

First Christian Church

Disciples of Christ — Guthrie, Oklahoma

Personnel Policy

Adopted: April 26, 2026

Section 1: Purpose and Scope

This Personnel Policy exists to support the mission and ministry of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Guthrie, Oklahoma by establishing clear, consistent, and fair practices for all employed staff. We are first and foremost a community of faith, and our employment practices should reflect our values of integrity, grace, accountability, and mutual respect.

Throughout this document, “First Christian Church” and “FCC” refer to First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Guthrie, Oklahoma. The terms are used interchangeably.

This policy applies to all paid employees of First Christian Church. It is intended to complement, not replace, the congregation's Constitution and Bylaws. In any conflict between this policy and the Bylaws, the Bylaws shall govern.

This policy is not a contract of employment and does not guarantee continued employment. It may be revised by the Board as ministry needs evolve. Employees will be made aware of any changes and asked to re-sign the policy.

In the event that no Senior Minister is currently serving, the responsibilities assigned to the Senior Minister in this policy shall be assumed by the Board Chair, in consultation with the Personnel Committee. Day-to-day operational oversight during a vacancy shall be coordinated by the Church Administrator in cooperation with the Board Chair.

Section 2: Employee Classifications

All employees are classified in one of the following categories. Classification determines eligibility for benefits, leave, and certain policy provisions.

2.1 Exempt (Salaried / Non-Hourly) Employees

Exempt employees are paid a set salary and are not eligible for overtime pay. This classification currently includes:

- Senior Minister
- Associate Minister
- Youth Minister
- Children's Minister
- Church Secretary/Administrator
- Mother's Day Out (MDO) Director
- Any other salaried leadership role as designated by the Board

This policy is designed to accommodate additional exempt positions as ministry needs grow, without requiring a full policy revision.

2.2 Non-Exempt (Hourly) Employees

Non-exempt employees are paid hourly and are eligible for overtime in accordance with applicable federal and state law. Specific policies for hourly employees will be developed in a future addendum addressing timekeeping, overtime authorization, and related matters.

2.3 Part-Time and Temporary Employees

Part-time employees regularly work fewer than 30 hours per week. Temporary employees are employed for less than three consecutive months. Unless otherwise stated in a written agreement, part-time and temporary employees are not eligible for paid leave benefits.

Section 3: Calling and Hiring

FCC recognizes that employing staff is both an organizational decision and a matter of Christian discernment. All hiring decisions honor both dimensions.

3.1 Ministerial Staff

Ministers are called through the process described in Article V of the Bylaws, requiring Search Committee recommendation, a two-thirds Board vote, and a two-thirds congregational vote.

3.2 Non-Ministerial Staff

Non-ministerial positions are created by the Board. Candidates are recruited and interviewed by the Senior Minister in collaboration with the relevant committee and/or staff. Refer to bylaws for confirmation of employment. All positions include a written job description, compensation agreement, and classification designation approved by the Board before hire.

3.3 Background Checks

All paid employees must complete and pass a criminal background check (and driver check where applicable) before beginning work. Results are kept in the personnel file with restricted access.

Section 4: Goal Setting

Clear, meaningful goals are essential to effective ministry and organizational health. Goal setting is a shared act of discernment about how each staff member contributes to the congregation's mission.

4.1 Annual Goal Setting

At the beginning of each ministry year (currently defined as July), each employee develops goals in collaboration with their supervisor. Goals should be specific, aligned with FCC's mission and annual priorities, realistic, and measurable where possible. Qualitative ministry goals are equally valid.

For the Senior Minister, goals are developed in collaboration with the Board Chair and the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC). For all other staff, goals are developed with the Senior Minister. Completed goal documents are signed by both parties and placed in the personnel file.

