revised policies.

**The Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ:** The Pension Boards administers the retirement and life insurance and disability income plans, as well as health, dental and vision plans. Additional information is available at [pbucc.org](http://pbucc.org)

**The Massachusetts Health Connector:** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts administers a health insurance exchange for Individuals and Families, providing access to a number of MassHealth, ConnectorCare, and Health Connector plans with premium tax credits based on income. Additional information is available at [www.mahealthconnector.org](http://www.mahealthconnector.org).

**Employment posters:** Required Employment posters are posted in the church office and on the church website at [firstchurchcambridge.org/personnel/](http://firstchurchcambridge.org/personnel/)

## **CONDITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **Standards of Conduct**

First Church expects all employees to maintain a level of personal conduct that is welcoming, respectful, and honest.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

FCCC is committed to equal employment opportunity. We adhere to a policy of hiring, developing, and promoting employees without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, marital status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other characteristic protected by local, state or federal law, rule, ordinance, or regulation. Decisions on employment, promotion, compensation, benefits, training, and development are based solely upon an individual's qualifications with reference to the requirements of the position for which the individual is being considered. In accordance with applicable federal and state law protecting qualified individuals with disabilities, FCCC attempts to reasonably accommodate qualified individuals unless doing so would create an undue hardship.

### **Employee Letters of Agreement**

All employees have a letter of agreement and a job description written at the time of their hiring, and updated if there are significant changes.

### **Annual Reviews**

Most employees receive the support of a yearly review initiated by the SPC. The process is carried out according to the approved guidelines provided by the SPC. The evaluation process is reviewed and approved annually by the SPC.

### **CORI Policy**

In order to ensure that employees are appropriate for their positions, a Criminal Offender Records Information report (CORI) will be required as a condition of employment, after a candidate has been offered a position, but before they begin work. Each employee will sign a consent form for this background check, and the results of the CORI report will be shared with the employee.

This report is provided to employers by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, CORIs are required for many of the volunteers in the church. For more information on which volunteers please see Safe Church Policies and Procedures ([Appendix G, p. 31](#)). All CORI information is held in confidence by the Director of Operations and second CORI officer.



CORI checks will be repeated for all employees and volunteers every three years on a regular schedule. If an employee or volunteer begins work on a non-CORI check year they will be re-checked again along with other staff and volunteers in regular CORI check years. For example: based on current dates, checks will be made in 2024, 2027, 2030, and so forth. If someone is hired in 2023, that person will be checked again in 2024 in the interest of keeping everyone on the same schedule. The Church reserves the right to do additional CORI checks should there ever be a serious concern about an employee or volunteer.

## **Safe Church Policy**

FCCC has developed a safe church policy for use by members, volunteers, and staff members who work with minors in church programming. All employees shall review and follow the current Safe Church Policies and Procedures (See Appendix G, p. 31) and Our Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community. (See Appendix H, p. 33).

## **Safety and Security Plans and Procedures**

FCCC has developed safety and security plans and procedures for use by members, volunteers, and staff members. All employees shall read and periodically review the plans and procedures as posted on the church website on the Members & Friends page.

## **Employee Records**

Employment records (e.g., application materials, tax forms, health insurance, life and disability, and pension information) are held in a locked, confidential file. A separate confidential file is maintained for annual employee reviews and other material pertaining to job performance.

In order to keep all records current, employees are responsible for notifying their supervisors in a timely fashion of changes in personal information (e. g., home address, telephone number, and other contact information) as well as all changes that may affect payroll or insurance benefits, such as marital status, dependents, and the like.

## **Smoking**

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building or on the church grounds.

## **Employee Handbook Revisions**

This Handbook may be updated as needed by the Staff Policy Committee, with notification to employees.

## COMPENSATION

### Negotiable Compensation Plan

Compensation is negotiated with each employee upon hire, based primarily on guidelines provided by the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. Total compensation, including salary or wages and the cost of benefits will be calculated, with the allocation between cash salary and benefits negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the goal of keeping the cost to the church the same.

If an employee's needs for benefits change, the employee may request that the balance of cash salary and benefits be re-allocated, keeping the total compensation cost the same.

### Salaries

Exempt employees are paid an annual salary.

### Hourly Wages

Non-exempt employees are paid an hourly wage. These hourly wages are also determined with consideration for the total cost to the church. Since those who work 20 or more hours per week receive the benefit of paid time off, an employee who is hired to work less than 20 hours per week may be paid a higher hourly wage than an employee who is performing the same job and hired to work 20 hours or more, so that the total cost to the church is comparable.

Hourly employees are expected to use the Connecteam Time Clock app to record their arrival and departure time each time they work. For payroll calculations, employees' times are rounded to the nearest 15 minutes and paid accordingly.

If an employee cannot access the QuickBooks Time app, they should contact their supervisor or the Minister of Stewardship & Finance.

### Overtime

The church pays an overtime rate of 150% of the employee's hourly wage when an employee is required to work more than 40 hours during the Monday through Sunday work week. Note that paid time off (holiday, sick or vacation) is not included when counting hours worked.

### Housing Allowance

Housing is provided for the Senior Minister at 44 Garden Street. Other ministers may receive a housing allowance. The value of the housing benefit is determined at the beginning of a minister's call and is adjusted each year with the annual salary increase (see [Annual Salary Increase on p.11](#)).

Each year, clergy and licensed ministers may designate a portion of their compensation as a housing allowance in accordance with IRS rules. The amount of the housing allowance is approved by the SPC or EC on an annual basis, prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>. No other employee is entitled to housing compensation.

### **Optional IRS Section 125 Plans**

All employees are eligible to designate a portion of their compensation as a flexible spending account for the reimbursement of eligible medical or dependent care expenses. To review this plan, see [Appendix D, p. 26](#). The Minister of Stewardship & Finance is available to answer employees' questions about this plan.

### **Payment of salaries and wages**

Salaried employees are paid semi-monthly. Hourly employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis. Hourly employees must record their hours using the on-line Connecteam Time Clock app, which will be reviewed and approved by the appropriate supervisor. The Church encourages all employees to be paid with direct deposit to their personal bank account. The Minister of Stewardship & Finance is available to help employees make financial arrangements.

### **Payroll Advances**

In exceptional circumstances, employees may request a payroll advance. The total amount is limited to two weeks' pay or the amount of accrued payroll, including unused vacation time, whichever is less. This request should be made at least a week in advance and must include the repayment amounts and dates and be signed by the employee and the Minister of Stewardship & Finance. Payroll advances will be reported to the Treasurer or Head of Staff. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by SPC.

### **Annual Salary Increase**

The annual salary increase is recommended by the SPC, approved by EC, and voted by the Congregation. This amount will be prorated for employees who have been employed for less than twelve months as of January 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **BENEFITS – TIME OFF**

### **Paid Holidays**

First Church observes the following holidays. These are paid holidays for those hired to work 20 hours per week or more.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

If the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it will be observed on Friday or Monday respectively. If contracted building use requires that the building be open on these holidays, the Director of Operations may negotiate a fee for sexton services with the organization using the building, in order to compensate staff who may need to be on duty.

### **Support Staff Breaks and Meals**

Support staff members may take one 30-minute meal break or two 15-minute breaks during a shift that is 6 hours or longer.

### **Vacation**

All employees hired to work 20 hours per week or more are eligible for paid vacations based on their length of service. Employees working less than 20 hours per week may request unpaid time off.

