

Intro

Introduction

Northwest UMC of Peoria, IL

Our Mission To experience and share the love and power of Jesus Christ

Our Vision To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

Core Values Hospitality, Music, Missions/Outreach, Children's and Youth Ministry, Prayer Ministry, Generosity, and Family

Employee Policy Manual

Draft Aug 25, 2026

Updated TBD

Employee Policy Manual

If you are a new employee, welcome — we are glad you are here. We hope you will enjoy working alongside our staff and the many volunteers from our congregation who make up the Northwest UMC team. The success of each employee is measured by how well his or her work advances the mission and ministries of the Church.

This Employee Policy Manual provides information and guidelines about Church practices and policies. It is intended for current employees as well as members of the Northwest UMC community who assist staff or serve on committees responsible for staff oversight. It is designed to be a helpful reference for both new and existing employees.

The policies in this manual may be changed, modified, revoked, or replaced at any time by action of Northwest UMC, with or without prior notice. This manual supersedes all previously written policies or policy manuals.

A. Employment

Section A: Employment

1.0 Equal Employment Opportunity

Northwest UMC is committed to providing equal employment opportunity to all qualified individuals. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, citizenship status, ancestry, age (40 and over), order of protection status, marital status, physical or mental disability, arrest record, military status, sexual orientation, discharge from military service, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law. This commitment applies across all aspects of employment, including hiring, compensation, training, promotions, discipline, and termination.

2.0 Appointed Clergy

Pastors are appointed to Northwest UMC by the Bishop of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Directing Pastor serves as the Administrative Officer of the Church.

3.0 Staff Qualifications

All staff members are expected to meet the following baseline qualifications:

- Be supportive of the Christian faith and the mission and values of the United Methodist Church;
- Possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to carry out the responsibilities of their specific role;
- Be able to work collaboratively and maintain positive, respectful relationships with the people they serve and with fellow staff members;
- Handle sensitive and confidential information with discretion and integrity;
- Show a willingness to grow, learn, and develop in their role;
- Demonstrate a genuine sense of commitment and responsibility in their work.

4.0 Employment Status

Each employee's classification, hours, and compensation will be established and agreed upon at the time of hiring. Employees should refer to their offer letter or employment agreement for the specific terms that apply to their position.

5.0 Tax Provisions for Appointed Clergy

To qualify for the special tax provisions available to Appointed Clergy under IRS regulations (Topic 417, Earnings for Clergy), an individual must be a licensed, commissioned, or ordained minister performing services "in the exercise of his or her ministry." This generally includes:

- Administering sacraments such as communion, baptism, weddings, and funerals;
- Serving as a recognized religious leader of the congregation;
- Leading and conducting religious worship services;
- Providing oversight and direction for the religious organization and its ministries, under the authority of a recognized church body or denomination.

Appointed Clergy are exempt by law from mandatory federal income tax withholding. However, they may voluntarily elect to have federal income taxes withheld by completing and submitting an IRS Form W-4 to the Church. Northwest UMC will not withhold or match FICA taxes for Appointed Clergy. If desired, Appointed Clergy may request that an additional withholding amount be applied to cover their estimated self-employment tax liability. Any amounts withheld will be reflected on the Appointed Clergy member's Form W-2 at year end.

All other employees of Northwest UMC will receive an IRS Form W-2 at the end of each calendar year reporting their taxable income, withholdings, and other required information.

6.0 Nepotism

Our goal in every hiring decision is to select the most qualified candidate for the position. Relatives of current Northwest UMC employees are welcome to apply for open positions but will not receive preferential consideration. No employee may directly supervise, or be directly supervised by, an immediate family member. Exceptions to this policy require prior approval from the Leadership Team.

7.0 Employment At Will

All employees of Northwest UMC, with the exception of the Directing Pastor, are employed on an at-will basis. This means that either the employee or Northwest UMC may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause. This policy manual is not an employment contract and should not be read as one. It describes our general policies and operating procedures. Regardless of whether the disciplinary steps described elsewhere in this manual are followed, an employee may be dismissed at any time when the Directing Pastor recommends, and the Leadership Team approves, that the employee's performance or conduct is unsatisfactory.

