



HOPE CHURCH
northwest arkansas

**STAFF POLICIES
AND PRACTICES**

HOPE CHURCH

STAFF POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Welcome from Hope Church

We welcome you to Hope Church Northwest Arkansas and thank you for your service. We appreciate the vital role of church employees in accomplishing the mission of the church to the people we serve and to the broader Christian community.

Hope Church is a nonprofit, religious corporation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, to minister to spiritual, emotional, physical, and social needs.

Please review this employee handbook and acknowledge your acceptance of these terms of employment by completing and returning the Employee Receipt located at the end of this document.

Compliance with Biblical Standards

Christianity is central to the purpose and mission of this church and its ministries. For this reason, all church affairs are conducted in full accordance with the Bible, the church's mission, and the *Statement of Faith*¹ and *Official Statements*² as contained in the Open Bible Manual. Likewise, it is our policy to employ only committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Consequently, each employee is expected to review and affirm his or her agreement with such standards as a condition for continued employment with Hope Church, both in terms of doctrinal belief and practical application. For example, all employees are expected to reflect Christian values in their interaction with persons we serve, fellow employees, and others. In addition, employees are required to refrain from behavior that reflects negatively on the church's Christian standards. Violation of these requirements shall constitute cause for discipline up to and including employment termination.

Affirmation of Statement of Faith

All Hope Church officers, staff and employees shall, as a condition of their employment status, acknowledge in writing their acceptance of and agreement with the Statement of Faith and Official Statements, as set forth in the Open Bible Manual.

¹ The *Open Bible Statement of Faith* is available at <https://www.openbible.org/About-Us/Core-Beliefs>

² *Open Bible Official Statements* can be found in The Open Bible Manual available at <https://www.openbible.org/About-Us/OBC-Manual>

Introduction

The Senior Pastor and Board of Elders have created this manual to assist staff in understanding the practices, benefits and policies regarding employment at Hope Church. Also included is information about general church policy and practices that will inform members of the staff as they carry out their responsibilities in this ministry. This manual is subject to periodic review.

Employment

All persons considered for employment at Hope Church must possess the following:

- A personal commitment to Jesus Christ and His work.
- An educational and/or experiential background necessary for the job to be performed.
- A positive attitude of cooperation with other staff members, with the Elders, with lay leaders of the church and with the members of the congregation. Loyalty to the church, to the pastors, and to each other is essential.
- A pleasing personality, warm, gracious, and relating to people in a positive manner.
- A willingness to submit to authority.
- They are expected to attend most Hope Church services on a regular basis. Exceptions to this must be approved by the Pastor/Board of Elders.

Staff Defined

The staff is composed of two basic classifications, which includes both salaried staff and support staff. Salaried staff is listed below as pastoral and non-pastoral:

Pastoral - The pastoral division is that group of persons holding ministerial credentials who are serving as ministerial associates to the Senior Pastor. Some benefits and requirements applicable to pastoral staff are not necessarily extended to other staff classifications (weekly staff planning/lunch, crisis intervention, etc.) These men and women have been hired with the primary responsibility of finding and equipping leaders for the work of ministry. Their roles consist mostly of directing, coaching and pastoring, and they report directly to the Senior Pastor.

Non-Pastoral - This division is composed of department directors, i.e. Music Director, Nursery Care Director, Staff, and Media Coordinator. They do not necessarily hold ministerial credentials.

The Support Staff – Support Staff is composed of various administrative and maintenance personnel who assist the pastoral staff in their duties (church receptionist, maintenance). They do not necessarily hold ministerial credentials.

Probationary Period - All support staff shall be hired on a 90-day probationary period. After successful completion of the 90-day period, they shall be declared a permanent employee of Hope Church.

Other definitions

- Full-time staff members/employees are those persons who work 30 hours or more per week on a permanent basis.
- Part-time staff members/employees are those employees who work less than 30 hours per week on a permanent basis.
- Temporary staff members/employees are those persons who work either full-time or part-time but not more than 90 consecutive work days without a break in employment.

Applicability - The policies and conditions of this manual cover all staff members/employees. If any special conditions have been considered and approved by the Senior Pastor/Board of Elders in the original call to ministry at Hope Church, it must be attached to the job description and/or salary agreement.

Matter(s) not covered in the staff/employee's job description will be administered according to the policies set forth herein. No changes or supplements may be added to this directive unless approved by the Senior Pastor/Board of Elders.

Evaluations - Employees are to be evaluated annually. Annual evaluations are normally conducted in January each year. Completed forms will be filed in the employee's personnel record. Supervisors may perform an evaluation at any time during the year. Remember that evaluations may be used for "praise" as well as "improvement" areas.

