

Employee Handbook

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Acton Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

12 Concord Road, Acton, Massachusetts 01720

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1.0 Introduction

We are excited to have you as part of our staff and our ministry. We believe that you will enjoy your employment with us. We are sure that you can contribute to the success of our church and share our commitment to achieving the goals in our mission statement.

The mission of Acton Congregational Church, which it shares with the Church Universal, is to preach and teach the Good News of the salvation that was secured for us at great cost through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The church encourages each individual to accept the gift of Christ and to respond to God's love by taking part in worship, ministry to one another, and the Christian nurture of people of all ages. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are called as servants of Christ to live our faith in our daily lives and to reach out to people of this community and the world with love, care, and concern for both their physical and spiritual needs.

This employee handbook contains the key policies, goals, benefits, and expectations of Acton Congregational Church.

The success of Acton Congregational Church is determined by our success in operating as a unified team. We have to earn the trust and respect of our congregation every day. Our success is built by creative, productive employees who are encouraged to make suggestions while thinking "outside the box." Your job, every job, is essential to fulfilling our mission each day to the people who trust and respect us.

The primary goal of Acton Congregational Church, and yours as one of its staff, is to live our mission statement through dedicated hard work and commitment.

We all look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*The Personnel Committee
Acton Congregational Church*

2.0 Employment Policies

2.1 Job Descriptions

The Personnel Committee will ensure that each position at ACC has a written job description which provides at least the following elements:

- a. Revision number
- b. Job title
- c. Purpose of the position (objectives, needs, reasons)
- d. Concise description of the duties and responsibilities of the position
- e. Reporting structure for the position
- f. Knowledge and skills required, preferred, or desirable, including licenses, certificates, or degrees, as applicable
- g. Supervisory responsibilities of the position, if any, including the number and type of employees supervised
- h. Fiscal responsibility associated with the position (e.g., budgeting responsibilities, approval privileges, reporting and auditing functions)
- i. Physical demands associated with the position, if any
- j. General description of the working conditions and environment associated with the position (e.g., necessary travel, unusual work hours, unusual environmental conditions, etc.)

The job description is the basis for the employee's annual performance appraisal. The Personnel Committee must approve any changes to the job description. The employee shall have access to the current job description, which shall be maintained in the church office.

2.2 Work Hours

ACC allows for the use of flexible hours to help employees balance personal needs with the needs of the church. Flexible work hours vary depending on the position. Employees must discuss flexible work hour options in advance with their supervisor and receive prior approval. Employees should not request frequent changes to their schedule. ACC reserves the right to change an employee's work hours at its discretion to meet business needs.

Non-ministerial employees must fill out and submit a weekly timesheet that tracks hours worked, as well as vacation or sick time taken. The timesheet is due in the Church Administrator's office each Monday for the previous week. Exempt employees are expected to manage their hours to meet their average weekly commitment. Ministers are responsible for providing accurate information about sick, vacation, or study leave hours taken to the Church Administrator for tracking purposes.

2.3 Attendance and Availability

The efficient operation of ACC depends upon each employee fulfilling his or her responsibilities. When employees are not at work as scheduled, productivity is interrupted and business operations may be affected.

Because the church allows flexible hours and many employees are away from the church building as part of their work, it is important that all employees (including ministers) keep the sign-out board (in the main Church office) accurately updated to reflect their availability.

An employee who is unable to report to work by the start time of his or her designated work day should personally notify his or her supervisor and the Church Secretary of the expected tardiness or absence. Employees are expected to call in each day they will be on an unscheduled absence from work. Employees absent from work for three consecutive workdays without calling in will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

All employees (excluding Ministers) are expected to fill out a Vacation Request Form and obtain his or her supervisor's approval prior to taking vacation time. All employees must inform the Church Administrator as soon as they know of planned absences of any kind, for inclusion in a "Planned Absences" report that is maintained and provided to staff. This report is used by the Church Administrator to track sick, vacation, and study leave.

2.4 Use of Communications and Social Media

All electronic and telephonic communications systems provided by ACC and all communications and information transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the property of ACC and are to be used solely for job-related purposes. Employees and volunteers may not use ACC's systems for commercial purposes, for sending offensive, harassing, or defamatory messages, or for connecting to Internet sites that are inconsistent with the mission of this church. Employee privacy does not extend to such communications and ACC maintains the right to monitor its systems to ensure that they are being used in accordance with this policy.

Employees may not use the church's social media sites or their own personal sites to disclose the church's confidential information or to discuss other church members.