8.0 Immigration Law Compliance

Northwest UMC is committed to employing only individuals who are legally authorized to work in the United States, and we do not discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In accordance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, all new employees must complete an Employment Eligibility Verification form (I-9) and provide documentation confirming their identity and work authorization before beginning employment. Employees who are rehired must also complete a new I-9 if they have not done so with Northwest UMC within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer on file or remains valid.

9.0 Disability Accommodation

Northwest UMC is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities. All employment decisions are made based on a person's ability to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation, and not on the basis of disability.

Where a disability affects an employee's ability to perform their job functions, Northwest UMC will work with the employee to identify and provide reasonable accommodation. Employees who need accommodation are encouraged to speak with the Directing Pastor or the Leadership Team.

B. Workplace Guidelines

Section B: Workplace Guidelines

1.0 General

The purpose of these guidelines is to define Northwest UMC's general workplace expectations. Northwest UMC's basic rule is simple – if any employee engages in activity detrimental to the best interests of Northwest UMC, its members, or its employees, he or she will be appropriately disciplined. There will be consequences for improper behavior. The workplace guidelines in this Employee Policy Manual are not exhaustive or all-inclusive.

Examples of activity detrimental to the Church include, but are not limited to, habitual lateness and/or absenteeism, destruction of property, fighting, reporting to work under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, stealing, insubordination, refusing to perform an assignment, and disclosing confidential information inappropriately. This list is meant to illustrate the kinds of behavior that are unacceptable, not to describe every possible situation.

2.0 Office Hours

Northwest UMC maintains regular office hours, although these vary by availability of staff, time of year, and other factors. At certain times of year, the Pastor will work with staff to adjust schedules as necessary to meet the workflow needs of the Church's ministry.

3.0 Holidays

Northwest UMC observes the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- July 4th
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

If an observed holiday falls on a working day, holiday pay will be provided.

Staff required to work on an observed holiday will be allowed either equivalent time off with pay before or after the holiday, OR double pay, when approved by the Directing Pastor.

4.0 Telecommuting / Work From Home

Work-from-home arrangements may be made with the approval of the Directing Pastor. All policies and procedures governing in-office work should also govern at-home work.

5.0 Inclement Weather

On inclement weather days, the Directing Pastor has the authority to close the office. Staff may still be able to handle necessary tasks from home on these days and are encouraged to do so rather than risk their safety or that of others traveling to the Church office.

5.1 During Normal Working Hours

The Directing Pastor has the authority to close the Church office if the Church experiences a prolonged power failure, or if approaching bad weather raises safety concerns.

5.2 Cancellation of Church Services

Cancellation of Church services, events, or meetings will be determined by the Directing Pastor in consultation with other Church leaders.

6.0 Staff Meetings

Employees are expected to attend scheduled staff meetings.

7.0 Appearance and Dress Code

Attire should always be neat and modest while at Church or participating in video communications from home.

8.0 Anniversary Date

An employee's anniversary date is defined as his or her first day on the job with Northwest UMC. Each employee will serve a ninety (90) day probationary period from the anniversary date. The employment of any staff person may be terminated by either the employee or Northwest UMC during this probationary period. At the end of ninety (90) days, there will be a Performance Appraisal completed as outlined in the Performance Standards section of this Manual.

9.0 Recording Time Worked

All employees are required to maintain a record of actual hours worked. Hourly employees report hours to the Pastor before the following Tuesday, and get paid on the following Friday.

10.0 Personnel Files and Records

Northwest UMC keeps a personnel file on each employee. These files are kept securely in the Church office. They contain documents that are, have been, or are intended to be used in determining an employee's qualifications for employment, promotion, transfer, additional compensation, discharge, or other disciplinary action. Except for letters of reference and certain other limited information, the contents of the file are open for inspection by the employee at reasonable times and intervals upon request. Northwest UMC will keep all personnel records private.