The number of hours in a vacation week is equivalent to the number of hours an employee is regularly scheduled to work. The vacation time for non-clergy staff is as follows, but may be altered by the Staff Policy Committee in exceptional circumstances:

- After 6 months' employment            2 weeks per calendar year
- After 2 years' employment            3 weeks per calendar year
- After 5 years' employment            4 weeks per calendar year

Called ministers are eligible for four weeks of paid vacation per calendar year. If an employee begins mid-year, this amount is prorated.

Vacation is accrued and recorded each pay period. Vacation can be taken before accrual with prior agreement of the supervisor. Vacation time cannot be accumulated from one year to the next or paid in cash. If an employee has any unused vacation time as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, it must be used or scheduled by January 31<sup>st</sup>. If employment is terminated at any time after one year of service, the employee will be paid for any unused vacation time accrued within that calendar year.

## **Sick Leave**

In compliance with Massachusetts General Laws, effective July 1, 2015, all employees accrue sick leave at the rate of one hour per 26 hours worked. This rate of accrual is equivalent to 10 sick days per year. Sick time is accrued and recorded each pay period. Full-time exempt employees are assumed to work 40 hours per week. Unused sick days are carried over from year to year, up to a maximum of 65 days (three months), but are not ever paid in cash.

Sick Leave may be used in conjunction with the PFML Policy below for illness, injury, medical care or the effects of domestic violence or for medical appointments for the employee, spouse, child, parent or spouse's parent. Employees must record sick time using the Connecteam Time Clock app and notify their supervisor of the absence.

Sick leave will be paid at the employee's regular rate. In the case of an employee with multiple hourly pay rates, sick time will be paid at the rate that would have been earned during the hours missed. For those employees covered by the UCC Life Insurance & Disability Income Plan, sick leave will be paid according to the disability insurance requirements.

## **Massachusetts Paid Family & Medical Leave**

All First Church employees are subject to the MA PFML tax. Employees who earn at least a minimum (\$6,000 in 2023) from all Massachusetts employment are eligible for Massachusetts Paid Family & Medical Leave. An employee who anticipates needing to be absent from work for more than 7 calendar days must contact their supervisor. The Minister of Stewardship & Finance and/or the Vice Moderator will work confidentially with them to apply for PFML.

The Massachusetts benefit is based on the employee's average weekly wage as compared to the state average weekly wage (SAWW), which is \$1,765.34 in 2023. The benefit is 80% of the first 50% of the SAWW (\$882.67 in 2023) and 50% of the wages above that amount, up to a maximum benefit per week (\$1,129.82 in 2023). FCC will pay the difference between the employee's usual wages and the state's benefit during the approved leave; employment benefits and deductions will continue during the leave. If there is a delay in receiving the state's benefit, employees may request an advance using the [Payroll Advances policy on p. 11](#).

According to Massachusetts law, an employee may not use paid time off concurrently with PFML; an employee may use accrued sick or vacation time before or after their PFML. If the leave is denied by the MA Department of Family Medical Leave, the employee may use any accrued sick or vacation time during their leave.

## **Study Leave**

Called clergy are eligible for up to two weeks of paid leave each year for continuing education or attendance at professional conferences, seminars or workshops. If a minister has any unused study leave as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, that time will be lost. Study Leave days may not be carried over from year to year or paid in cash.

## **Sabbatical Leave**

FCCC has covenanted with all full- and part-time clergy and program staff to grant eligibility for sabbatical leave after specified periods of residence.

Sabbaticals may be taken every 5-7 years, for a period of 3-6 months, as negotiated by the employee with the SPC.

Sabbatical leaves for full-and part-time staff persons should be planned and publicized well in advance (8-12 months). In the case of clergy, it is desirable that a sabbatical planning team be formed to assist the minister and the congregation to prepare for the leave. An outline of proposed sabbatical activities must be submitted for review by the SPC, who will then recommend that the leave be approved by the EC.

Normally, the employee's full salary will be paid for up to 4 months of a sabbatical leave. A longer sabbatical would be remunerated with 4 months' compensation prorated over the length of the time away.

It is understood that, barring unforeseen circumstances, a staff person will remain in their position for a full year following a sabbatical. A covenant to this effect will be agreed to by the staff person and the congregation's representatives before the staff person departs for sabbatical.

In the interests of keeping sabbatical arrangements as flexible as possible so that eligible staff persons may respond to particular opportunities and needs that do not fall within the above guidelines, the SPC, in consultation with the Head of Staff and the approval of the EC, may alter the terms of remuneration and timing outlined above.

## **Jury Duty**

In accordance with Massachusetts law, First Church will pay regular wages for the first three days, or part thereof, of juror service.

## **UNPAID LEAVE**

### **Family and Medical Leave Act**

FCCC provides leaves for pregnancy, military service, extended jury/witness service, bereavement, workers' compensation, disability and family needs, in accordance with applicable federal law, including the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. For more information, please see [Appendix E, p. 27](#).

### **Parental Leave**

In compliance with the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act, employees may take an unpaid leave of up to eight weeks upon the birth or adoption of a child. Employees may choose to use accumulated sick time, may file a claim with the MA Department of Family & Medical Leave, and/or may file a short-term disability claim in order to maintain compensation during this time away.

Employees seeking to take Parental Leave should provide notification at least two weeks, when practicable, in advance of the anticipated departure and state intent to return to the workplace following the leave.

Any Parental Leave taken under Massachusetts law will run concurrently with any other applicable leaves, such as under the Family and Medical Leave Act ([see p.14](#)).

### **Small Necessities Leave Act**

Employees may use sick leave (if applicable) or vacation leave for the purposes listed below. If all paid time off has been used, then under Massachusetts General Law, the Small Necessities Leave Act permits eligible employees to take up to a total of 24 hours of unpaid leave within a twelve-month period for the following reasons:

- To participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of a child of the employee, such as a parent-teacher conference or interviewing for a new school;
- To accompany a child of the employee to routine medical or dental appointments, such as check-ups or vaccinations; and
- To accompany an elderly relative of the employee to routine medical or dental appointments or appointments for other professional services relating to the elder's care, such as interviewing at nursing or group homes.

An employee must have been employed for 12 months at the time the leave is to begin. Also an employee must have worked for at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period prior to the beginning of the leave.

Such leave is available in addition to other state and federally protected leaves, such as FMLA. The 24 hours of leave may be taken within the 12-month calendar year period and the time may be taken on an intermittent (i.e. 2 hours to attend a parent-teacher conference) or reduced-time schedule.

### **Leave of Absence**

A leave of absence may be granted by the Head of Staff with the approval of Executive Council and Staff Policy Committee.

## **BENEFITS - INSURANCE**

### **Health Plans**

#### *Eligibility*

UCC clergy are eligible to participate in the United Church of Christ Medical Benefits Plan. Note that entrance into this plan is limited once an employee has worked for any UCC congregation for 20 or more hours per week for 90 days or more. The church's contribution will be determined as a part of overall compensation (see *Negotiable Compensation Plan* on p.10).

FCCC does not otherwise pay for health benefits. Employees are eligible to obtain individual coverage through the Massachusetts Health Connector, and are encouraged to access the Advance Premium Tax Credits if they are eligible.

#### *SPC Policy Governing Health Benefits*

The kind and scope of health insurance offered to eligible employees is reviewed annually by the SPC and is subject to change.

### **Dental Plan**

FCCC does not pay for dental benefits. However, employees may choose to participate in the UCC Dental Plan, with 100% of the premium deducted from pay. Open enrollment for this plan is in October of each year for a January 1<sup>st</sup> start. Note that employees enrolling after the first 90 days of employment receive a lower maximum benefit for the first year.