4.2 Goal Categories

Goals should address some combination of the following, as appropriate to each role:

- Ministry and program development
- Personal and professional growth, including continuing education

- Congregational relationships and community engagement
- Administrative and operational responsibilities
- Spiritual formation and self-care

Section 5: Quarterly Check-Ins

Regular check-ins support ongoing communication, course correction, and mutual accountability. They are conversations, not evaluations.

5.1 Frequency and Format

All exempt employees will have check-ins with their direct supervisor beginning quarterly (approximately every 90 days). As both the employee and supervisor feel the relationship and communication are well established, check-ins may shift to a biannual schedule at their mutual discretion. Check-in requirements for non-exempt hourly employees will be addressed in their job description.

These conversations are intended to:

- Review progress toward annual goals
- Surface challenges, resource needs, or concerns
- Recognize contributions and celebrate wins
- Adjust goals if circumstances have significantly changed
- Discuss professional development opportunities

A brief written summary, agreed upon and signed by both parties, is prepared after each check-in and retained in the personnel file. An overview of all check-in discussions is shared with the Personnel Committee and Board Chair. Personnel files are maintained in a locked and secured folder.

5.2 Senior Minister Check-Ins

Quarterly check-ins for the Senior Minister are conducted by the Board Chair in consultation with the PRC. These conversations should be candid and supportive. The Board is informed in general terms of the Senior Minister's progress while appropriate confidentiality is maintained.

5.3 Other Exempt Staff Check-Ins

The Senior Minister conducts quarterly check-ins with all other exempt staff, and may delegate this responsibility for a specific staff member to a direct committee or another staff member with Board Chair approval.

Section 6: Annual Performance Evaluation

Annual evaluations provide a formal, documented assessment of each employee's work and are the foundation for salary review decisions.

6.1 Timing

Evaluations are completed at least once per year, typically in the third quarter or before the next year's budget is prepared. The evaluation should never be the first time an employee hears a concern; those should have been addressed in quarterly check-ins.

6.2 Evaluation Process

Evaluations for all staff (except the Senior Minister) are conducted by the Senior Minister in cooperation with the Personnel Committee, referencing the employee's job description, annual goals, check-in notes, and relevant ministry committee input.

The Senior Minister's evaluation is conducted by the Board Chair and the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee and Board Chair reviews and approves the evaluation outcome.

Any employee who wishes to discuss concerns related to a member of the ministerial staff, including concerns that arise in connection with the evaluation process, has the right to request a direct conference with the Board Chair or a member of the Personnel Committee without going through the Senior Minister. This right exists to ensure that all employees have access to a confidential and appropriate channel for raising concerns about ministerial leadership. Such requests should be made in writing and will be treated with confidentiality.

6.3 Evaluation Ratings

- Exceeds Expectations: Consistently goes above and beyond job requirements and goals
- Meets Expectations: Fulfills job requirements and goals in a satisfactory manner
- Needs Improvement: Falls short in one or more significant areas; improvement plan required
- Unsatisfactory: Fails to meet basic job requirements; subject to corrective action or termination

The evaluation is signed by both evaluator and employee. The employee's signature indicates receipt, not necessarily agreement. A written employee response may be attached to the file.

Section 7: Merit-Based Compensation

FCC believes in compensating staff fairly and in recognition of faithful service. Salary decisions reflect both the congregation's financial realities and its appreciation for its staff.

7.1 Annual Salary Review

Salaries are reviewed at least annually in connection with the evaluation cycle and budget process. The Board establishes and adjusts salaries on recommendation from the Senior Minister (or Board Chair and Personnel for the Senior Minister) and the Personnel Committee. Reviews consider:

- Performance evaluation rating
- Progress on annual goals
- Tenure and experience
- Comparable compensation for similar ministry roles
- Congregation's budget and financial capacity

7.2 Merit Increases

Merit increases are based on performance evaluation outcomes and are not guaranteed. The Personnel Committee may recommend raises based on evaluation ratings. The Board retains full authority over all salary decisions.

Cost-of-living adjustments, if offered, are distinct from merit increases and are determined separately by the Board. Merit raises can be added in addition to Cost-of-living adjustments.