Personnel file information is generally not to be released to third parties. Requests for release of information to a third party should be cleared with the Directing Pastor. There are certain times when information may be shared outside the Church:

- In response to a subpoena, court order, or order of an administrative agency
- In a lawsuit, grievance, or arbitration in which the employee and Northwest UMC are parties

Northwest UMC will provide only verification of employment dates, the employee's last or present job title, and the fact of employment to a prospective employer or other outside parties, unless the employee provides written authorization.

Documents that may be placed in a personnel file include, but are not limited to:

- Application for employment
- Employment offer form
- Authorization for a background check
- Emergency notification form
- Job description
- References
- Salary information and W-2 forms
- Any other documents relating to the employee's status
- Proof of continuing education
- Files containing medical information will be kept in a separate file
- I-9 forms (verification of an employee's legal status as a U.S. citizen) will be kept in a separate file
- Leave records, including vacation, sick leave, and PLAWA paid leave, and completed performance evaluations.

11.0 Confidentiality of Personnel Records

Northwest UMC will keep personnel files confidential and access to them will be limited. All personnel files are confidential and those with access are expected to treat them as such. Generally, access to personnel files will be limited to the Directing Pastor and the Chair of the Leadership Team / appropriate Leadership Team member.

Those with access to personnel files will keep the information confidential and will not share it with anyone outside Northwest UMC. If information is shared with a Church committee, committee members are bound by the same confidentiality policy. If a breach of confidentiality is determined to have occurred, a meeting will take place among all parties involved to determine appropriate action.

12.0 Confidentiality of Church Information

During the course of employment with Northwest UMC, employees may regularly have access to sensitive and confidential information. This information may be found in Church records, correspondence with members and others, internal communications, and similar documents. Employees of Northwest UMC serve in a position of trust and are obligated to protect the confidentiality of this information strictly.

Any information regarding Northwest UMC, its members, or those to whom Northwest UMC ministers, which an employee learns as a result of their employment, is considered confidential. Employees may not disclose, duplicate, or use this information except as required to carry out their duties. Failure to meet this standard may result in disciplinary action.

13.0 Issuance of Church Property and Equipment

Keys to exterior doors and/or offices will be issued to appropriate employees. Church-issued keys may not be used by anyone other than the employee to whom they were issued, and employees must never copy Church keys.

Any Church-owned property or equipment (such as keys, credit cards, or laptop computers) issued to an employee remains the property of Northwest UMC. These items are to be used solely by the employee to whom they were issued, and only for Church-related business. All such items must be returned to the Church office upon termination of employment, and the employee's final paycheck will be held until all items have been returned.

14.0 Orientation and Training

Northwest UMC will provide appropriate orientation and training to each new employee. This will include:

- Completion of required employment forms, such as a W-2 statement, an I-9 form, and authorization to conduct a background check.

- Receipt of a copy of this Employee Policy Manual, the employee's job description, and other relevant materials. The employee will sign a sheet confirming they have received these items.
- Instruction and training in specific duties, under the direction of the Directing Pastor or others as appointed by the Leadership Team.
- Participation, with prior approval of the Directing Pastor, in additional training or continuing education opportunities that would enhance job performance, as the budget allows.

15.0 Grievances and Complaints

Employees who have grievances or complaints about Church policies, procedures, or organizational matters should first discuss them with their immediate supervisor. If the employee feels the concern is unresolved, they may submit it in writing to the Directing Pastor, who will review the matter and take appropriate action. If the employee is still not satisfied, they may submit the concern in writing to the Chair of the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will review the matter and provide a response. The decision of the Leadership Team is final.

16.0 Ethics Statement

All funds and property received and administered by Northwest UMC are entrusted to them by God through the faithful financial support of Church members. Therefore, the highest degree of Christian stewardship and fiduciary responsibility is expected of all Leadership Team members, committee members, and staff in matters relating to the receiving, reporting, and use of such funds and property. Ethical, moral, and legal conduct is a critical component of Christian stewardship. Fiduciary responsibility also includes loyalty to the objectives and purposes for which funds have been allocated, prudence and care in the administration of entrusted funds and property, and personal commitment to the highest standard of fiscal responsibility.

