

Model Church Policy Manual

Operating Policies · Office Procedures · Personnel Policies

WHY THIS IS NOT IN YOUR BYLAWS

Bylaws say who decides and how. Policies say what we decided for now.

That is the whole distinction, and it is worth more to your church than any single policy in this manual. Who may call a business meeting is a bylaw. How far in advance the fellowship hall must be reserved is a policy. Whether the church votes to sell property is a bylaw. The mileage rate you reimburse is a policy.

The reason to keep them apart is the cost of changing them. Look at what each one takes:

TO CHANGE A BYLAW

Written text available **two weeks** in advance

Announced at worship services

Two-thirds vote

Across **two consecutive** business meetings

No changes from the floor

TO CHANGE A POLICY

Brought to a regular business meeting

Simple majority

In **one** meeting

Recorded with a date

Effective when the church says

These are the standards recommended in the model bylaws, Article XXI. Use your own church's actual numbers if they differ, and write them in above.

So: put in your bylaws only what should be that hard to change. Everything else belongs here. A church that writes its office hours into its bylaws has to hold two business meetings to close early on Christmas Eve. That is not a hypothetical; we have seen it.

DISCLAIMER

This model is provided by the Chilton Baptist Association as a starting point for your church's own work. It is general educational material. It is not legal advice, and it is not a substitute for legal counsel. Every Baptist church is autonomous. Your church alone is responsible for its governing documents and for whatever it adopts.

REVIEW BEFORE YOU ADOPT (A STEP, NOT FINE PRINT)

1. Send the draft to the **Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions** for review. They keep staff who work with churches on governing documents and incorporation, and that review is available to Alabama Baptist churches.
2. Have **your own attorney** review anything that touches incorporation, property, employment, or liability. For this manual, that means Part Three in full.
3. Call the **CBA office** and we will help make the connection.

STEP ONE · READ THE MINUTES FIRST

Do not write a single policy until someone has read back through the church's business meeting minutes.

Most of your manual already exists. It is scattered through years of minutes, one motion at a time, and nobody has ever gathered it in one place.

Every motion the church passed that was not an election, a budget, or a bylaw amendment was a policy. The church voted that the van does not leave the county without two drivers. The church voted that benevolence is paid to the utility company and not to the individual. The church voted that weddings require the pastor's approval. All of that is binding, all of it was decided by the congregation, and almost none of it is written anywhere a new deacon can find it.

Compiling what the church has already decided does three things. It respects the congregation's past decisions instead of quietly overwriting them. It shortens the work, often by half. And it surfaces contradictions, which are best found by a committee in a quiet room rather than by two members arguing in a hallway.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Assign two people. Go back **ten to twenty years**, or to the last time the church revised its documents, whichever is further.
2. Read for motions. Ignore attendance, reports, and financial figures.
3. Log each one on the sheet below: what was decided, the date, and the page.
4. Mark each entry **Keep**, **Revise**, **Retire**, or **Conflicts**.
5. Sort the "Keep" and "Revise" entries into the three parts of this manual.
6. Bring the conflicts and the "Retire" list to the church as a single motion at the end, so nothing is quietly dropped.

WHAT THE CHURCH VOTED	DATE	PAGE	KEEP / REVISE / RETIRE	GOES IN PART

Copy this page as many times as you need. Keep the completed sheets; they are the working record of what the church had already decided, and they answer the question "when did we vote that?"

THE SHAPE OF EVERY POLICY

Every policy in this manual, and every policy your church writes later, uses the same nine fields in the same order. A committee should never have to invent a format at 8:15 on a Wednesday night.

The dates are not decoration. A church that cannot say when a policy was adopted cannot defend it, cannot prove the congregation approved it, and cannot tell whether it is still current. Fill in all three dates every time.

THE REPEATABLE BLOCK · COPY THIS FOR ANY POLICY

Title and number	What it is called and where it sits in the manual (for example, OP-4). Number by part so you can insert later without renumbering everything.
Purpose	One or two sentences. Why does this policy exist? If you cannot say, do not write the policy.
Authority	What gives the church the right to decide this, and who approved it. Cite the bylaw article, and the business meeting.
Boundaries	What this policy covers and, just as important, what it does not. Boundaries are where disputes get settled before they start.
Responsibility	The office or group that carries it out, and who may grant an exception. Name a role, never a person's name.
Guidelines	The actual steps, in order. Short numbered items. This is the part people read.
Date voted	The date of the business meeting that approved it.
Effective date	When it starts. Often the same day; sometimes later, to give people notice.
Review date	When the church will look at it again. Two years is a good default. Put it on the calendar.