Employees who have personal websites or blogs or who otherwise participate in social media should be aware that their statements on topics or activities related to the church may reflect on ACC. Employees who discuss topics or activities related to ACC should use the following disclaimer on their personal sites: The views and opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer, Acton Congregational Church.

Only those employees who are authorized by their supervisor may post content on the church's social media sites. In addition, employees are expected to comply with the church's social media guidelines and Safe Church policies.

Violation of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

2.5 Problem Resolution

ACC is committed to ensuring that employees work in a positive and supportive environment. As in any employment setting, from time to time, misunderstandings or conflicts can arise. ACC encourages employees to address such issues in a direct and respectful manner with the specific individual(s) involved. If a situation develops that the employee believes is detrimental to that employee, another employee, or the church, the employee should discuss the matter with his or her supervisor or the Senior Minister. In addition, the Personnel Committee provides ombudsmen who are available to discuss such issues with employees.

If an employee feels that his or her issue has not been resolved, he or she may take the concern in writing to the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The Chair of the Personnel Committee will meet with the employee, investigate the matter, and inform the employee of his or her findings in writing. If the employee feels that the matter is still not resolved, he or she may repeat the process with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

2.6 Performance

2.6.1 Performance Reviews

Each employee will be reviewed annually. Each employee's direct supervisor will conduct performance reviews for all employees except the Senior Minister during the month of June. The Senior Minister's review will be conducted by the Chairs of the Personnel Committee, the Board of Deacons, and the Board of Trustees, or a delegate from each committee, and will be completed by 31 August.

Each employee will be asked to complete and sign a Self-Appraisal form and submit it to the Church Administrator on or before 1 June. The Church Administrator will provide a copy for the employee's manager and maintain the original in the employee's personnel file.

The manager will complete an Employee Appraisal form for each of his or her direct reports and have it reviewed at minimum by one person (the supervisor's manager, or when the Senior Minister is the supervisor, by the chair of the Personnel Committee) prior to conducting the review. Either the supervisor or the employee may request the presence of a member of the Personnel Committee at the review meeting.

Performance reviews should be based on the supervisor's objective assessment of the employee's performance of job responsibilities as outlined in the job description and that year's specific goals, and should follow the format recommended by the Personnel Committee. Employee violations of personnel policies may also be addressed in the review. A copy of the review signed by the employee and the supervisor will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

The employee and supervisor will meet midway between reviews (by the end of February) to discuss goal status and any other issues.

Aside from the formal evaluation process, the supervisor may place documentation about an employee's performance in the employee's personnel file, provided that the documentation is reviewed and signed by the employee and the supervisor.

2.6.2 Corrective Action

In the event that an employee's performance does not meet the requirements of the position because of work deficiencies, excessive tardiness or absenteeism, inappropriate behavior, or violation of these policies, the supervisor will raise the issue with the employee through discussions and/or the annual performance review. The discussion will be documented and placed in the employee's personnel file.

If the employee's performance does not improve within a reasonable amount of time, the supervisor may implement a written corrective action plan defining the performance issues in clear terms, identifying specific steps the employee should take to resolve the problem, identifying the supervisor's role in the plan, and specifying the time period for the plan (normally not to exceed 30 days). If the employee has made some progress towards the goals of the plan, the supervisor may elect to extend the term of the plan for an additional period (normally not to exceed 30 days). A copy of the plan will be signed by both parties and placed in the employee's personnel file.

If the employee's performance deteriorates or does not improve during the initial or extended plan, further disciplinary action up to and including termination may be taken during or at the conclusion of the plan period.

In the event of a serious infraction of these policies or if the mission of ACC is compromised, the employee may be terminated immediately.

This performance plan is not a contract and does not alter the fact that employment with the church is at will and that employment may be terminated with or without cause.

3.0 Compensation and Benefits

3.1 Compensation

Jobs at ACC are categorized as either "exempt" or "non-exempt" based on regulations established by the Fair Labor Standards Act, which establishes minimum wage and salary criteria and defines whether a job is entitled to overtime compensation. If a position is categorized non-exempt, pay is calculated on an hourly basis. Non-exempt positions are entitled to overtime pay, calculated at one and one-half times the regular hourly rate for all hours worked beyond 40 in a workweek. Those in non-exempt positions are paid every two weeks.

Exempt jobs are those which are exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Staff in exempt jobs are paid a fixed salary for all hours worked. Exempt staff members are not entitled to overtime pay. Exempt staff members are typically paid every four weeks.

3.2 Insurance and Related Benefits

Details of all insurance programs are available in the church office.

3.2.1 Health Insurance

Individual health insurance is offered to full-time employees (at least 1664 hours per year or an average of 32 hours per week) with 100% of the premiums paid by the Acton Congregational Church.