All employees agree to abide by the highest ethical and moral standards and practices, and all applicable laws and regulations, in all actions they take on behalf of Northwest UMC.

17.0 Harassment Policy

Northwest UMC is committed to providing a work environment free from harassment, discrimination, and hostile conduct. This policy prohibits all acts of discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate or offensive conduct in the work environment, whether engaged in by a supervisor, co-worker, or Church member.

Any employee with questions or concerns about discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate conduct in the workplace is encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their supervisor or the Chair of the Leadership Team. Anyone can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

If an employee believes he or she is being, or has been, harassed in any way, or has witnessed harassment, they must report the facts of the incident immediately to the Directing Pastor. If the concern involves the Directing Pastor, the employee should report directly to the Chair of the Leadership Team. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes unlawful harassment, the totality of the circumstances — including the nature of the conduct and the context in which the incident occurred — will be investigated and documented in writing. Every complaint will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and held in strict confidence. The Church will take affirmative steps to ensure that such behavior is not allowed or tolerated. Offenders may be disciplined up to and including termination and the loss of accrued benefits.

18.0 Personal and Romantic Relationships

Situations may arise where workplace friendships develop into personal or romantic relationships. Romantic relationships between co-workers can create difficulties for the parties involved, Northwest UMC, and other employees or members.

When such a relationship develops and one employee is anywhere in the chain of authority or influence over the other, both employees are expected to report the relationship to the Directing Pastor. This type of authority dynamic can affect employee morale through perceptions of favoritism and may create potential violations of the harassment policy. The employees must report the relationship as soon as it appears it could become romantic in nature (e.g., dating) to the Directing Pastor who will consult with the Leadership Team on appropriate next steps.

19.0 Smoking, Drug, and Alcohol Policy

It is the policy of Northwest UMC to provide a workplace free of drugs and alcohol. Employees are prohibited from manufacturing, using, possessing, distributing, transferring, selling, or being under the influence of alcohol or unauthorized or illegal drugs while on Church business, on Church premises, or in any Church parking lot, storage area, job site, or vehicle.

In keeping with Northwest UMC's commitment to a safe and healthy work environment, smoking — including cigarettes and e-cigarettes — is not permitted on any Church premises, whether owned or leased, including all offices, buildings, and vehicles. This policy applies equally to all employees, members, and visitors.

The term "illegal drugs" as used in this policy means a drug or other substance as defined in applicable federal and state criminal law.

Any violation of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including discharge, as determined by the Leadership Team.

20.0 Workplace Violence

Northwest UMC takes violence in the workplace very seriously in order to ensure the safety of employees and Church members on Church grounds.

Violence and threats of violence include, but are not limited to:

- Any act that is physically assaultive -- Any substantial threat to harm or endanger the safety of others
- Behaviors or actions that a reasonable person would interpret as carrying the potential for violence or aggression
- Any substantial threat to destroy property
- Possession of any weapon or dangerous instrument (such as firearms, certain knives, or brass or metal knuckles) on Church property

A climate of fear or intimidation will not be tolerated at Northwest UMC. Threatening or intimidating behaviors, acts of verbal or physical aggression, and/or violence may result in severe discipline or immediate termination. Civil and criminal penalties will be pursued as appropriate. Every employee is responsible for taking any threat or violent act seriously and reporting it immediately to the Directing Pastor.

21.0 Workplace Safety and Security

Every effort will be made to ensure the safety and well-being of employees, volunteers, Church members, and guests of Northwest UMC, both on Church premises and during Church-related activities. Northwest UMC will provide employees with the tools, training, facilities, and information necessary to work in a safe and efficient manner. Employees are asked to approach their work with care and respect for their own health and safety and that of those around them.