BLANK FORM · PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE

POLICY TITLE _____ NO. _____

PURPOSE

AUTHORITY

BOUNDARIES

RESPONSIBILITY

GUIDELINES

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

WHY THE SAME NINE FIELDS EVERY TIME

Because the fields ask the questions a committee forgets to ask. **Authority** forces you to check whether the church actually has the right to decide this and whether it voted. **Boundaries** forces you to say what the policy does not cover, which is where nearly every argument comes from.

Responsibility forces you to name who may grant an exception, so the answer is not "whoever is asked first."

Policies below are models. Your church's numbers, offices, and practice go in the blanks. Where we have written a figure, it is a common figure among our churches, not a requirement.

PART ONE · OPERATING POLICIES

How the church uses what it owns, and how it serves people who ask for help. Mostly this part is a matter of writing down what your church already does. Build it second.

Facility Use		OP-1
PURPOSE	To make the church's buildings and grounds available for ministry in an orderly way, and to protect the property the congregation has given to maintain.	
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XVII, section 17.5, and Article XVIII. Adopted by the church in business meeting.	
BOUNDARIES	Covers all church-owned buildings, grounds, kitchen, and equipment. Does not cover the church vehicle (see OP-4), weddings and funerals (see OP-5), or use of the church name or logo. The facilities are not offered for general rental and are not a public forum.	
RESPONSIBILITY	The church office schedules use. The _____ approves requests from outside groups. The pastor may grant an exception and reports it at the next business meeting.	
GUIDELINES	1. Church ministries have first priority, then church members, then outside groups whose purposes are consistent with Articles II, III, and XVIII of the Bylaws. 2. All use is requested in writing at least _____ days ahead and placed on the church calendar. If it is not on the calendar, it is not scheduled. 3. A member of the church must be present and responsible for any use by an outside group. 4. No admission may be charged and nothing may be sold on the premises without approval of the church. 5. No alcohol, tobacco, or firearms, except as allowed by law for authorized personnel. 6. Groups leave the space as they found it. Tables, chairs, trash, kitchen, thermostats, lights, doors. 7. Outside groups provide a certificate of insurance where the _____ determines it is appropriate. 8. A deposit of \$_____ may be required and is refunded when the space is left in order.	
DATE VOTED _____		REVIEW DATE _____
EFFECTIVE DATE _____		

Benevolence

OP-2

PURPOSE	To help people in genuine need in the name of Christ, fairly, confidentially, and within what the church has budgeted.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XI (duties of deacons) and Article XVI. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers short-term emergency help with basic needs: utilities, rent, food, medicine, fuel, and limited travel. Does not cover ongoing support, debt payoff, legal fees, fines, business losses, or loans. The church makes gifts, not loans.
RESPONSIBILITY	The deacons administer the fund. The pastor may approve up to \$_____ without further approval and reports it to the deacons. Amounts above that require _____.
GUIDELINES	1. Requests are made to the pastor or a deacon. A short written record is kept of every request, whether approved or not. 2. Payment is made directly to the provider, not in cash to the individual. This protects both the church and the person helped. 3. Assistance is limited to \$_____ per household in any _____-month period, and to the amount remaining in the fund. 4. No decision is made by one person alone. 5. Requests are held in confidence. Names are not reported in business meeting or printed in the minutes; only totals are reported. 6. The church may refer to other agencies, and coordinates with them where possible to avoid duplicate help. 7. Gifts to individuals are not tax-deductible <i>to the church's donor</i> when the donor designates the recipient. Undesignated gifts to the benevolence fund are. If a donor asks, say so plainly.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Child and Youth Protection

OP-3

PURPOSE	To protect children and youth, to protect the adults who serve them from false suspicion, and to obey the law.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XIII, section 13.5, and Article VIII, section 8.8. Alabama law regarding mandatory reporting. Adopted by the church in business meeting.