### **Vision Plan**

FCCC does not pay for vision benefits. However, employees may choose to participate in the UCC Vision Plan, with 100% of the premium deducted from pay. Open enrollment for this plan is in February of each year for an April 1<sup>st</sup> start.

### **Life and Disability Insurance**

FCCC pays the premiums for the UCC's Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan, for employees hired to work 20 or more hours per week, and who are enrolled in the plan. This plan provides short-term disability (up to 22 weeks), long-term disability (to age 65), and life insurance.

- Short-term disability: After 30 days' disability, the short-term disability insurance pays 60% of the employee's salary basis, up to a maximum of \$1,384.62 per week for up to 22 weeks. There is no waiting period for maternity coverage; benefits are limited to six weeks, plus an additional two weeks for a Caesarean section delivery.
- Long-term disability: After 22 weeks of short-term disability, if approved by the insurance company, the long-term disability insurance pays 60% of the employee's salary basis up to a maximum of \$6,000 per month, less the Social Security Disability benefits, and also contributes 7% of salary basis to the employee's Annuity Plan account until age 65.



- Group life insurance: The amount of the group life insurance death benefit depends on the age of the employee, ranging from 50-200% of salary plus housing. Note that if the death benefit is more than \$50,000, a required excess premium amount will be added as taxable income on the employee's W-2.

Further details on these plans are available through the UCC at [www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org).

### **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

FCCC pays the full cost of Workers' Compensation insurance. If the Workers' Compensation insurance carrier determines an employee is disabled due to a work-related injury, the employee may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits that would cover, fully or in part, lost income, medical care, and rehabilitation. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts determines which disabilities qualify for Workers' Compensation and limits the total benefit a person may receive, as well as the maximum length of time medical care costs are covered and the types of hospital care that are covered.

All work-related injuries must be reported by the employee to their supervisor immediately, or Workers' Compensation claims may be forfeited or denied.

### **Unemployment Insurance -- FUTA, SUTA**

FCCC employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits. FCCC is a non-profit religious organization, and not permitted by law to pay into the unemployment insurance system.

### **Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act -- COBRA**

Upon an employee's termination of employment, the church is not required to provide continuation of benefits under COBRA. However, if this would be helpful to the employee, it may be arranged to the extent possible by the insurance provider by speaking with the Minister of Stewardship & Finance. In all cases, the former employee will provide payment for the insurance before the church makes its payment. If the employee fails to provide the payment on time, the insurance will be terminated.

## **BENEFITS - RETIREMENT**

### **Social Security and Medicare**

FCCC pays the employer's portion of FICA and Medicare taxes for all non-ordained employees. (Ordained clergy will receive an equivalent SECA Allowance).

### **Retirement Plan**

The Lifetime Retirement Income Plan for the United Church of Christ provides lifetime retirement income or beneficiary benefits to clergy and lay employees. Membership in the Lifetime Retirement Income Plan is open to anyone working for a UCC employer. The Plan is a defined contribution plan as described in section 403(b)(9) of the Internal Revenue Code. FCCC will contribute only to the Lifetime Retirement Income Plan of the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ.

- Clergy are eligible to participate in the Lifetime Retirement Income Plan beginning with their date of call. FCCC will contribute a percentage of their annual salary basis, according to their employment agreement.
- For all lay employees hired to work 20 hours or more, FCCC will contribute a percentage of annual salary as determined annually by the SPC, approved by EC and voted by the congregation.
- An employee may choose to allocate some compensation to their Employee Retirement Contribution Account, on either a pre-tax or after-tax basis. The employee should contact the Minister of Stewardship & Finance for an application.

More information is available at [pbucc.org](http://pbucc.org). Recordkeeping for the Retirement Plan and retirement planning services are provided by Fidelity Investments.

### **Employee Retirement Contribution (Tax Sheltered Annuity)**

An employee may choose to allocate some compensation to the UCC Pension Plan's Employee Retirement Contribution (Tax Sheltered Annuity). The employee should contact the Minister of Stewardship & Finance for an application.

## **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS**

### **Debit Card Policy**

The church maintains a debit card account for those staff who need a debit card in order to perform their job responsibilities.

Each employee will sign an agreement outlining proper use of the card, will submit receipts for each purchase through the PEX card app, and will surrender the card upon request of the Minister of Stewardship & Finance.

### **Discretionary Allowances**

The Senior Minister and other called Ministers are provided an annual discretionary allowance to cover miscellaneous expenses, including but not limited to membership or enrollment fees, continuing education courses, books and subscriptions, travel and/or mileage, meals with parishioners, and other expenses associated with carrying out their pastoral responsibilities.

The value of this benefit is recommended on an annual basis by the SPC, approved by EC, and voted by the Congregation. The allowance is reported to the IRS as income unless the Minister establishes a reimbursement system and submits expense reports to the Treasurer.

## **Travel and Parking**

The Senior Minister and other called Ministers may be reimbursed for use of their car on Church business, and for other legitimate travel expenses (fares to travel to conferences or continuing education events, or service to the wider church, for example). The value of this benefit is included in the Minister's Discretionary Expense line. The allowance is reported to the IRS as income unless the Minister establishes a reimbursement system and submits expense reports to the Minister of Stewardship & Finance.

All other employees using their car on church business, other than commuting expenses, will be reimbursed for their use. The church reimburses at the current IRS rate, plus tolls and parking. This per mile reimbursement is reviewed periodically by the SPC and is subject to change. Employees requesting reimbursement must fill out a check request form stating the purpose of the trip, the number of miles driven, and the amount of the reimbursement.

The Church has a limited number of parking spaces available. These spaces are allocated by the Staff Policy Committee on the recommendation of the Head of Staff, in view of job requirements and personal circumstances.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Electronic Communications**

The use of any software and business equipment (including but not limited to computers, photocopiers, and fax machines) for private purposes is strongly discouraged.

### **Personal Use of Computers & Cell Phones**

The potential for damage from the internet is great and comes in many forms. The following rules are to be observed at all times:

- Employees may not permit unauthorized persons to use the church computers.
- Employees are to exercise caution when downloading material from the internet.
- Employees who retrieve personal email at work should not open attachments from unknown sources.
- Employees should not open any emails that contain messages or headings such as, "you've successfully changed your password"; "you need to check your account info"; "you need to change your password", "Dan is in a prayer meeting", etc. These are common subject lines for virus-infected emails or fraudulent financial transactions.
- Under no circumstances may employees visit or download material from sites displaying pornography or other sexually explicit material, or from sites associated with gambling.

## **Social Media**

Our Safe Church Policy applies to the way we interact in person and in all types of media. Employees should refer to the current Safe Church Policies and Procedures ([Appendix G, p. 31](#)) and "Our Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community" ([Appendix H, p. 33](#)) for details.

## **Telephone Calls**

The use of business telephones should be limited to official business. Non-urgent personal calls and text messages during work time are discouraged.

# **EMPLOYEE TERMINATION**

*As of the publication date of this Handbook, if any part of the processes outlined below is in conflict with rights, duties or procedures described in the FCCC by-laws, the Handbook shall take precedence over the By-Laws.*

## **Resignation of Employees**

If Support Staff wish to resign they are expected to give the Head of Staff 30 days' notice.

If Program Staff wish to resign they are expected to give the Head of Staff 60 days' notice.

If Clergy wish to resign, the length of time between the public announcement of their intended departure and the day their service to the congregation officially ends will be determined through consultation among the clergy person, the Board of Deacons, and the members of the SPC. Normally, however, the period between announcement and departure shall not be shorter than 30 days, nor longer than 90.