7.3 Salary Advances

Salary advances are strongly discouraged. In exceptional circumstances, an advance may be requested in writing and requires prior written Board approval.

Section 8: Accountability and Corrective Action

FCC holds all employees to standards consistent with our mission and values. When those standards are not met, the church responds with a process that is fair, clear, and documented.

Employment is at-will. It is the church's general practice to follow the steps below except where immediate termination is warranted.

8.1 Grounds for Corrective Action

Corrective action may be initiated for, but is not limited to:

- Performance that does not meet established expectations or goals
- Violations of church policy
- Conduct inconsistent with FCC's mission, values, or community standards
- Insubordination or failure to follow reasonable directives
- Breach of confidentiality
- Misuse of church property or funds
- Falsification of records
- Conduct that harms the congregation or its witness

8.2 Corrective Action Steps

The steps below represent FCC's standard approach to corrective action and are intended to provide employees fair notice and an opportunity to improve. However, based on the severity of an issue or the nature of the conduct involved, one or more steps may be skipped, including the verbal or written warning. In cases of serious misconduct, immediate termination may occur without prior warning. See Section 9.5 of this policy for specific conduct that may result in immediate termination.

Step 1: Verbal Warning with Documentation

The supervisor meets with the employee to discuss the concern. For the Senior Minister, this conversation is led by the Board Chair and at least one member of the Personnel Committee. The issue, expected change, and improvement timeline are communicated clearly. A written summary is prepared, signed and dated by both parties, and placed in the personnel file. The employee may attach a written response.

Step 2: Written Warning and Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

If the concern is unresolved within the agreed timeline, or a more serious issue arises, a formal written warning is issued. It includes:

- A clear description of the concern and reference to prior conversations
- Specific, measurable expectations for improvement
- A defined improvement timeline, typically 30 to 90 days
- Consequences if improvement is not demonstrated

The PIP is developed collaboratively where possible. For the Senior Minister, the Board Chair and Personnel lead this process. The Senior Minister leads this process for all other employees. If there is no Senior Minister at the time, the Board Chair and at least one member of the Personnel Committee will lead it. Documents are signed and dated by both parties and placed in the personnel file.

Step 3: Termination

If satisfactory improvement is not demonstrated within the PIP timeline, or a subsequent serious violation occurs, employment may be terminated per Section 9.

Steps may be skipped at supervisory and Board discretion for serious violations such as theft, sexual misconduct, harm to a minor, or conduct creating immediate risk to the congregation.

8.3 Documentation and Confidentiality

All corrective action documents are confidential and maintained in the employee's personnel file. Access to personnel files is restricted as described in Section 12 of this policy. FCC also recognizes that applicable employment law may limit what information can be disclosed about personnel matters, including in any congregational setting. The Board Chair and Personnel Committee are responsible for ensuring that confidentiality obligations are honored in all corrective action and termination proceedings.

Section 9: Termination of Employment

The decision to end an employment relationship is handled with care, fairness, and confidentiality, in alignment with the Bylaws.

9.1 Employment-at-Will

Employment at FCC is at-will. Either party may end the relationship at any time. This policy does not alter that status unless a specific written agreement signed by the employee, Senior Minister, and Board Chair provides otherwise.

9.2 Voluntary Resignation

Resigning employees should provide as much written notice as possible. A minimum of two weeks is expected for non-ministerial staff. Ministers follow the resignation process in Article V of the Bylaws. All church property must be returned by the final day of employment. Accrued and approved vacation is paid out on the final paycheck.

9.3 Involuntary Termination — Non-Ministerial Staff

1. Supervisor documents reason(s) for recommended termination.
2. Senior Minister reviews and may consult the Personnel Committee.
3. The Cabinet (as defined by the bylaws) is notified and provides final approval. The Cabinet may overrule any employment decision.
4. Employee is notified in a private, in-person meeting with Board Chair and Senior Minister. Written notice is provided, signed and dated and filed in the personnel file.