Family health insurance is available for full-time employees but the cost differential between an individual and family policy is the responsibility of the employee.

3.2.2 Dental Insurance

Individual dental insurance is offered to full-time employees (at least 1664 hours per year or an average of 32 hours per week) with 100% of the premiums paid by the Acton Congregational Church.

Family dental insurance is available to full-time employees, but the cost differential between an individual and family policy is the responsibility of the employee.

3.2.3 Vision Care Insurance

Acton Congregational Church employees are eligible to purchase individual and family vision care insurance through the UCC. This coverage is available at 100% employee cost.

3.2.4 Group Life and Disability Insurance

A combined benefit Group Life and Disability insurance plan is available to full-time employees who work an average of 32 or more hours per week (a minimum of 1664 hours per year) with 100% of the premiums paid by the Acton Congregational Church.

Employees working at least 20 hours per week (minimum of 1040 hours per year) up to 32 hours

per week (maximum of 1664 hours per year) may participate in this plan at their own expense (cost is 1.5% of annual salary plus housing).

3.2.5 Flexible Reimbursement Act Program

Acton Congregational Church staff working a minimum of 1040 hours per year (an average of 20 hours per week) are eligible to participate in a “cafeteria” plan as defined in Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code. The IRS allows employees to set aside a portion of their salary in a pre-tax account that can then be used to fund health and dental insurance premiums, out-of-pocket medical and dental expenses, and dependent care expenses on a non-taxable basis. More information on this plan is available in the Summary Plan Description (SPD) in the church office.

3.3 Time Off With Pay (Staff and Ministers)

The following benefits are offered to full-time employees (minimum of 1664 hours per year). Part-time employees working at least 1040 hours per year (equivalent to 20 hours per week year-round) and less than 1664 hours per year (equivalent to 32 hours per week year-round) may be eligible for benefits on a prorated basis as a percentage of a 40-hour week.

3.3.1 Vacation

Ministers’ vacations are specified in their contracts.

Paid staff will receive two weeks of paid vacation after the first ten (10) months of employment. Staff with less than 10 months of initial service will receive vacation time on a prorated basis. After three (3) years, an employee will receive three (3) weeks of paid vacation. After ten (10) years of employment, an employee will receive four (4) weeks of paid vacation. Service during these ten years need not be continuous.

Employee supervisors shall approve all staff vacations and make sure that employees reflect vacation time properly on their time cards.

Examples:

- a.** A part-time individual works 24 hours per week year-round. A two-week vacation would be 48 hours.
- b.** A part-time individual works 24 hours per week except for 10 weeks in the summer. The work year is 1248 hours less 240, or 1008 hours. This person works less than 1040 hours and is ineligible for vacation.
- c.** A part-time individual works 1040 hours per year but takes the summer off. This person would receive the equivalent of two weeks of vacation as if the 1040 hours were spread equally across the year, or 40 hours of vacation per year.

Up to two weeks of earned vacation may be carried over from one calendar year to the next by an employee.

3.3.2 Holidays

There are eleven (11) paid holidays during the calendar year. Each year the Church Administrator will, after consultation with the ACC Personnel Committee, publish a list of

holidays and days on which the Church will be officially closed for business in the following year.

The compensation rate for holidays shall be calculated on a pro rata basis for part-time employees. For example, for an individual who works 1040 hours per year (half-time), the “straight time” workday is four (4) hours.

3.3.3 Sick Leave

Employees may take sick leave for their own illness or the illness of an immediate family member (spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, father- or mother-in-law, or anyone living in the employee’s household). Sick leave will accumulate to a maximum of 12 days per year at the rate of one (1) workday per month. These days can be carried over into the next year (up to a maximum of 30 days) but are not payable upon termination.

3.3.4 Jury Duty

Each employee shall be granted up to three days off with pay annually for jury duty if called to serve.

3.3.5 Bereavement Leave

Staff members may take up to 3 days of paid bereavement leave upon the death of a family member (spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, father- or mother-in-law, or anyone living in the employee’s household). One day of paid bereavement leave may be taken to attend the funerals of other relatives. If any additional leave time is needed, unpaid leave may be taken, at the discretion of the employee’s supervisor. Time off to attend the funeral of a non-relative may be taken as unpaid leave, with the prior approval of the employee’s supervisor.

3.3.6 Compassionate Leave Policy

An employee may request to be absent from work to care for his/her family (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, parents, grandparents, father- or mother-in-law, and anyone living in his/her household), or to take care of pressing personal matters. A request for such an absence shall be made to his/her supervisor who will determine whether such absence will be granted. The supervisor may approve up to three days of paid leave per calendar year. If more time off is needed, the employee may take additional unpaid leave if approved by the supervisor in advance.