## **Resignation without Notice**

Unless there are serious extenuating circumstances, if an employee resigns without notice, they will forfeit eligibility to be rehired. Final paychecks for employees who quit without notice will be mailed on the next regularly scheduled payday and addressed to the most recent address on file. All other benefits will be terminated at the earliest possible date.

## **Termination of Program or Support Staff**

If a Program or Support Staff person's performance is unsatisfactory for more than one review period (See [Annual Reviews, p. 8](#)), or if repeated incidents of poor performance occur during any given review period and are documented in writing to the employee, the Head of Staff may determine that termination is warranted. For a detailed description of termination processes please see [Appendix I, p. 35](#).

## **Revocation of Call (Dismissal of Clergy)**

### *Introduction*

The calling of a minister initiates a sacred covenant of trust between the minister and the congregation that is unlike other employment relationships. Because of the unique nature of this relationship, grave spiritual damage can occur if a call is revoked without prayerful care or legitimate congregational authority. A call may be revoked only after sincere discernment of God's leading, and after all other remedies have been exhausted.

### *Warrants for Revocation*

Revocation of call may be warranted for reasons of performance or vocation. The conditions and circumstances that warrant revocation of call must be serious, manifested over time, and deemed intractable by the church's legitimately-elected leaders. This means that the process may not be forced by means of a swell of anger about a discrete or anomalous incident, by anonymous letters or petitions circulated among members of the church, or by a self-appointed group that appeals directly to a minister or to the congregation.

### *Examples*

Circumstances in which revocation of call, absent cause for clergy misconduct, may be warranted include:

- Habitual failure to carry out pastoral duties as agreed to in the minister's covenant with the congregation;
- Habitual resistance to, usurpation, or obstruction of the legitimate roles and obligations of the church's appointed and elected leaders;
- Demeanor and conduct resulting over time in disturbance to the peace or reputation of the congregation;
- Manifest unhappiness, stagnation, or exhaustion in ministry unrelieved by ordinary opportunities for renewal such as days off, vacations, continuing education, and sabbatical;
- A poor match between the minister's gifts for ministry and the identified needs of the congregation.

### *Revocation vs. Dismissal "For Cause"*

If these conditions and circumstances include violations of clergy ethics that rise to the level of clergy misconduct, the process for revocation of call outlined here need not be followed. Instead, the Moderator and Chairperson of Deacons, with the previous endorsement of the Deacons and EC, will notify the clergy person that a consultation with the appropriate denominational officer (normally the Area Conference Minister) will be conducted, and that if charges of misconduct are brought and proven, immediate dismissal may result.

### *Process Leading to Revocation of Call*

The process leading to revocation of call will include the mutual support and collaboration of all involved parties, including the Area Conference Minister, the Metropolitan Boston Association (MBA) Committee on Ministerial Standing, the Board of Deacons, EC, and the Congregation. Please see [Appendix J, p. 36](#) for a detailed description of the process to be followed in the case of revocation of call.

### *Marking the end of a ministry*

If a call is revoked, or if the clergyperson resigns during the process; and if it is possible, prudent, and desired by the clergyperson, appropriate public opportunities for marking the end of the ministry, giving thanks for the minister's past service, and wishing them well in the future, should be provided.

### *Employee Handbook vis-a-vis FCCC By-Laws*

Because the FCCC By-Laws do not contain detailed provisions for due process in the event of the revocation of a pastoral call, the provisions for due process of the FCCC *Employee Handbook* shall be the congregation's guide in all cases.

## **Termination for Cause**

### *Support and Program Staff*

Support Staff and Program Staff may be terminated for cause without warning or probation. In such a case, the Head of Staff will provide documentation of cause to the SPC, who must approve the termination. In the case of Support and Program Staff, "cause" includes financial malfeasance, repeated or disruptive insubordination, sexual misconduct, persistent absenteeism, and other habitual violations of the ethical standards expected of FCCC employees.

### *Clergy*

In the case of Clergy, dismissal for cause normally means that the clergyperson has violated accepted clergy ethics as understood by the denominational judicatory, the MBA. Normally, if such cause is present, charges of clergy misconduct will also be brought, in consultation with the Area Conference Minister and/or the Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry of the MBA. The procedures of the MBA related to pastoral misconduct will apply in this case.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Personnel Record

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Hired \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Starting Hours and Pay rate \_\_\_\_\_

- Letter of agreement
- USCIS Form I-9 with document copies
- CORI
- IRS Form W-4
- MA DOR Form M-4
- New Hire Report filed \_\_\_\_\_ (date)
- Employee Handbook* received \_\_\_\_\_ (employee signature)
- Harassment Policy read \_\_\_\_\_ (employee signature)
- Safe Church Policy read \_\_\_\_\_ (employee signature)
- Emergency Procedures read \_\_\_\_\_ (employee signature)
- Anti-Racism Policy read \_\_\_\_\_ (employee signature)

#### Benefits

- Medical 125 Plan \_\_\_\_\_ If declined, initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- UCC Health insurance >=20 hours \_\_\_\_\_ If declined, initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- Dental Insurance \_\_\_\_\_ If declined, initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- Vision Insurance \_\_\_\_\_ If declined, initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- UCC Lifetime Retirement Income Plan \_\_\_\_\_
  - Date application filed \_\_\_\_\_
- Employee Retirement Contribution (TSA) \_\_\_\_\_
- Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan \_\_\_\_\_
  - Date application filed \_\_\_\_\_ If declined, initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy**

First Church in Cambridge seeks to encourage creativity while conserving the resources and protecting the interests of the church. Therefore, intellectual property of a scholarly or artistic nature (such as sermons or music) is the sole property of the creator unless a specific contract with alternative provisions has been negotiated prior to the creation of the property. However, any works so created within the scope of a staff member's paid employment may (in their original form) be used, reproduced, and sold by First Church in Cambridge without further compensation to the employee unless a specific contract with alternative provisions is agreed to by both the employee and the church. All such contracts as mentioned in this policy must be approved by the Executive Council. This policy will be agreed to and signed by current staff, will be conveyed to new staff members at the time of hire, and will be included with any agreements with guest ministers and musicians.

*Approved by Staff Policy Committee, 6 December 2020  
Reported to Executive Council, 7 December 2020*



## Appendix C: Debit Card Policy

### EMPLOYER DEBIT CARD AGREEMENT FOR STAFF

As an authorized cardholder, I have been trained and fully understand and agree to the following terms and conditions regarding the use and safekeeping of the First Church debit card entrusted to me:

1. Although this card is issued in my name, I understand that it is First Church property and must be used with good judgment.
2. I accept full personal responsibility for the safekeeping of the debit card assigned to me, and that absolutely no one else is permitted to use my church debit card.
3. I will immediately report the theft or loss of my debit card to Karen McArthur or Kirsten Manville. I understand that there is a PIN number associated with this debit card.
4. I will not use the debit card for non-Church related expenses, unauthorized purchases, or for personal purchases. I understand that the debit card cannot be used to obtain cash or cash back.
5. I will create an online user and password to monitor my expenses and balance and to upload receipts at [www.pexcard.com](http://www.pexcard.com).
6. I understand that my monthly card limit is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and that this may be increased as needed by contacting Karen McArthur.
7. I will only make purchases as approved by my supervisor or the lay leader who has oversight of that line item of the budget. If my week's purchases total more than \$500, I will contact Karen McArthur by email. If any purchase or any combination of purchases is expected to exceed \$1,000, I will contact Karen at least one week in advance.
8. I understand that I am personally responsible for obtaining all original detailed receipts. I will initial each receipt, indicate the line item to be charged, and leave receipts in Karen's mailbox at least weekly, if not more often.
9. When I use the church debit card, I understand that I am responsible for repayment of any of these charges deemed not allowable when receipts are submitted to the Church. I further understand that any unallowable amount must be repaid to the Church immediately. In the event that I fail to repay any non-allowable amount within one week, the Church is authorized to withhold the full amount from any payment(s) due me from the Church, including payroll checks, as repayment.
10. I understand that misuse of my debit card or failure to follow any of the above listed terms and conditions may result in:
  - a. Revocation of the privilege to use the debit card
  - b. Disciplinary action
  - c. Termination of employment, and/or criminal charges being filed with the appropriate authority.
11. I agree to surrender the debit card immediately upon request or upon termination of employment for any reason.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby accept the above terms and conditions and acknowledge receipt of the debit card.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer Signature

