What Does The United Methodist Church’s *Book Of Discipline* (2012) Say About the Employment of Non-Appointed Church Staff?

We frequently receive from pastors, church members, committee members, and employed church staff questions about the employment of non-appointed lay staff in the local church. This pamphlet gathers together the most frequently asked of these questions with related sections of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 2012. No attempt is made here to interpret these paragraphs or to offer advice related to any specific situation.

**1. Who determines what staff positions are required in the local church?**

The Pastor-Parish or Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is given broad oversight and responsibility in church staffing matters. The SPRC shall "recommend to the church council, after consultation with the pastor, the professional and other staff positions (whether employee or contract) needed to carry out the work of the church or charge." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

"It is the responsibility of the [SPRC] committee to communicate with the committee on nominations and leadership development and/or the church council when there is a need for other leaders or for employed staff to perform in areas where utilization of the gifts of the pastor(s) and staff proves an inappropriate stewardship of time." (Paragraph 258.2)

**2. To whom are staff responsible?**

The SPRC shall "confer with, consult, and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on matters pertaining to priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time and priorities for the demands and effectiveness of the mission and ministry of the congregation." (Paragraph 258.2.g [4])

**3. Who determines the job description for staff?**

The SPRC is to "develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for associate pastors and other staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor." (Paragraph 258.2.g [7])

**4. Who sets staff salaries?**

It is the responsibility of the church council to "recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations)." (Paragraph 252.4.d)

**5. Shall staff receive benefits? Who sets the benefits of staff?**

"The [SPRC] committee shall further recommend to the church council a provision for adequate health and life insurance, and severance pay for all lay employees." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

**6. What about retirement benefits?**

"[The SPRC] shall recommend that the church council provide, effective on and after January 1, 2006, 100 percent vested pension benefits of at least three percent of compensation for lay employees of the local church who work at least 1040 hours per year, are at least 21 years of age, and have at least one year of permanent service. The church council shall have authority to provide such pension benefits through either a denominational pension program administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits or another pension program administered by another pension provider." (Paragraph 258.2.g[12])

**7. What about continuing education?**

The SPRC shall "consult with the pastor and staff concerning continuing education and spiritual renewal, to arrange with the church council for the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth…” (Paragraph 258.2.g [8])
8. **What about professional certification?**

The SPRC is to "encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization." (Paragraph 258.2.g [8])

"When persons are hired or contracted, consideration shall be given to the training qualifications and certification standards set forth by the general Church agency to which such positions are related." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

9. **Are there guidelines for changing the employment status of staff? Who hires and fires staff?**

"The [SPRC] committee and the pastor shall recommend to the church council a written statement of policy and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not subject to episcopal appointment as ordained clergy. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss nonappointed personnel." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

10. **When does the SPRC meet? May the staff member attend?**

"The committee shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the bishop, the district superintendent, the pastor, any other person accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. The Committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor and/or the district superintendent. The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself." (Paragraph 258.2.e)

"The committee shall meet with the district superintendent without the pastor or appointed staff under consideration being present. However, the pastor or appointed staff under consideration shall be notified prior to such meeting with the district superintendent and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter." (Paragraph 258.2.e)

"The committee shall meet in closed session, and information shared in the committee shall be confidential." (Paragraph 258.2.e)

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