



## **Theological Considerations for Personnel Policies and Guidelines**

Appropriate compensation for and respectful care of clergy and lay employees of the church and good parish management practices are stewardship issues. They involve the right use of a congregation's assets of money and talent to further the coming of God's kingdom on this earth. Parishioners alone cannot carry out this great calling. The men and women who earn their livings working in our churches have a vital role.

Good personnel practices also are equity and justice issues. We know that for many of our people, clergy and lay alike, the work they undertake for us is the chief expression of their ministry within the Body of Christ. Their dedication often leads them to give more than duty requires. It is important that we regularly show our appreciation and gratitude in a variety of intangible and tangible ways.

For, it is when a congregation lives out its faith not only as a worshipping community but as a just employer that it follows the mandate of the One who said, "The laborer deserves to be paid." (Luke 10:7)

## **Employment Policies for Lay Employees**

### *Definition:*

*Lay Employee:* Any individual, other than a clergy person, employed by a parish, mission or separate congregation. This excludes contracted service providers and temporary employees.

### *Policies:*

- It is the policy of the Diocese of Washington that parishes adhere to all applicable local, state and federal laws, to the Canons of the Episcopal Church and to the Canons of the Diocese of Washington in their employment practices; and
- That parishes use the *Guide to Human Resources Practices for Lay Employees in Episcopal Churches, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, as the basis for parish personnel policies and practices; and
- That newly hired employees of any Diocesan institution (parish, mission, organization, school) have a background check coordinated through the *Diocesan Human Resource Office* with employment contingent upon the results of this screening; and
- That employees complete *Safeguarding God's Children* training every three years of active employment.

## ***Guidelines:***

That parishes employ the recommended practices and compensation guides that are provided in this document.

That parishes conform to the expectations of approved General Convention and Diocesan Resolutions.

That parishes work within the spirit of employment laws from which they legally may be exempt to promote justice and fair treatment in the workplace.

The Diocesan Human Resource Committee encourages parish clergy and lay leadership to contact Church House staff for assistance and referrals when human resource issues arise. Staff is knowledgeable about resources and best practices, saving parishes valuable time and money as they address challenging issues.

## **I. Recommended Best Practices**

The recommended practices summarize those included in the *Guide to Human Resources Practices for Lay Employees in Episcopal Churches, 2nd edition*. The *Guide* provides sample letters, templates, language for policy statements and comprehensive overviews of pertinent laws, canons and resolutions. It is a "one-stop-shop" for guidance on human resource issues and for best practices.

### *Assessment of Staffing Needs*

Parish leadership and staff participate in the assessment of parish priorities, current allocation of resources and emerging needs at regular intervals to determine appropriate staffing levels and job descriptions. This is especially helpful when vacancies in existing positions occur.

### *Establishment and Maintenance of Up-to-Date Job Descriptions*

Annually, employees and supervisors review existing written descriptions for accuracy. These are the foundation for establishing performance expectations.

### *Establishment of Title for each Position based on Job Description*

Job titles and compensation reflect the job duties and knowledge, skills and abilities required to do the job.

### *Recruitment and Screening of Applicants*

Open positions are posted, enabling qualified applicants to learn of and apply for the job. Postings include required knowledge, skills and abilities. Screening is based on job-related criteria and

includes representatives of parish constituencies who will work closely with the successful candidate.

### *Selection and Offers of Employment*

The successful candidate for a position is offered the position in a written agreement which includes the job title, supervisor (reporting line), date of employment, cash salary/hourly wage and benefits, leave and paid time off, statement of at-will employment and requirement of successful completion of background check. Other conditions of employment, such as completion of training, should be included as well. Grounds for termination of the agreement not specified in parish personnel policies should be included.

This agreement should be updated and signed by all parties when terms of employment change.

The Diocesan Human Resource Administrator should be notified as soon as candidates accept a position so that benefits information may be forwarded. *Click here* for the Diocese of Washington Request for Insurance Coverage.

### *Orientation of New Employees*

The first few months are a critical period in the development and retention of new hires. Minimally, new employees should be introduced to clergy, staff and lay leaders, given a facilities tour, trained to use equipment, review and sign the job description, be given all pertinent manuals plus parish bylaws and policies, and meet regularly with the supervisor to review expectations, priorities and performance.

### *Job Performance, Performance Problems and Progressive Discipline*

Regular communication regarding an employee's work promotes job satisfaction and effective performance. It is the supervisor's responsibility to bring concerns about performance and other unacceptable behavior on the job to the attention of the employee in a prompt and professional manner. Generally, these issues are first addressed in a verbal counseling session. If the problematic behavior persists, written notices of expectations for behavioral modifications with timelines may be issued and if all efforts fail, employment then may be terminated.

### *Conduct*

Establishing clear, written expectations for appropriate conduct and reinforcing this conduct during performance discussions helps create a productive work environment. Expectations for appropriate conduct may include teamwork, dependability, maintaining privacy of others and keeping the work environment safe and secure.

The following are examples of unacceptable conduct at work that could result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment without advance notice:

- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness;
- Failure to follow parish procedures and policies;
- Falsification of records;
- Sexual misconduct or harassment;
- Poor work performance; or
- Failure to report for work without prior notice on three or more occasions.

### *Business Practices*

Employees should be introduced to and adhere to the practices and methodologies included in the most recent edition of the *Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs*.

### *Employee Records Management*

Personnel records contain the original application for employment, screening documents, letter of agreement, performance-related documents, copies of benefits applications (except medical), copies of citations and awards and other job-related documents. Leave and payroll materials may be kept here or in a separate file. Forms I-9 should be kept in a separate file.

Individual medical and disability-related records are confidential documents, kept separately in a secure location.

A schedule for records retention should be developed with the assistance of a lawyer or the *Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs*. Guidelines for accessing information in personnel files should be documented.

## **II. Compensation**

Compensation is based on the knowledge, skills, abilities plus the related education and experience that the successful candidate brings to the position. The Diocesan Compensation Guides are used in determining the appropriate salary for each position.

## **III. Benefits**

**Medical and Dental:** The Diocese offers a comprehensive array of plans through the Episcopal Church Medical Trust. These are available to lay employees through the Diocese of Washington. [Click here](#) for additional information.

**Pension:** Defined Contribution and Defined Benefits Plans are available through the Church Pension Group. The Diocese of Washington assists parish employers with the enrollment process. Parishes are

encouraged to contribute up to 9% of base salary for lay employees working 1000 hours or more in a twelve month period.

**Income Replacement Benefit and Long-Term Disability:** Employees working 20 hours per week or 1000 hours annually are eligible to enroll in the Church Pension Group plans at their own or the employer's expense.

**Group Life Insurance:** Employer-paid group life insurance is available for employees working a minimum of 20 hours per week or 1000 hours annually.

**Optional Retirement Savings Plans (403b)** This benefit is available at employee expense from Church Pension Group to employees working a minimum of 1000 hours per year.

Some of these benefits require enrollment within the first 30 days of employment. After 30 days, employees may be required to wait until for the next Open Enrollment period and/or undergo medical underwriting.