## Appendix D: IRS Section 125 Plan *(updated annually)*

**First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC**  
IRS Section 125 Plan  
Election and Salary Reduction Agreement  
Plan Year January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

All employees of the Church are eligible to designate a portion of their compensation for the reimbursement of eligible medical or dependent care expenses. The amount(s) so designated are not considered wages and therefore are not taxable for federal or state income tax purposes and are not subject to FICA and Medicare taxes. All group insurance premiums may only be reimbursed through the “premium only plan.” Those who participate in a “High Deductible Health Plan” may be eligible to designate an amount to be deposited to their Health Savings Account; these amounts may be changed at any time. Those employees without a Health Savings Account may participate in the Medical Flex Spending Plan. For Medical Flex Spending, the annual amount must be designated before January 1<sup>st</sup> and may not be revoked except under a “change of status” as defined by the IRS.

For reimbursement, the employee must submit receipts to the church office. Any expense allowed as a deduction on IRS Schedule A may be reimbursed, such as physician care or co-payments, prescriptions, dental care, eyeglasses, or vision care. Reimbursement may only be made for care received between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024, regardless of when the employee is billed or pays for it. Up to \$640 may be carried forward to the next Plan Year. Any Medical FSA amount in excess of \$640 that is unused by the employee after December 31, 2024 will be forfeited to the church. For Dependent Care, the annual amount must be designated in advance and may not be changed, with **any unused amount forfeited after December 31, 2024.**

The maximum amounts that may be designated are:

Medical “Premium Only Plan”	up to total salary or wages
Employee contribution to HAS	maximum amount (including employer contributions) up to \$4,150 (individual) or \$8,300 (family plan), with an additional \$1,000 allowed if employee is over age 55
Medical expenses (FSA)	\$3,200, only if employee has no HSA
Dependent care expenses	\$5,000

A full copy of the IRS summary of Section 125 Cafeteria Plans is available in the church office.

## **Appendix E: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

FMLA is granted in accordance with the requirements of applicable law in effect at the time the leave is granted. No greater or lesser leave benefits are granted other than those set forth in the relevant laws.

Employees should contact their supervisor as soon as they become aware of the need for a family or medical leave.

FCCC has the right to initiate a leave of absence for any employee when, in its sole judgment, it believes such leave is appropriate.

### **FMLA Eligibility**

According to the FMLA, to be eligible for FMLA leave, the employee must have worked at FCCC for at least twelve months and have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months.

Eligible employees may receive up to twelve work weeks of unpaid leave during a twelve-month period for one of the following reasons:

- for the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- to care for a member of the employee's immediate family (parent, child, spouse) with a serious health condition; or
- for the employee's own serious health condition as recognized under the FMLA.

Employees may take FMLA leave intermittently (blocks of time or reduced schedule). Certain restrictions and rules may apply.

### **Notice and Certification**

Employees who need FMLA leave may be required to provide the following:

- 30-day advance notice when leave is foreseeable;
- Medical certification from a health care provider (prior to the leave and prior to reinstatement);
- Periodic re-certification; and
- Periodic reports during the leave.

When leave is needed, the employee must try to schedule treatment so as not to unduly disrupt work at FCCC. The twelve-month period for determining the number of weeks of eligibility is measured backward from the date that any leave would begin.

## **FMLA Compensation and Benefits**

FMLA leave is unpaid; however, employees who have accrued paid time off, such as sick time or vacation time, may use this time as part of the leave.

Paid time off (holidays, vacation, and sick time) does not accrue during unpaid leave.

During the leave, FCCC maintains any group health insurance coverage that was provided to the employee before the leave on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work.

Where applicable, the employee is required to continue payment for the employee portion of insurance premiums while on leave. If the employee fails to return to work at the end of the leave, FCCC may recover the premiums paid for maintaining health coverage.

## **Job Reinstatement**

When employees return from the FMLA leave, FCCC will make every effort to reinstate employees in their previous position or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions. However, upon return, employees have no greater rights than if they had been continuously employed.

## **Appendix F: Harassment and Abuse Prevention Policy**

First Church in Cambridge (FCCC) is committed to providing a work environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, we maintain a strict policy of prohibiting unlawful harassment and abuse, sexual and otherwise. Any employee found guilty of committing any of the following acts may be disciplined or, where appropriate, discharged without prior warning.

All employees must indicate that they have read and understand this policy by initialing their personnel record. (See [Appendix A, p. 23](#))

### **Sexual Harassment & Abuse**

Harassment includes verbal, physical, and visual conduct that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile working environment or that interferes with work performance. Such conduct constitutes harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either an explicit or implicit term or condition of an individual's employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- Such contact has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Conduct that falls into the definition of sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature such as patting, pinching or touching;
- Overt or implied threats against individuals to induce them to perform sexual favors or to engage in an unwelcome sexual relationship;
- Verbal harassment or abuse of a sexual nature, including intimidation by way of suggestion or desire for sexual relations, or making jokes or remarks of a sexual nature to or in front of a person who finds them offensive;
- Use of sexually suggestive terms or gestures to describe a person's body, clothing, or sexual activities; or
- Displaying or posting offensive sexually suggestive pictures or materials in the workplace.

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

The American Medical Association defines child sexual abuse as "the engagement of a child in sexual activities for which the child is developmentally unprepared and cannot give informed consent. Child sexual abuse is characterized by deception, force or coercion."

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in

sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of oral, genital and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

### **Other Types of Harassment**

Harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, physical or mental disability, marital status, HIV-positive status, age, sexual orientation, gender or any other protected basis is prohibited. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as threats, epithets, derogatory comments, or slurs;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory posters, photographs, cartoons, drawings, or gestures;
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, or blocking normal movement; or
- Retaliation for reporting harassment or threatening to report harassment.

### **Procedure to Report Harassment**

Employees who believe that they or someone they know has been the subject of harassment or abuse may bring their complaint to the Head of Staff, any Minister or the Moderator. All allegations will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, insurance policy requirements, and based upon advice of legal counsel.

FCCC will not deny, minimize or blame any individual involved in allegations. However, any employee found to have knowingly made false or frivolous allegations will be subject to disciplinary action possibly leading to termination of employment.

## Appendix G: Safe Church Policies and Procedures

*In 2003, First Church entered into a process to provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Recommendations and procedures were developed by the initial Safe Church Task Force, the Board of Christian Formation, and the Executive Council of First Church in 2005. Revisions took place since and were reviewed and endorsed by the Christian Formation for Children & Youth Committee and the Executive Council in 2012. The latest revisions have been made by the Christian Formation Committee in 2019.*

**“Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community”:** First developed in 2005 over a series of meetings held on Sunday mornings and open to all church members, the “Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community” received a careful and thorough update in 2019. The new Covenant is a document for ALL members of the First Church community, with suggestions and guidance on a variety of interactions between and among us. It is a document that articulates guidelines for safe and respectful behavior for children at First Church. All First Church adults are encouraged to speak with any child (or their caregivers when the child is disregarding this communal covenant). The Covenant is made available for viewing and downloading on our website, and hard copies of the Covenant may be requested from the church office. Every Regathering Sunday, the Covenant is highlighted in announcements and made available in hard copy.