9.4 Termination of Ministers

Termination of the Senior Minister or other ministers follows the process as outlined in the Bylaws. Personnel matters related to ministerial termination are handled with strict confidentiality. The congregation will be informed of leadership changes in a manner that is pastorally appropriate and legally sound, without disclosure of protected personnel details.

9.5 Immediate Termination

The following may result in immediate termination without prior warning or a PIP:

- Theft, fraud, or misappropriation of church funds or property
- Sexual misconduct or harassment
- Abuse of or inappropriate conduct toward a minor
- Being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances on church property, in a church vehicle, or at an event representing FCC.
- Physical violence or threats of violence
- Falsification of records or background check materials
- Any conduct creating immediate legal risk or harm to the congregation

The Senior Minister or Board Chair (in matters involving the Senior Minister) may place an employee on paid administrative leave pending investigation before a final determination. Paid administrative leave pending

investigation shall not exceed 30 days without Board approval. The Board may authorize one extension not to exceed an additional 30 days if the investigation requires additional time.

Section 10: Grievance Procedure

Any employee who believes they have been treated unfairly may raise a grievance through the following steps:

1. Discuss the concern directly with the immediate supervisor.
2. If unresolved, bring the concern to the Senior Minister together with the supervisor.
3. If still unresolved, submit a written grievance to the Board, whose decision is final.

Retaliation against an employee for raising a good-faith grievance is prohibited.

Employees are not required to raise concerns about a member of the ministerial staff through the Senior Minister. Any employee may bypass the standard grievance steps and request a direct conference with the Board Chair or a member of the Personnel Committee at any time. This option exists to ensure that no employee is without a safe and appropriate channel for raising concerns, regardless of who the concern involves. Requests made under this provision will be handled with confidentiality and without retaliation.

Section 11: Conduct Standards

All FCC staff are called to serve with excellence, humility, and integrity. Staff are expected to:

- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with FCC's mission and values
- Treat all members, guests, volunteers, and colleagues with dignity and respect
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information regarding members, staff, and congregational matters
- Avoid conflicts of interest and disclose any potential conflicts to their supervisor
- Model healthy boundaries in all ministry relationships
- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations

Outside employment is permitted as long as it does not interfere with FCC duties. Staff are encouraged to discuss significant outside commitments with their supervisor.

Section 12: Personnel Records

FCC maintains confidential personnel files for each employee, including employment records, compensation documentation, evaluations, corrective action documents, leave records, and background check results. Personnel files are maintained in a designated locked file in the office.

Access to personnel files is limited to the following individuals, consistent with the congregation's Bylaws and applicable law:

- Senior Minister
- Direct supervisor of the employee
- Church Secretary/Administrator (for administrative purposes)
- Personnel Committee members
- Board Chair

Access by any other individual requires a signed release from the employee. Employees may inspect their own file by written request. Files are not to be removed from the premises.

FCC recognizes that applicable employment and privacy law may further restrict what personnel information can be shared, including in congregational settings. The Personnel Committee and Board Chair are responsible for ensuring these obligations are met.

Section 13: Policy Administration

13.1 Authority

This policy is adopted by the Board of First Christian Church. The Board may amend, revise, or rescind any provision at any time and notify all staff of any changes.

13.2 Questions and Interpretation

Questions about interpretation should be directed to the Senior Minister, or to the Board Chair in matters involving the Senior Minister.

13.3 Acknowledgment

All employees sign an acknowledgment confirming they have received, read, and understood this policy. Signed acknowledgments are retained in each employee's personnel file.

Employee Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the First Christian Church Personnel Policy, that I have read and understand its contents, and that I agree to abide by the standards and procedures described within. I understand that this policy is not a contract of employment and does not alter my at-will employment status.

Employee Name (Print): _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor / Senior Minister: _____ Date: _____