Northwest UMC strives to comply with all applicable workplace safety laws and regulations, and employees are responsible for understanding and observing them. No task is so important that it warrants risking the health or safety of any employee or volunteer.

If an on-the-job accident occurs — whether involving an employee or a volunteer — it must be reported to the Office Manager or Directing Pastor immediately, no matter how minor it may seem.

22.0 Background Checks

All staff will complete a background check form and subsequent background check as a condition of employment.

C. Compensation

Section C: Salary and Benefits

1.0 Overview

Northwest UMC's benefit plan is designed to give employees paid time away from work, help with certain expenses, and provide other support as needs arise.

The benefits described in this section are available as of the date of this manual. Benefits may be adjusted at any time. Reasons for adjustment may include rising costs or a change in the church's financial position.

2.0 New Employees

Starting salaries are set by negotiation. Every new employee goes through a ninety (90) day probationary period. At the end of that period, the Directing Pastor will conduct a performance review as described in Section D: Performance Standards.

3.0 Pay Periods

Pay period is two weeks, ending on a Sunday. Hourly employees report hours to the Pastor before the following Tuesday, and get paid on the following Friday.

4.0 Tax Deductions

Federal and state taxes will be withheld from each paycheck based on the withholding forms you complete when you are hired. Each January you will receive a W-2 showing the amounts withheld during the previous year.

If your tax situation changes, it is your responsibility to submit an updated withholding form. A copy will be placed in your personnel file.

5.0 Unemployment Compensation

Employees of churches are generally not covered under state unemployment compensation law and therefore may not be eligible for unemployment benefits if they leave employment.

6.0 Overtime

For non-exempt employees, any hours worked beyond forty (40) in a single work week are eligible for overtime pay at one-and-a-half times the regular rate, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. **Overtime must be approved in advance by the Directing Pastor.**

A normal work schedule will be set with the Directing Pastor. When meetings or other duties fall outside normal hours, schedules should be adjusted when possible rather than counting toward overtime.

Holidays and paid absences—including vacation, sick leave, PLAWA paid leave, and paid continuing-education leave—do not count as hours worked for purposes of overtime calculations. The work week runs Monday through Sunday.

A non-exempt employee may choose compensatory time off instead of overtime pay, with the Directing Pastor's approval. Compensatory time must be taken during the same pay period in which it was earned.

7.0 Volunteer Service

Non-exempt employees may not volunteer their personal time to perform the same duties they are paid to do. This rule comes from Department of Labor wage and hour standards.

Non-exempt employees are welcome to volunteer for other church activities, as long as those activities are unrelated to their normal job responsibilities.

8.0 Vacation

Vacation time is provided in recognition of employee service.

8.1 Ministerial Staff

The Directing Pastor's vacation is governed by The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline and will be honored by Northwest UMC.

8.2 Support Staff

Full-time employees will negotiate vacation time and policy at time of hire.

8.3 Part-time Paid Leave

Part-time employees accrue paid leave under the Illinois Paid Leave for All Workers Act at the rate of one hour for every 40 hours worked. In this manual, this benefit is called 'PLAWA paid leave.' It may be used for any reason and is separate from the vacation and sick-leave benefits provided to eligible full-time employees. Unused PLAWA paid leave carries over to the next 12-month period, although Northwest UMC may limit its use to 40 hours in any 12-month period. Northwest UMC will pay out unused PLAWA paid leave when employment ends.

9.0 Sick Leave

Full-time salaried employees working 37.5 or more hours per week earn eight (8) hours of sick leave per month, credited on the first of each month. Unused sick leave may accumulate up to 160 hours (twenty days); no additional hours will be credited once that cap is reached. The remaining provisions of this section apply to this full-time sick-leave benefit. Part-time employees may use PLAWA paid leave for illness or any other reason, as described in Section 8.3.

Sick leave may be used for:

- Your own illness, injury, or medical appointment.
- The illness, injury, or medical appointment of an immediate family member (spouse, children, or parents).
- Care of an immediate family member with a contagious illness, or when your own exposure to a contagious illness would put others at risk.