BOUNDARIES	Covers every activity of the church involving anyone under 18, on or off church property, and every paid or volunteer worker in those activities. There are no exceptions for family members, longtime members, or one-time helpers.
RESPONSIBILITY	The _____ keeps the records and the cleared-worker list. The pastor and the deacons enforce it. No one may grant an exception.
GUIDELINES	1. Every worker completes a written application, a criminal background check, and reference checks before serving. Checks are renewed every _____ years. 2. Six-month rule. A worker must have been a regular attender for at least six months before serving with minors. 3. Two-adult rule. Two unrelated adults are present at all times. No adult is ever alone with a child who is not their own, including in vehicles. 4. Doors have windows or remain open. Restroom assistance follows the written procedure posted in each classroom. 5. A sign-in and sign-out record is kept for preschool and children's activities. 6. No adult contacts a minor privately by phone, text, or social media without a parent included. 7. Workers are trained annually, and the training is documented with signatures. 8. Reporting. Any worker who suspects abuse or neglect reports it immediately to civil authorities. Alabama law makes ministers, teachers, and others mandatory reporters. The duty is personal: it is not satisfied by telling the pastor, and no one in the church may tell you not to report. Notify the pastor as well, and write down what you observed, when, and whom you called.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

IF YOUR CHURCH ADOPTS ONLY ONE POLICY

Adopt OP-3, and adopt it this month, before the rest of the manual is written. It is the policy that protects children, it is the one your insurance carrier will ask about, and it is the one whose absence is hardest to explain afterward. Then send it to your attorney and to your insurer for review.

OTHER OPERATING POLICIES TO WRITE, USING THE SAME BLOCK

NO.	POLICY	THE DECISION IT HAS TO SETTLE
OP-4	Church vehicle use	Who may drive, minimum age, license and driving record check, two drivers for long trips, no personal use, fuel, and what happens after an accident.
OP-5	Weddings and funerals	Who may be married in the building, required premarital counseling, the pastor's discretion to decline, fees and honoraria, use of the building by a non-member, music and decoration rules.
OP-6	Handling of offerings	Two unrelated counters, the count sheet, prompt deposit, who reconciles the statement, and who may not do two of those jobs.
OP-7	Keys, security, and alarm	Who holds keys and codes, the written key log, what happens when a keyholder leaves office, and who is called at 2 a.m.
OP-8	Kitchen and food service	Who may use the kitchen, cleanup standard, food left in the refrigerator, and any county health requirement that applies.
OP-9	Media, photography, and technology	Permission before a child's photo is posted, what the livestream shows, who speaks for the church online, music copyright licensing, and acceptable use of church computers.
OP-10	Mission trips and off-site activities	Permission and medical release forms, adult-to-minor ratios, insurance, who approves a trip, and how money is raised and held.
OP-11	Love offerings and honoraria	Who approves a gift to a guest speaker or staff member, how it is reported, and the fact that it is usually taxable income.
OP-12	Building maintenance and capital repair	Who may authorize a repair and up to what amount, how bids are taken, and who signs a contract.

PART TWO · OFFICE PROCEDURES

How the paper, the money, and the calendar move through the church office. This is the shortest part and the one that reduces risk fastest. Build it first.

Records Retention

OF-1

PURPOSE	So that the church keeps what it must keep, can find it, and does not store what it should not.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XII, section 12.2, and Article XVII, section 17.6. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers church records in any form, paper or electronic. Does not cover a pastor's personal sermon files or private counseling notes.
RESPONSIBILITY	The Church Clerk holds permanent records. The Treasurer holds financial records. The office keeps the working files.
GUIDELINES	Keep permanently: bylaws and all amendments, minutes of every business meeting, deeds, mortgages and title papers, incorporation papers and state filings, the IRS determination letter, insurance policies, annual financial statements and audits, membership records, and baptism, marriage, and death records. Keep seven years: payroll records, contribution records, bank statements and canceled checks, paid invoices, contracts after expiration, and tax filings including Form 941 and W-2 copies. Keep as long as required and then dispose of securely: employment applications, background check results, and personnel files. Keep these locked and separate from general office files. Keep a duplicate off site. Bylaws, deed, insurance policy, and the last three years of financial statements, at a bank box or a member's fireproof safe. Shred anything discarded that contains a name, an address, a Social Security number, or a giving amount.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Purchasing and Reimbursement