3.4 Unpaid Time Off

3.4.1 Maternity Leave

To the extent consistent with the Family and Medical Leave Act, upon giving birth to a child, a female employee may use accumulated sick leave, followed by unpaid leave, up to a total of twelve (12) weeks. When an employee’s spouse gives birth to a child, he/she may take unpaid leave up to a total of twelve (12) weeks. When an employee adopts a child, he/she may use unpaid leave up to a total of twelve (12) weeks. If a greater period of leave is required, under applicable law, an employee shall be entitled to such greater leave. The Personnel Committee may consider reduced duty hours during the maternity/adoption leave period.

4.0 Legal Issues

4.1 Equal Employment Opportunity

The Acton Congregational Church (ACC) is committed to treating all employees and applicants fairly and does not tolerate discrimination against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, pregnancy, handicap (disability), mental illness, sexual orientation, genetics, marital status, military or veteran status, or any status protected by applicable law. Employment and hiring decisions are based solely on the qualifications and abilities necessary to perform a specific job.

Equal opportunity principles apply to all employment practices with ACC, including employment advertising, recruitment, pre-employment inquiries, hiring, job assignments, promotions, transfers, demotions, layoffs, terminations, recalls, training, compensation, and benefits.

4.2 Employment Eligibility

All newly-hired employees must complete Form I-9 and produce supporting documents within 72 hours of beginning employment, as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

At the time of hire, and every three years thereafter, all employees are required to submit to a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check. Successful completion of the CORI process is a condition of employment. For more information, please refer to Safe Church Policies & Procedures, CORI Policy.

All employees will be required to provide proof of minimum age (18 or older). In addition, other documents and proof of credentials may be required for certain positions.

4.3 Employment Status

Full-time employees are those employees whose job description requires them to work 1664 or more hours per year.

Part-time employees are those who are hired to work less than 1664 hours per year.

Ministers are engaged for ministry through individual call letters. The terms and conditions of these policies also apply to ministers, except where there is a conflict between the terms of their call letters and these policies, in which case the terms of the call letter prevail.

All newly hired employees shall be considered probationary employees until completion of ninety (90) calendar days of employment. At the end of the probationary period, the employee's supervisor will meet with the employee and review his or her performance. Notwithstanding the fact that the employee has successfully completed the probationary period, the employee's employment is at all times considered to be at-will, meaning that either the employee or ACC may terminate employment at any time, for any reason.

4.4 Employee Files

ACC maintains personnel files on each employee which include such documents as performance reviews, benefit forms, and disciplinary documentation. Because of the confidential nature of employee's personnel files, they are kept in a locked cabinet with access restricted to authorized persons on a need-to-know basis.

To insure that the file is up-to-date, employees should notify the Church Administrator of any changes in personal information.

Current and former employees may request access to their file upon written request to the Church Administrator. The files remain the property of ACC at all times.

4.5 Workplace Environment

4.5.1 Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace

Employees are prohibited from using or being under the influence of intoxicating or illegal substances either while on duty or on church premises.

4.5.2 Non-Smoking Environment

ACC is a non-smoking environment and smoking by employees or others is prohibited both indoors and outdoors on church property.

4.5.3 Personal Property

ACC provides all essential items required to perform one's duties. Any personal property which is brought onto the church's premises, including briefcases, personal calculators, personal computers, and smart phones is at the employee's sole risk. Exceptions to this policy may be made for personal property brought onto premises with the prior written permission of the employee's supervisor.

Theft of cash or clothing from locked desks, rooms, or lockers, where signs of forcible entry are present, may be reimbursed up to \$100 per incident.

ACC will reimburse a net financial loss of personal property or cash while traveling on behalf of ACC after all other avenues of recovery have been exhausted, subject to a limit of \$1,000 per incident. The employee is expected first to exercise all rights of recovery from airlines, hotels, and personal insurance. Loss incurred by an ACC employee's accompanying spouse will not be considered.

4.5.4 Policy Against Harassment

It is the goal of ACC to provide a workplace free from discrimination and harassment, and we expect employees to treat each other and those with whom they have contact in the workplace in a respectful and professional manner consistent with our values. Sexual harassment of employees, as well as harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, pregnancy, handicap (disability), sexual orientation, genetics, or military or veteran status, is prohibited by law and will not be tolerated by ACC. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about harassment, or retaliation against individuals for

cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint, is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is illegal when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a term or condition of employment, or is used as a basis for employment decisions. Sexual harassment, which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an employee's work performance or which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, is also illegal.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct which, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances -- whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comment on an individual's body, comment about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; and
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

Because ACC takes allegations of harassment seriously, we will respond promptly to complaints and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action, up to and including termination, where appropriate.