When sick leave runs out during an extended illness, the employee may choose to use any remaining vacation time. For absences of three or more consecutive days, Northwest UMC may require a doctor's note, and reserves the right to request one at any time.

In unusual circumstances, the Leadership Team may review an employee's situation and grant additional sick days on a case-by-case basis.

Sick leave only accrues while an employee is actively working. Sick leave does not accrue during an unpaid leave of absence, and the employee's anniversary date will be moved forward one week for each week of unpaid leave taken. Unused sick leave cannot be used as extra vacation time and will not be paid out when employment ends.

10.0 Salary Review

Each employee's salary will be reviewed at least once per year. The Leadership Team will prepare a recommendation based on:

- The employee's performance review
- Current inflation and cost of living
- The church's financial ability to grant increases
- Comparable salaries for similar positions in the community
- Any changes in the role's responsibilities or required skills

The Leadership Team will consider input from the Directing Pastor when preparing its budget recommendation. Final salary figures are set after approval by the Leadership Team.

11.0 Health Insurance

NOTE: Does Northwest UMC subsidize health insurance premiums for full-time staff?

Northwest UMC does not provide group health insurance. Northwest UMC does not subsidize annual health insurance premiums for full-time salaried employees.

The Directing Pastor receives health insurance allowance as provided for by the Conference policies.

12.0 Pension

Northwest UMC does not contribute to a pension plan for full-time non-pastoral salaried staff. At the time of writing, there is a state-government savings plan that part-time workers can participate in at their discretion. The Directing Pastor does receive pension benefits through the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

13.0 Leaves of Absence

13.1 Personal Leave

Full-time salaried employees receive eight (8) hours of paid personal leave per calendar year, beginning after their first year of employment. Personal leave does not carry over from year to year and is not paid out when employment ends. Except in emergencies, personal leave requires advance approval from the Directing Pastor.

An employee who has completed at least six (6) months of continuous service may request an unpaid personal leave of absence for up to thirty (30) days. The request should explain the reason for the leave and include start and end dates, and must be submitted to the Directing Pastor in advance. The Directing Pastor will consult with the Leadership Team before approving.

Extended leave that does not qualify under the Family and Medical Leave Act may be granted by the Directing Pastor, with the Leadership Team's agreement, in exceptional circumstances.

13.2 Bereavement Leave

Employees may take up to one paid week off at their normal weekly pay following the death of an immediate family member (spouse, parents, children, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or in-laws). Normal weekly pay is defined as the average of the previous four (4) weeks of pay for that staff person. More than one week requires approval from the Directing Pastor and the Leadership Team.

In the case of the death of a more distant relative or close friend, one paid day off may be arranged with the Directing Pastor.

Other family-related time off may be taken without pay at the Directing Pastor's discretion.

13.3 Family and Medical Leave Act

Eligible employees may take up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave within any twelve (12) month period under the Family and Medical Leave Act. During this leave, the employee's position will be held and restored upon return.

Unpaid FMLA leave may be taken for:

- The birth and care of a newborn child.
- The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care.
- Care of an immediate family member (spouse, parents, children, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or in-laws) with a serious health condition.

- The employee's own serious health condition that prevents them from working.

The Directing Pastor can take eight (8) weeks paid FMLA and up to an additional four (4) weeks unpaid FMLA per the Book of Discipline.

14.0 Jury Duty

All employees who are required to serve on a jury or appear in court under a valid subpoena or court order will be excused from work and paid their normal salary or wages during that time. Normal weekly pay is defined as the average of the previous four (4) weeks of pay for that staff person.

Employees are expected to report to work on any day, or portion of a day, when court duties do not conflict.

After jury service ends, the employee must submit the attendance form provided by the court to the church office. Any jury pay received from the court (excluding mileage reimbursement) must be turned over to the church. Mileage payments included in the court's check will be returned to the employee.

15.0 Reporting Absences

When you are unable to come to work for any reason, notify the Directing Pastor or Office Manager as soon as possible.