**"Two Adult Rule":** During FCC-sponsored programs for minor children, such as church school, scheduled child care by nursery staff or volunteers, youth group outings, and other formation programs, it is the church's recommendation that two unrelated adults supervise each group as much as possible. At all other times, including fellowship hour after church school and nursery care have ended, the supervision of children is the responsibility of their caregivers. Caregivers should be aware that First Church does not own or maintain the play equipment in Sage Hall, nor does it maintain the outdoor play equipment. It is the church's recommendation that children not be permitted to play in these areas or other parts of the church unattended. Caregivers are welcome to supervise their own children in these spaces, or to arrange for two unrelated adults to be with a group of children while they are playing.

**Digital and Social Media Guidelines:** The digital and social media guidelines of First Church have been developed to follow the same principles of conduct as expressed in other sections of our Safe Church Policy, including the Covenant. These principles should be applied when church staff members use digital and social media on behalf of the congregation and when volunteers use social media in relation to their volunteer service with minors in the congregation.

An additional principle applies specifically to digital and social media: the way staff present themselves online in forums where congregation members engage should be in keeping with the way staff members present themselves in person at church functions. If your online presence specifies your affiliation with First Church, you are seen as a representative of First Church.

First Church's “Two Adult Rule” applies to digital and social media communication between adults and minors. Digital and social media should not be used for one-to-one extended communication between an adult (staff member, church school teacher, or youth leader) and a minor. Any communication that is sent via digital means (e.g. email, social networking notes or posts, instant messages, texts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others. Weighty or emotional matters are best discussed in person rather than by email or other digital means.

First Church follows a Privacy Policy with regard to personal information shared with the church via our website and computer database. You can find the full text of the policy on our website, both in the public domain and in the password-protected Members Area. Hard copies of the Privacy Policy may be requested from the church office.

**Examples of First Church's Safe Church Policy in action in the digital world:**

- A staff member would not engage in extended texting conversations with an individual youth. Generally, when texts are sent to youth, they should be sent to a group of youth plus other group leaders and/or parents.
- Staff members who accept Facebook Friend requests from members of the congregation, including minors, should keep in mind that even on Facebook, church staff members are perceived as representatives of the church.
- The FCC Facebook page and the FCC website are maintained for the purpose of publicizing events endorsed by the congregation or a committee of the congregation. Exceptions to this guideline are the Blog and Prayer Request sections of the website. However, administrators of the church's website and Facebook page may delete any inappropriate content from these venues.

**CORI and SORI Checks:** First Church has been certified by the Criminal History Systems Board of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for access to criminal offender record information (CORI), including conviction and pending criminal case data. First Church has also decided to access the national public database of sexual offender record information (SORI). Volunteers working with minors are required to sign a form acknowledging that First Church will check for a criminal history before allowing involvement in the leadership of our children and youth programs. CORI and SORI checks are completed at the beginning of the church program year (September) or at the time when a volunteer begins their service. Volunteers working directly with minors are required to complete acknowledgement forms once per year, for as long as they continue to serve the church in this capacity. The church reserves the right to do additional CORI and SORI checks should there ever be a serious concern about a volunteer. For information on CORI and SORI checks of employees, please refer to the Employee Handbook.

**Incident Report Forms:** If something suspicious and/or unsafe occurs while volunteers or employees are caring for minors, teachers and leaders are asked to complete a Safe Church Incident Report Form. Completed forms are submitted to a Minister or the Director of Creative Worship & Arts and copies are provided to the parents/guardians of the injured child, as well as to the reporter of the incident.

**Medical Information:** Basic medical information is collected as part of the Children & Youth Program Registration. The Director of Creative Worship & Arts reads all registrations and the forms are filed in a locked drawer in the director's office. If there is pertinent information about a student that the classroom teachers need to know, the Director will make sure that information is given to the teachers in writing. Emergency information from the child's caregivers will also be given to teachers (as in the case of a severe allergy to peanuts, the use of an Epi-pen, etc.). Guardians will be reminded to update medical information as needed.

**First Aid Kits:** In case of emergency, there are first aid kits in each Church School classroom, in the church office, and in FCC kitchen (next to the microwave).

**Security Doors and Cameras:** In 2005, and at the request of the Newtowne School, a cooperative nursery school that rents space at First Church, a security door and camera system was installed at First Church. These cameras and doors are engaged 24-7, offering an added layer of protection and awareness of who is coming and going from our building. The Building & Grounds Committee worked with Newtowne School in 2011 to augment and upgrade the system, including purchasing new security cameras. The installation was completed in January 2012. The number of people who have access to the recorded images is extremely limited. The most recent update to the camera system was done post-renovation in 2017.

**First Church Emergency Preparedness Policies and Procedures:** In 2010, First Church adopted explicit policies and procedures for evacuating the building in an emergency. The Church staged its first fire drill under the new policy in August 2010. Future fire drills will take place on a regular basis. In 2019, the church initiated a process of self-evaluation regarding safety awareness, and from this work has come new Emergency Preparedness guidelines, including laminated instructions posted throughout the building regarding fire/evacuation procedures, medical emergencies, weather/natural disaster emergencies, disruptive person procedures, and security emergency procedures.



## Appendix H: Our Multigenerational Covenant for a Welcoming and Safe Community

*This covenant is for ALL of us at First Church. It is just one of the many ways that First Church addresses community behavior and communication. For additional information on church policies, please refer to our Safe Church Policies & Procedures, Sexual Harassment Policy, and Photography Policy.*

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First Church is home to people of all ages, sizes, backgrounds, and abilities. We are a truly multi-generational community that seeks to be the church together. When we gather, we must find ways to show care and respect to each other, while maintaining a safe environment for all.

This covenant is written to address the following:

1. How we greet and treat each other
2. How we care for each other
3. How we behave in different spaces in and around our building

We believe the suggestions and guidelines described in our covenant allow us to live more fully into our mission to be “Grounded in God, Growing in Community, Acting in Love.”

### HOW WE GREET AND TREAT EACH OTHER

It’s wonderful to see First Church folks greet old friends and new acquaintances every Sunday. The obvious joy and love found in these connections is a huge part of why we keep coming back week after week. Sometimes, kids don’t always remember that responding to grown-ups who greet them is a polite way to be together. Caregivers can help kids find comfortable ways to talk with people of all ages. Using good manners is a good practice in community!

Sometimes, when grown-ups are seeking ways to connect with littler ones, they fall back on remarking on a child’s appearance or asking questions about school. These comments may not always be the best way to engage a child. In fact, comments on someone’s appearance (other than “You look nice today, or “I like your outfit”) can feel intrusive or uncomfortable to persons of any age. Other options for greeting might be: “It’s nice to see you!”, “What’s new with you?” or “What are you excited about these days?”

First Church is a friendly place, and many of us like to greet each other with a hug or other physical contact. But some of us do not prefer this type of greeting, so it’s always a good practice to ask if it’s okay to hug someone and to respect an answer of “no, thanks.” We especially invite you to refrain from tapping heads and touching hair.