OF-2

PURPOSE	So that church money is spent as the church approved, and so that a member who buys supplies is paid back promptly and without embarrassment.
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AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XVI, sections 16.2 and 16.3. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers all spending of church funds, including debit or credit cards and online orders. Does not cover payroll or benevolence (see OP-2).
RESPONSIBILITY	A ministry leader may spend within their budgeted line. The _____ approves anything above \$_____. Unbudgeted spending above \$_____ requires a vote of the church.
GUIDELINES	1. No reimbursement without a receipt. No exceptions, including for the pastor. 2. Requests are submitted within _____ days on the church's reimbursement form, stating the budget line. 3. Reimbursement is paid within _____ days. 4. Mileage is reimbursed at the current IRS standard rate. The rate changes; the policy does not have to. 5. No one approves their own reimbursement, and no one signs a check payable to themselves. 6. Church cards stay with the office and are signed out. Statements are reviewed by someone who does not hold a card. 7. Give vendors the church's tax exemption number where it applies, and keep the certificate in the office.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Contributions and Receipting

OF 3

PURPOSE	So that every gift is recorded accurately, every giver can substantiate a deduction, and no one person controls the record of what came in.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XVI, sections 16.4, 16.5, and 16.8. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers offerings, mailed and online gifts, designated gifts, and non-cash gifts. Does not cover benevolence payments out (see OP-2) or payroll.
RESPONSIBILITY	The Financial Secretary posts contributions. The Treasurer handles deposits and disbursements. These are two different people. The _____ reconciles the bank statement.
GUIDELINES	1. Offerings are counted by two unrelated persons, recorded on a count sheet both sign, and deposited within _____ business days. The count sheet goes to the Financial Secretary, not the Treasurer.

2. Contributions are posted to individual records weekly. Records are stored locked or password protected.
3. Individual giving records are seen only by the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer as needed, and the giver. Not by the pastor unless the church has voted otherwise, and never by a committee.
4. Annual giving statements are mailed or delivered by **January 31**.
5. For any single gift of **\$250 or more**, the church provides a written acknowledgment stating the amount and that no goods or services were given in return. A canceled check is not enough for the donor.
6. Designated gifts are accepted only for purposes the church has approved (Bylaws 16.6), and are tracked separately from general funds.
7. Non-cash gifts (property, vehicles, stock) are referred to the _____ before acceptance. The church records receipt but does not appraise value.
8. Online and text gifts are reconciled monthly against the processor's report, including fees.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Church Calendar and Scheduling

OF-4

PURPOSE	So the church has one calendar, everybody uses it, and two groups never show up for the same room.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XVII, section 17.5. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers every use of church facilities, property, and the church van, by any group. Does not decide <i>whether</i> a group may use the building; that is OP-1.
RESPONSIBILITY	The church office keeps the calendar. The pastor resolves a conflict the office cannot. The _____ approves the annual calendar.
GUIDELINES	1. One calendar. If it is not on the church calendar, it is not scheduled, whoever remembers agreeing to it. 2. Requests go to the office at least _____ days ahead, naming the group, the room, the date, the times including setup and cleanup, and one responsible person. 3. The office confirms in writing. An unconfirmed request is not a reservation. 4. Priority when two requests conflict: (a) regular worship and scheduled services, (b) church-wide events on the annual calendar, (c) ministry and team meetings, (d) member events, (e) outside groups.

5. The annual calendar is built each _____ for the coming year, including revival, homecoming, Vacation Bible School, business meetings, and associational and state dates.
6. Nothing is scheduled against a regular worship service without approval of the church.
7. Cancellations are reported to the office so the space is released.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Communications and Deadlines