An employee who fails to report an absence and give a reason within a reasonable time will receive a formal warning and may be placed on probation, as described in the section on the Resolution and Grievance Process. If an employee does not show up and does not contact the church for two consecutive workdays, this may be treated as a voluntary resignation.

16.0 Expense Reimbursement

16.1 General Reimbursement

Employees with a designated spending account will be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary business expenses incurred in doing their job, provided they document the amount, purpose, date, and location of each expense on a reimbursement voucher. Vouchers must be submitted to the Office Manager within sixty (60) days of the expense. Any amounts received that exceed

documented expenses must be returned to the church within one hundred twenty (120) days. Properly substantiated reimbursements will not be reported as income on your W-2.

16.2 Mileage

Employees who use their personal vehicle for church business will be reimbursed at the current IRS standard mileage rate, with the Directing Pastor's approval. Reimbursement will be processed once a completed voucher is submitted.

17.0 Continuing Education

Employees may be granted paid continuing-education leave by the Directing Pastor. This leave is separate from, and will not be deducted from, vacation, sick leave, or PLAWA paid leave. Both the event and the dates must be approved in advance.

18.0 Severance Pay

If an employee's position is eliminated due to staff reorganization, lack of funding, or a change in ministry direction, the church will provide at least one (1) month's advance notice and severance pay equal to one week of pay for each full year of service. If the employee has worked less than a full year, the severance will be prorated.

Employees who resign voluntarily are paid through their last day of work but do not receive severance pay.

An employee who is involuntarily removed from their position for other reasons may receive separation pay at the discretion of the Directing Pastor, with the Leadership Team's agreement, but not more than one-half week of pay for each year of service at Northwest UMC.

D. Performance

Section D: Performance Standards

1.0 Probationary Period

New employees serve a ninety (90) day probationary period following their start date. Employment may be ended at any time during or after this period if the employee is not meeting performance standards.

About two weeks before the end of this period, the [Senior Pastor / Lead Pastor] and the Chairperson of the Leadership Team will meet with the employee to conduct a performance review covering the employee's work during the probationary period. The completed review form will be placed in the employee's personnel file. If performance is satisfactory, the probationary period ends — though the employee continues to serve at the pleasure of Northwest UMC (see *Employment "At Will"* in Section A). If performance is not satisfactory, the probationary period may be extended in writing or employment may be ended.

2.0 Position Descriptions

Every approved staff position, whether full time or part time, must have a current Position Description on file in the church office before anyone is hired to fill that position. A Position Description helps clarify responsibilities, coordinate work across the team, and avoid duplication of effort.

Position Descriptions are guides, not exhaustive lists. They are not meant to limit what an employee can contribute, and all employees are expected to be team players who help one another and the church within reason and workplace safety guidelines. Prospective employees are typically given the Position Description during the interview process. Employees should read it, revisit it periodically, and discuss any questions about their responsibilities or authority with their supervisor.

3.0 Performance Appraisals

Every staff member will receive a written performance review from their supervisor each year. The timing of this review should align with the schedule established in Section C. The review is a two-way conversation: it gives the supervisor a chance to give feedback on performance and discuss goals for the coming year, and it gives the employee a chance to share ideas for improving how the church operates.

- Salaries are reviewed each year at the time of the performance review.
- Once the review is complete, a copy will be shared with the employee and the Leadership Team, and the original will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

4.0 Performance

4.1 Corrective Action

Clear performance standards only work if there is also a clear, fair process for addressing situations where an employee is not meeting them. The goal of this process is to help correct problems and give employees a genuine opportunity to improve where that is appropriate.

Corrective action can take different forms depending on how serious the issue is and how likely the Leadership Team believes improvement to be. Factors considered include the severity of the problem, its nature, and the employee's overall work history. All corrective action will be documented in writing and placed in the employee's personnel file.

4.2 Informal Counseling

If an employee's performance or conduct falls short of what is expected, the [Senior Pastor / Lead Pastor] and the Chairperson of the Leadership Team will meet with the employee to talk through the situation. Together they will identify the problem, agree on steps to address it, and make clear what will happen if the problem continues. This conversation is normally the first step in the process.