Some beloved members of our community have certain challenges when meeting and interacting with others. These could be because of a mental health struggle, because they are having a hard day, or because they haven’t slept or are hungry. There are many reasons why someone may have a hard time respecting healthy boundaries. If you notice a behavior that is upsetting to you, please raise it with a staff person who may be able to offer further context or help with a response. If you are wanting to say something directly, please be respectful and try to approach the situation with curiosity instead of judgment.

### HOW WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER

Getting to know each other is a big part of sharing our lives together at First Church. In all our time together at church, we learn how to be friends, how to support someone who needs help, and how to receive the care of others when we need it most. This can happen best when we communicate clearly with each other.

Communicating well means both listening and speaking. Sometimes the listening part is more important than the speaking part!

If someone offers you feedback on how your behavior affects them, it is important to listen with an open heart and mind. We can all use some reminding about how to follow our community’s guidelines. Some examples of this might be:

- An adult asks a child to slow down or quiet down in particular spaces in our building.
- A parent listens to a church school teacher’s concerns and problem-solves with the teacher to help their child succeed in class.

- An adult seeks out support from a staff person to address an interaction with another adult that made them uncomfortable.
- An adult asks another adult to refrain from making comments that cause negative feelings of judgment.
- An adult tells another adult that they are in need of money or housing; after listening respectfully, the listener replies with words such as, "I hear that you are in need. Have you spoken with a member of the church staff?" and the need is then referred to a staff person.

### **HOW WE BEHAVE IN DIFFERENT SPACES IN & AROUND THE BUILDING**

There are different ways we show our enjoyment in being together. Some of us like to laugh loudly, play active games, or chase each other around. Some of us prefer quiet conversation over a cup of coffee or tea. These are all important ways to be together, but we must find a good balance so that everyone feels comfortable and everyone stays safe. Calm voices and walking feet are usually best in our common spaces, while loud voices and high energy are best accommodated outside or in the downstairs play space.

Different spaces in and around the church building have different guidelines for how we act. Here are some specifics to help you:

#### **The Sanctuary**

Worship is usually a time to sit quietly, although sometimes we are invited to stand to sing and move around! There are books and activity packets available in the Children's Worship Book Corner for those who appreciate a quiet distraction. An audio feed from the sound system can be heard in Hastings Common, which can be a lovely spot to hear the service while caring for a fussy baby or toddler. Audio can also be heard in the Narthex. A few noises from little ones during worship are to be expected and are a welcome sign of our congregation's vitality. Caregivers are encouraged to use their judgment for when their children's behavior might be too distracting for others. Babies and toddlers are also most welcome to spend the worship hour in the Nursery.

#### **Hastings Common**

Gatherings in Hastings Common can become crowded, so moving slowly and being mindful of others is important.

#### **Margaret Jewett Hall**

While MJH affords a bit more space, we should all take care in moving in and around the crowds at Coffee Hour or a shared meal. Also, we ask that people refrain from playing the piano in MJH during large events and Coffee Hours.

#### **The Library**

The Library is a kid-friendly space during all-church events in MJH! Feel free to pull out the beanbag chairs and board games from the under-cabinet closet spaces. No one should climb the circular stairs, however, unless invited up by Kate Layzer or Friday Café volunteers.

#### **The Chapel**

The Chapel is an acoustically "live" space that can become very loud with only a small amount of sound. While it's great for making a joyful noise at the Church School's Chapel Sing, it is best to use quieter voices in here during other activities.

#### **The Harter Room**

This is a nice meeting room for groups that need chairs and tables. It's also a good place for watching a movie.

#### **Sage Hall and the Playground**

These spaces are designed to accommodate more energetic play. We often have Nursery staff working to supervise children in these spaces during formation and fellowship programs, but caregivers are invited to supervise their kids anytime on the playground (if it's nice out) or in Sage Hall in the basement. Please, no climbing the Playground fence. And if you pull out lots of toys in either Sage Hall or the Playground, make sure to put them back where you found them. Thanks!

**IN ALL SPACES**, we are all encouraged to check in with each other to make sure everyone feels welcome and relatively comfortable with the activity level around them. Everyone is invited to communicate their needs for less (or more!) activity by talking with kids and their grownups, or seeking out staff or lay leaders who may be able to help guide us in living out our covenant together.

*This covenant was revised in early 2019 by the Christian Formation Committee with input from First Church staff, and it was endorsed by the First Church Executive Council on June 3, 2019.*

## **Appendix I: Processes for Termination of Staff**

### **Process for Termination of Support Staff**

The following steps will be taken:

- Head of Staff will issue a written warning of termination, with accompanying documentation, and discuss it with the staff person.
- A probationary period may be recommended.
- If a probationary period has been observed, a post-probation review will be conducted.

If termination is deemed warranted at the conclusion of a probationary period, notice of termination, with accompanying documentation, will be given to the employee by the Head of Staff, with previous approval of the Staff Policy Committee (SPC).

### **Process for Termination of Program Staff**

The following steps will be taken:

- The Head of Staff, with previous approval of the SPC, will issue a written warning of termination, with accompanying documentation, and discuss it with the staff person.
- This meeting may result in a recommendation for a probationary period of no less than 3 months.
- If a probationary period has been observed, a post-probation review will be conducted.
- At the conclusion of a post-probation review, a recommendation for termination or for continued employment will be made.
- If the recommendation is to terminate, termination must be endorsed by the SPC and approved by the Executive Council (EC).

Notice of termination, with accompanying documentation, will then be given to the Program Staff person by the Head of Staff.

## **Appendix J: The Process for Revocation of Call**

### **Determination that revocation of call may be warranted**

All clergy receive annual ministry reviews [See Annual Reviews, p. 8]. If after at least two consecutive annual reviews in which significant concerns about the continuing viability of a minister's call have been documented and discussed with the clergy person, the Moderator and the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons, in consultation with the Board of Deacons and the SPC, may determine that the initiation of a process leading to revocation of call is warranted. If this determination is made, the Board of Deacons will ask the EC to endorse a special pastoral review.

### **Special pastoral review**

The special pastoral review is an opportunity for the minister, representative leaders of the congregation, and a judicatory representative to meet in an attitude of discernment and partnership to consider the viability of the minister's call and to search for clarity about God's purposes for the minister and the church.

#### **Notifying the Area Conference Minister (ACM)**

Upon determining that a special pastoral review may be warranted, the Moderator and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons will notify the ACM for the Metropolitan Boston Association (MBA) in writing that a special review will be requested. At this time, the ACM will also be provided with a description of the revocation process as outlined in the *FCCC Employee Handbook*.

The presence and engagement of the ACM is a sign of the covenant that exists among people, minister, and the wider church, and ensures support for the clergy person as well as an outside eye on the important matter of congregational due process.

The ACM will designate a person from outside the congregation who will provide pastoral support for the minister under review. In certain cases, the ACM and the minister under review may agree that the ACM will provide this pastoral support. In either case, the ACM will be the principal advisor to the congregation's leaders throughout the process.

Because FCCC is a multiple-staff congregation, the ACM will also advise the leaders and any other clergy person who is not the subject of review concerning their appropriate role and level of involvement in the process.

### **Endorsement by the EC of a special pastoral review**

Upon receipt of the Deacons' request to conduct a special review, the Moderator will convene the EC and inform the members of the concerns that prompt the request. To assist in determining whether a special review is warranted, the EC may request that the MBA

Committee on Ministerial Standing provide a Situational Support Consultation. In any case, a two-thirds majority of members of the EC must vote to endorse the special review.

### **Notifying the minister**

Having secured EC endorsement for a special pastoral review, the Moderator or the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons will notify the clergyperson in writing and in person that a special pastoral review will be conducted. This notification will include a written summary of the concerns that prompt the review, and relevant documentation. The ACM will also contact the clergyperson, discuss the stated concerns, counsel them about possible options, advise them about the process, and arrange for their support.