OF-5

PURPOSE	So the church speaks with one voice, announcements reach people in time, and no one has to guess who may post in the church's name.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XIV, section 14.5 (no committee speaks for the church without authorization). Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers the bulletin, newsletter, website, social accounts, sign, mass email and text, and the livestream description. Does not cover a member's personal account, and does not cover photography permissions (see OP-9).
RESPONSIBILITY	The office prepares the bulletin and newsletter. The pastor approves anything going out in the church's name. Account credentials are held by _____ and one other person, never one alone.
GUIDELINES	1. Bulletin deadline: _____. Newsletter deadline: _____. Items after the deadline wait for the next issue. 2. Business meeting notice, called meetings, and bylaw amendments are announced as the Bylaws require, and the announcement is recorded in the office file with its dates. This is the record that proves notice was given. 3. No political endorsement of a candidate appears in any church communication. This protects the church's tax-exempt status. 4. No individual's illness, family situation, or discipline matter is published without that person's permission. 5. Music, video, and printed material are used only under the church's current copyright licenses. Keep the license numbers in the office. 6. When a staff member or volunteer leaves, account access is removed within _____ days. 7. Comments and messages on church accounts are answered courteously or not at all. Disputes are not argued online.

Membership Records

OF-6

PURPOSE	So the roll is accurate. An inaccurate roll makes a quorum meaningless and a majority unknowable.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article VII (sections 7.2, 7.5, 7.7, 7.8) and Article XII, section 12.2. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers the active roll, the inactive roll, transfers, and the directory. Does not change who may be a member or who may vote; only the Bylaws do that.
RESPONSIBILITY	The Church Clerk maintains the roll. Only a vote of the church moves a name to the inactive roll or removes it.
GUIDELINES	1. New members are entered within _____ days of being received, with the date and manner of reception and the date of baptism. 2. Requests for a letter of transfer are processed within _____ days, using the form in Appendix B-1 of the Bylaws, and the church's action is recorded. 3. Annual roll review. Once a year, before the _____ meeting, the Clerk and the deacons review the roll for members not attending or contributing for the period in Bylaws 7.7, attempt contact, and record the attempt. 4. The office keeps a current count of active resident members, because that is the number a quorum is figured on. 5. Deaths, marriages, and baptisms are recorded permanently. 6. A directory is provided to members only, is not posted publicly, and omits any member who asks to be left out. 7. Members' addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses are not given to outside organizations for any purpose.

Confidentiality

OF-7

PURPOSE	So that a member can tell the church office something without hearing it repeated in the parking lot, and so that staff and volunteers know exactly where confidentiality ends.
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AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article VIII, sections 8.5 and 8.8, and Article XVI, section 16.8. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers everyone who works or volunteers in the office, counts money, handles records, or serves on a committee that sees personal information. It does not cover, limit, or delay any report required by law.
RESPONSIBILITY	Every staff member and office volunteer signs this policy at the start of service. The pastor and the _____ Committee address a violation.
GUIDELINES	1. Not repeated: individual giving, benevolence requests, counseling conversations, personnel matters, discipline matters, medical information, and anything a member shares in confidence. 2. Prayer requests are shared publicly only with the person's permission, and only to the extent permitted. "Unspoken" means unspoken. 3. Information is shared inside the church only with those who have a genuine need to know in order to act. 4. Records containing personal information are kept locked or password protected, are not taken home, and are shredded when discarded. 5. The limits, stated plainly. Confidentiality does not apply where Alabama law requires a report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult; where there is a threat of harm to a person; or where a court orders disclosure. In those cases the duty to report comes first and is immediate. Nobody in the church may instruct a worker to stay silent. 6. A breach of this policy is grounds for removal from the position.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Office Hours and Coverage

OF-8

PURPOSE	So a member, a funeral home, or a stranger in need knows when someone answers, and so a bivocational pastor is not expected to be available every hour.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XIII. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers office coverage and after-hours contact. Does not set staff compensation or leave (Part Three), and does not govern building access (OP-7).
RESPONSIBILITY	The pastor sets coverage within these hours. The _____ approves a change to the posted hours.