4.3 Performance Improvement Plan

If informal counseling does not resolve the issue and the employee's performance remains unsatisfactory, the [Senior Pastor / Lead Pastor] and the Chairperson of the Leadership Team will place the employee on a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP will be written down and reviewed with the employee in a face-to-face meeting. It will clearly describe:

- The specific performance or conduct problems that need to be corrected,
- The concrete steps the employee is expected to take,
- The support or resources Northwest UMC will provide, and
- The date on which the PIP period ends.

The length of the PIP period will be set by the [Senior Pastor / Lead Pastor] and the Chairperson of the Leadership Team. The employee will have a real opportunity to correct the identified problems during this time. A progress check-in may be scheduled before the end of the PIP period.

If the employee meets the expectations set out in the PIP, their regular employment status will be restored at the end of the period. If the problems continue or the employee does not make sufficient progress, Northwest UMC retains the right to end employment at any time during the PIP period.

Northwest UMC also reserves the right to end employment at any time without going through a PIP, depending on the nature or severity of the situation. Any involuntary termination will be

supported by appropriate documentation and will ordinarily take place only after a conversation with the employee.

E. Termination

Section E: Termination of Employment

1.0 Resignation

If you wish to leave your position in good standing, please give the Directing Pastor written notice at least two weeks before your last day. This gives the church time to adjust schedules and begin looking for a replacement.

2.0 Involuntary Termination

An involuntary termination is one initiated by Church Leadership for reasons other than a reduction in staff (see Section C.18 for layoffs).

The following are grounds for immediate dismissal:

- Any breach of legal or moral ethics
- A false statement on your employment application
- Insubordination
- Theft
- Use of illegal drugs or alcohol on church property or during church-sponsored activities
- Substantiated allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse

The following may also be grounds for dismissal:

- Violation of Northwest UMC policies or procedures
- Unexcused absences
- Unsatisfactory work performance
- Violation of confidentiality

Unsatisfactory performance will generally be handled through the process described under the *Resolution and Grievance Procedure* before termination is considered.

When an involuntary termination is necessary, the following steps will be followed:

1. The Directing Pastor and the Leadership Team will investigate the situation and confirm that grounds for termination exist. If they do, the process below will be followed:
 1. A meeting will be scheduled with the employee, the Directing Pastor, and a representative of the Leadership Team.
 1. The reasons for the termination will be clearly explained to the employee.
 2. Any supporting documentation will be available for the employee to review.

3. The terms of separation will be discussed, including any remaining benefits and the employee's reference status.
4. The employee will collect personal belongings in the presence of the Directing Pastor or a Leadership Team representative, return all church-owned property, and leave the premises once that is complete.
5. A written record of the termination process will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

3.0 Layoff

A layoff is a termination that results from changing ministry conditions that require a reduction in staff. A layoff is not a disciplinary action.

4.0 Return of Church Property

Employees are responsible for all church property, materials, and documents issued to them. Upon request, or upon separation from employment, all church property must be returned promptly and in satisfactory condition. Northwest UMC may withhold from a current or final paycheck the cost of any items not returned as required, and may take any other appropriate steps to recover or protect its property.

5.0 Exit Interview

When an employee leaves voluntarily, the Directing Pastor or a Leadership Team representative will normally conduct a face-to-face exit interview to better understand the extent to which church policies, the work environment, or working conditions may have contributed to the employee's decision. If an in-person meeting is not possible, the interview may be conducted by phone.

Employee Acknowledgement

Employee Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received this Manual and that I am responsible for reading and understanding its contents, including the explanation of "At Will Employment" (Section A) of this document. If anything in this Manual is unclear to me, I understand that I am obligated to consult the Directing Pastor and/or the Chairperson of the Leadership Team for further information. I also understand that existing policies may be updated, changed, or removed at any time.

Employee's Name (Printed Clearly): _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

To be signed and returned to the Office Manager.