Any employee who feels that he or she has been subjected to harassment may file a complaint, verbally or in writing, with her/his supervisor, a minister, or an ombudsman for the Personnel Committee. The person, or person who receives the complaint, will forward it to the Chair of the Personnel Committee for investigation and resolution.

ACC will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The investigation will include private interviews with the person filing the complaint, any witnesses, and the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment. When the investigation is complete, ACC will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of that investigation.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, ACC will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where it is appropriate, we will also impose disciplinary action.

4.5.5 Workplace Violence

ACC is committed to ensuring a safe work environment for employees and maintains a zero tolerance policy for abusive or violent behavior in the workplace.

ACC also prohibits the carrying of weapons or firearms (including concealed handguns the individual is licensed to carry) on ACC property or at any church-sponsored event on or off church premises and while performing any job-related duties for ACC.

4.5.6 Reporting and Retaliation

ACC expects all employees to report actions or practices that they believe may be in violation of ACC's policies or legal or regulatory obligations. Employees who fail to report a violation of law or ACC policy or who fail to cooperate with or hinder an investigation may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

ACC will not tolerate retaliation against employees who, in good faith, report a suspected violation of policy, law, or regulation.

4.6 Termination of Employment

As mentioned elsewhere, all employment relationships with ACC are on an at-will basis. Employees wishing to terminate their employment with ACC are asked to notify the church in writing at least two weeks in advance of their termination date.

4.7 Exit Interviews

It is ACC's policy to conduct an exit interview with a terminating employee, to provide feedback on why the employee is leaving, what he or she liked about employment at ACC, and any areas needing improvement, in the employee's opinion. A member of the Personnel Committee will conduct an exit interview prior to the employee's last day.

5.0 Employee Handbook Acknowledgment

I, _____,

acknowledge that I have read and understand the ACC Employee Handbook and that my employment with ACC is governed by the policies it contains. I understand that the Employee Handbook does not create a contract of employment between me and ACC and that my employment with ACC is at will and may be terminated at any time with or without notice or procedure, for any reason.

I understand that the Employee Handbook is subject to change at the sole discretion of ACC and that the Employee Handbook and any applicable policies are available to me.

Employee Signature

Date

Please sign and return this page to the Church Administrator for placement in your employee file.

Appendix - Church Leadership and Committees

This appendix is intended to serve as a synopsis of the Church's leadership committees. For more extensive definitions and expanded committee list, see Church By-Laws.

Officers of the Church: The Officers of the Church include the Senior Minister, Associate Minister(s), the Board of Deacons, Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Archivist/Historian, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Collector, the Board of Trustees, and three at-large members of the Church Council.

Board of Deacons: The Board consists of twelve deacons who assist the Senior Minister in the preparation and administration of the ordinances of the Church. The Board aids the Senior Minister in the spiritual care of the Church and community

Board of Trustees: The Board consists of twelve trustees, acting on behalf of the congregation. The Board is responsible for the physical assets and financial affairs of the Church, including all real and personal property. The Board employs all Church staff other than the Ministers.

Church Council: The direction of the various elected committees and Church organizations into an efficient total Church program is the responsibility of the Church Council, consisting of the Senior Minister, the Moderator, the Vice Moderator, three members at large elected by the Church at the Annual Meeting, and one member designated by each of the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees and the Personnel Committee. The Church Council is responsible for long range planning and for the efficient operation of the Church and its organizations. The Council assesses the general interest of the Church, the Church School and other departments and their varied activities. It takes actions and makes recommendations to the Church regarding such activities and interests as it deems advisable.

Personnel Committee: This subcommittee of the Board of Trustees is responsible for supporting our supervisors in hiring and discharging of lay staff, with the consent of the Trustees, and all other personnel matters.

Pastoral Relations Committee: This committee consists of one member selected by each minister and approved by the Board of Deacons and acts as an advocate for our ministers and a liaison between them and the congregation and church committees.

Coordinating Council: The Coordinating Council consists of certain staff members, the Moderator and Vice Moderator, and the chairs of church organizations and standing committees, plus the three members-at-large of the Church Council. The Coordinating Council acts as an advisory board to the Church Council and makes such recommendations to the Church regarding such activities and interests as it deems advisable. The Council coordinates the activities of the various boards and committees of the Church.