GUIDELINES

1. Office hours are _____, posted at the door, on the sign, on the website, and on the answering message.
2. Someone is present, or the phone is forwarded, during posted hours. Two adults are present whenever the building is open to the public.
3. **After hours and emergencies.** Calls go to _____. A death, hospitalization, or emergency is reached at _____. The message states this plainly.
4. Holidays observed: _____. Closures are announced one week ahead.
5. Weather closings are decided by the pastor and announced on _____.
6. Anyone alone in the building after hours tells one other person, and the exterior doors stay locked.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Annual Filings and Deadlines

OF-9

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| PURPOSE | So no deadline is missed because the person who used to remember it is no longer in the office. |
| AUTHORITY | Bylaws, Article I, section 1.4, and Article XIX, section 19.4. Adopted by the church in business meeting. |
| BOUNDARIES | Covers recurring filings, renewals, and reports. Does not replace professional tax advice; the church uses a payroll service or an accountant for filings it cannot do reliably. |
| RESPONSIBILITY | The office keeps this calendar. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial filings; the Clerk for the state and associational items. Both report completion to the _____. |
| GUIDELINES | Post this list in the office, put every date on the church calendar, and initial each line when it is done. Confirm current dates and requirements with your accountant; they change. |

ITEM	WHEN	WHO	DONE
Annual giving statements to donors	By January 31		
W-2 forms to employees, 1099 forms to contractors	By January 31		
Form 941 payroll returns (or as your service files)	Quarterly		
Minister housing allowance designated by church action, <i>in advance</i>	Before each year begins		
Registered agent and address confirmed with the Secretary of State	Annually, and on any change		
Property, liability, and misconduct insurance review and renewal	Annually		
Workers' compensation policy and audit	Annually		
Financial review or audit by persons who do not handle funds	Annually after fiscal year end		
Background checks renewed for staff and workers with minors	On the OP-3 cycle		
Annual church profile or letter to the Association	As requested		
Roll review, budget preparation, officer nominations	Before the annual meeting		
Bylaws and policy manual review	Every two years		

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

PART TWO IS YOUR WHOLE FIRST YEAR, AND IT IS ENOUGH

Nine procedures. None of them controversial, most of them already your practice, and together they close the gaps that actually cost churches: money handled by one person, records nobody can find, a roll that makes a quorum meaningless, a confidentiality rule that nobody wrote down, and a deadline that passed because the person who remembered it moved away.

Take two or three per business meeting. Fill in the blanks with what your church already does, not with what you wish it did. Adopt them, date them, and put them in the binder. Then start Part One.

PART THREE · PERSONNEL POLICIES

How the church treats the people it pays. This is the part with legal exposure, and it is the part to build last.

ATTORNEY REVIEW, ON THIS PART ESPECIALLY

Employment law changes, it is enforced by agencies outside the church, and the ministerial exception protects less than churches assume. Do not adopt Part Three from a model. Draft it, then have an attorney read it before the vote.

Watch for the two mistakes we see most: a handbook that promises a warning sequence or a term of employment (which can create a contract), and treating a secretary or custodian as a contractor rather than an employee. Both are expensive to undo.

Employment Basics

PP-1

PURPOSE	To state plainly what the church and its employees may expect of each other.
AUTHORITY	Bylaws, Article XIII. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
BOUNDARIES	Covers all paid staff, ministerial and support, full-time and part-time. Does not cover volunteers (see OP-3 for screening), and does not cover the pastoral relationship itself, which is governed by Bylaws Article X.
RESPONSIBILITY	The _____ Committee administers these policies. The pastor supervises staff day to day.
GUIDELINES	1. At-will employment. Employment is at the will of the church and the employee, and may be ended at any time by either, with or without cause. Nothing in this manual is a contract or a promise of continued employment. 2. Written job description. Every position has one, stating duties, hours, who supervises, and whether the position is exempt or non-exempt. It is given to the employee at hire and reviewed annually. 3. Screening. Every employee completes an application, a background check, and reference checks before the first day. 4. Timekeeping. Non-exempt employees record actual hours worked each week and are paid overtime as required by law. Volunteering extra hours in the same role they are paid for is not permitted, however willing the employee is. 5. Payroll. Employees are paid on _____. Federal and state withholding and reporting are handled as the law requires, and ministers' compensation is reported on Form W-2.

6. **Housing allowance.** Any minister's housing allowance is designated by official action of the church *in advance* of the year it applies, and recorded in the minutes. It cannot be made retroactive.

7. **Standard of conduct.** Employees agree to conduct consistent with Bylaws Articles III and XVIII, and with the church's stated beliefs, on and off duty.