### **Notifying the congregation**

It will be up to the prayerful discretion of the Moderator and the Chair of the Board of Deacons, in consultation with the ACM, to determine the timing and manner of congregational notification that a special review is to be conducted, or even whether notification is warranted at this juncture. Great care must be taken in any case to balance the right of the minister to confidentiality and fair treatment, the ability of those conducting the process to act freely without undue pressure, and the right of the congregation to be informed of actions taken that affect the common life of the church.

### **Special Review: Meeting with the minister**

The Moderator, Chair of the Board of Deacons, and others whom they may appoint will meet with the minister to discuss prayerfully the concerns that prompt the review and clarify the process to be followed. The ACM (and the clergy support person, if other than the ACM) will also be present. The aim of the meeting should be to review all the stated concerns and to clarify the status of the clergyperson's call.

More than one meeting may be necessary to reach consensus about the status of the minister's call, but care should be taken not to prolong the discussion or the decision unnecessarily.

This meeting (or series of meetings) may have the following outcomes:

- Revocation of call is deemed unwarranted and no further action is recommended.
- A probationary period of three months is authorized, during which the minister and the leaders of the congregation work together towards specific goals for renewal, and at the end of which a second special review will take place and final determination will be made concerning revocation or renewal of call.
- Revocation of call is deemed warranted without a probationary period.
- The minister offers to resign.

### **Report to the Board of Deacons and recommendation to EC**

The Moderator and the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons will report to the Deacons concerning the outcome of the special review. The Deacons will subsequently send a recommendation to EC concerning this outcome, as described below.

### **In the case of a recommended probationary period**

The Chair of the Board of Deacons will provide a written summary to the EC of the terms and goals of the probationary period. A simple majority of members must endorse the terms and goals of the agreement.

If at the end of the probationary period, it is determined by a second special review that a renewal of the minister's call is warranted, no further action will be taken.

### **In the case of a recommended revocation of call without probationary period**

If it is determined by the special review that the congregation should proceed to a revocation of call, and the minister chooses not to resign in view of this decision, the Deacons will prepare a recommendation to the EC that the call be revoked. This recommendation will be prepared in consultation with the SPC, the ACM, and will include proposed terms for a just and orderly separation that have been previously negotiated with the clergyperson. A two-thirds majority of EC members must approve the recommendation to sever the pastoral relationship and the terms of the proposed separation.

These terms may include:

- an adequate period of up to one year during which the minister may seek and find a new call while continuing to serve the congregation;
- an adequate period of up to six months during which the minister may seek and find a new call while on paid leave from the congregation;
- details of a severance package (compensation, housing, and other matters);
- mutually-agreeable language for making the separation public;
- other provisions as negotiated.

### **In the case of resignation**

If the minister chooses to resign, the section *Resignation of Employees (Clergy)*, p. 20, applies, with the proviso that the suggested time limit of 90 days between announcement of resignation and leave-taking may be extended by negotiation with the Board of Deacons in consultation with the SPC in order to permit the minister to seek and find a new call.

### **Special Meeting for Congregational Endorsement**

If the EC approves the recommendation to revoke the minister's call and agrees to the terms of the separation as proposed, the Moderator, Chair of the Board of Deacons, and the ACM will notify the clergyperson in writing and in person that their call is to be revoked, pending endorsement by the congregation.

Pursuant to the FCCC by-laws, which state that a minister's call may be revoked only by vote of the congregation, a special meeting of the congregation must be called by the Moderator. The notification of the special meeting will include:

- the purpose of the meeting;
- a brief summary of the reasons for the proposed revocation of call;

- a description of the process that was followed with reference to the relevant sections of the *Employee Handbook*;
- the names and roles of all the persons who participated;
- other information as deemed necessary by the church leaders in consultation with the ACM.

The ACM will advise the church's leaders and the clergy person concerning their role and appropriate level of involvement at this stage of the process, but normally the clergy person will not be in attendance at the special congregational meeting.

The decision by the congregation whether to uphold the recommendation to revoke the minister's call may be made by a process of substantial consensus, or by a two-thirds majority vote. In either case, every effort will be made to conduct the meeting in an atmosphere of respect and mutual care, with an eye to the common good of the congregation and the well-being of the clergy person in question.

If the congregation agrees to revoke the minister's call, the decision, along with the agreed-upon terms, will be communicated in writing and in person to the minister by the Chair of the Board of Deacons and the Moderator. The ACM may choose also to participate in this notification.

If the congregation decides not to uphold the recommendation, the clergy person will be informed as above, and the Deacons will be charged with initiating a process of reconciliation within the congregation, as well as to continue working with the minister to resolve the concerns that prompted the process in the beginning. The ACM will remain actively involved in this attempt to reconcile, renew, and move forward.

### **Christian demeanor**

The desired outcome of this process should be a renewal of the clergy person's call, not its revocation. However, when it becomes clear that revocation is warranted, all parties to the process should act deliberately to reach a just agreement to sever the relationship, so that all involved may be free to respond faithfully to the new thing God is doing even through a regrettable situation.

Throughout this process, all parties are expected to act with respect and forbearance, as is fitting for sisters and brothers in Christ. Congregational leaders will admonish one another to be prudent and modest in all their conversations about the concerns that prompt the process. They will avoid gossip, unnecessary negative characterizations of the clergy person's character and/or motives, and the denigration of their declared supporters. The clergy person will endeavor to observe the same sort of respect towards the leaders of the congregation.

Both the clergy person and the congregational leaders will promise to say only what is necessary about the reasons that led to the special review and subsequent process, balancing as much as possible the right of the congregation to be informed with the right of the minister to preserve their dignity and good reputation. All parties will also refrain from personally marshalling support for their positions outside the due process provisions of the *Employee Handbook*.

## **Appendix K: Guidelines for Calling the Minister to be Senior Minister**

*These guidelines apply only to the second Minister (hereafter referred to as Minister) called to provide general parish ministry in partnership with the Senior Minister. In the event that the Senior Minister steps down, the Minister **may** initiate a Call process for the position of Senior Minister without an open search being conducted as long as the following guidelines are followed:*

First, a reasonable amount of time must pass before the Minister initiates the Call process. Under normal circumstances, this should be no sooner than 60 days after the Senior Minister announces her/his departure. The principle behind this timing is to allow enough time for the congregation and Senior Minister to have a period of leave-taking.

After 60 days, the Minister may notify the Executive Council and Board of Deacons of his/her interest in pursuing a Call to become the Senior Minister. If the Executive Council and Deacons vote to approve the Minister's request to be considered for the Senior Minister position, their next step will be to determine an appropriate process of discernment for the congregation. This process could include any number of steps including but not limited to an initial vote to determine if the congregation would like to proceed with a discernment process, a series of listening sessions, congregational conversations, and consultations with the SNEUCC Area Conference Minister. The process, if it is carried out, would ultimately lead to a vote on whether or not to call the Minister to be the Senior Minister.

The Congregation's process of discernment should not take more than an additional 90 days under normal circumstances. The principle behind this timing is to allow enough time for a reasonable discernment process to take place but not so much time that it would unduly burden either the Minister or the Church.

An open search would not be conducted simultaneously. Such a circumstance would be unfair both to outside applicants and to our internal applicant due to the disparity in knowledge about the various applicants. In addition, a simultaneous open search would violate the covenantal relationship we would have with this Minister, as with all our ministers. An open search would only be conducted if the Minister has not been called to the position of Senior Minister.