8. **Personnel files** are confidential and kept locked. An employee may review their own file on request.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

Leave and Time Off

PP-2

- PURPOSE** So that rest is planned rather than negotiated, and so that a bivocational pastor and a part-time secretary know where they stand.
- AUTHORITY** Bylaws, Article XIII, section 13.6. Adopted by the church in business meeting.
- BOUNDARIES** Covers paid staff only, and only the categories listed. Does not create a right to payment for unused leave except as stated.
- RESPONSIBILITY** The pastor approves staff leave. The _____ Committee approves the pastor's leave and keeps the record.
- GUIDELINES**
1. **Vacation.** _____ weeks per year for full-time staff, including _____ Sundays, requested at least _____ weeks ahead. Unused vacation does not carry over beyond _____.
 2. **Weekly day off.** Ministerial staff take a regular day off each week. The church expects it and does not treat it as time owed back.
 3. **Sick leave.** _____ days per year. Extended illness is handled case by case by the church.
 4. **Bereavement.** Up to _____ days for the death of an immediate family member.
 5. **Revival, camp, and conference time** is church work, not vacation, and is approved in advance and budgeted.
 6. **Holidays.** The church observes _____.
 7. **Pulpit supply** during the pastor's absence is arranged by the pastor and paid from the budgeted line.

DATE VOTED

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

OTHER PERSONNEL POLICIES TO WRITE, USING THE SAME BLOCK

NO.	POLICY	THE DECISION IT HAS TO SETTLE
PP-3	Hiring procedure	Who writes the description, who interviews, what the church votes on, and what goes in the written offer.
PP-4	Compensation review	When salaries are reviewed, against what comparison, and who brings the recommendation to the budget process.
PP-5	Performance review	How often, who conducts it, whether it is written, and where it is filed. Keep it encouraging and keep it documented.
PP-6	Harassment and misconduct	A stated prohibition, two named people a complaint can be brought to (so no one must report to the person involved), how it is investigated, and no retaliation. Have an attorney draft this one.
PP-7	Grievance	How an employee raises a concern and who hears it, without creating a required sequence of steps the church must follow before ending employment.
PP-8	Separation	Notice expected, final pay, return of keys and equipment, removal of account access, and who communicates the change to the congregation.
PP-9	Benefits	Retirement contributions, insurance, continuing education, book and travel allowances, and whether each is available to part-time staff.

BUILD IN THIS ORDER, AND WHY

You will not write this manual in one year, and you should not try. Build it in the order below. Each part is adopted as it is finished, so the church sees progress and the work does not stall waiting on the hard part.

1 Office Procedures

Because it is the shortest and it reduces risk fastest. Records retention, how offerings are counted, who may spend what, what the church keeps and what it shreds. None of it is controversial, most of it is already the practice, and it can be drafted in two or three meetings.

It also builds the committee's confidence. A group that has finished something small will finish something large.

2 Operating Policies

Because it is mostly compiling what the church already does. This is where the minutes you read in Step One pay off. Much of Part One is already decided; your work is to write it in one format and retire what no longer applies.

The one exception is the child and youth protection policy. Do not wait for its turn in the order. Adopt it first, by itself, and have it reviewed.

3 Personnel Policies, with an attorney's review

Because it carries the most exposure and the least room to guess. Employment law is enforced by people outside the church, it changes, and a well-meant sentence can create a contract the church did not intend.

Draft it last, send it to the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and then to your own attorney, and budget for that review. It is cheaper than the alternative, and the CBA office will help you find counsel who works with churches.

KEEPING IT ALIVE

- One binder, dated, held by the Church Clerk, with a numbered table of contents. Copies for the pastor, the office, and the chairman of deacons.
- Every new policy is added with all three dates filled in. A policy without dates does not go in the binder.

- Put the review dates on the church calendar. A standing committee reviews the manual every two years, the same cycle as the bylaws.
- When the church votes a new policy in a business meeting, the Clerk writes it into the binder that week, while it is still fresh.
- Give new deacons, new staff, and new committee members a copy in their first month. A manual nobody has read is a manual nobody follows.

ONE LAST WORD

Fewer policies, clearly written, that the church actually follows, are worth more than a thick binder nobody opens. If a policy does not answer a question your church has actually faced, do not write it. You can always add one later with a single vote, which is the entire reason this manual is not your bylaws.