Church Attendance and Tithes - All staff members/employees are expected to be faithful in regular attendance of weekly church services (Sundays and mid-week), and in the giving of tithes and offerings.

Personnel Record - A personnel record shall be kept on every employee and shall include the following: Salary agreement, Job description, Evaluations, Awards, Disciplinary actions, Leave records and requests

Daily Schedule, Attendance, Absenteeism

Pastoral staff shall structure their schedule under the direction of the Senior Pastor. Their official office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, due to the necessity of unforeseen ministry requirements, there is flexibility in their weekly schedule. For example, if a pastor is called out at night to minister, he or she is not required to be at the office at 9:00 a.m. Understanding the nature of pastoral ministry, flexibility is required. All changes in the normal schedule are to be coordinated with the Senior Pastor.

Non-Pastoral and Support Staff have office hours are Tuesday thru Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

This period will serve as the official work hours for all full-time, salaried, and support staff unless arrangements have been made otherwise with the Senior Pastor supervisor. Lunch periods will be 30 minutes in length.

Attendance - Each staff member is expected to be regular, punctual, and conscientious regarding attendance at work. Maintaining a good, consistent work attendance record is a staff member's personal responsibility. A "Time Off Report" form must be completed by the by each employee that is absent from work due to illness, vacation days, or personal holidays. This form is to be forwarded to the Senior Pastor for placement in the employee's personnel records.

All time away from work shall be approved and/or excused by the pastor. When an employee is going to be absent, for any reason, they must notify the pastor one (1) hour prior to reporting for work. The reason for absence and whether or not he/she will report later in the day shall be furnished. Any anticipated absence should be pre-arranged with the pastor unless the condition is such that it is known the absence will be prolonged.

Failure to report to work in accordance with this policy will mean forfeiting any sick leave privileges for that period. Excessive, prolonged, or unexcused absenteeism may result in probation, leave of absence, or dismissal from the staff.

All employees should inform the receptionist when they will be out of their office for any length of time and inform the receptionist when they return to their office.

Absenteeism - Excessive absence is any time above the allotted days off and will be considered excessive and without pay.

Staff Meetings, Prayer Times

All Staff – Staff meeting for all pastoral, salaried, and support staff is held every Wednesday at 9:00 a.m., unless changed due to staff schedule conflict. The staff is encouraged to pray as part of their work week.

Pastoral Staff – The pastoral staff will meet each Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. with lunch following. Individual meetings with the Senior Pastor will precede and follow the Tuesday staff meeting.

Board of Elders – the Board of Elders meets monthly, usually on a Thursday night. Occasionally members of the staff are asked to attend.

Staff Retreats and Staff Fellowships – Staff retreats and fellowships are scheduled periodically.

Office Practices

Dress and Appearance - Since we represent our Lord Jesus Christ and Hope Church, we must portray an image to those we are privileged to serve by maintaining the best grooming and dress standards possible. Pastoral Staff members shall dress in a well-groomed fashion. Platform attire for men and women shall be conservative and modest. Office attire shall be professional casual unless an activity dictates other apparel.

Confidentiality - One basic rule of the church ministry is its confidential relationship between the church leaders and people. It is imperative for all staff members/employees, regardless of their position, to always respect the privacy of others. Any conversation, counseling session, correspondence, file material, or any internal transaction of the church must not be discussed or made public in any way. Knowledge about people gained because of staff relationship shall be closely guarded.

Any breach of this confidentiality will be just cause for disciplinary and/or discharge action. Any release of personal information to unauthorized persons/agencies without the expressed written/verbal consent of the staff member/employee will be considered a violation of privacy. Caution should be used in releasing phone numbers and addresses of church members, adherents and staff.

Public Relations - Public relations are of the utmost importance to every staff member/employee. It is imperative that all of us go out of our way to be friendly, helpful, and courteous to all with whom we come into contact. The reception that people receive from us will greatly influence their attitude, along with their confidence in the church, and in Jesus Christ. Along with keeping a positive attitude about your ministry here at Hope Church, keep in mind that our church is always open to everyone. You can expect visitors to walk in the office area(s) at most any time while you are working. Therefore, your interest and attention to work shall be evident at all times. Your immediate work area(s), as well as the surrounding area(s), shall be kept in a neat and orderly fashion at all times.

Press Coverage and Church Publicity - Regarding church publicity, only the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders are authorized to represent the church to the press. They may choose to authorize selected employees and staff members to speak to the press on specific matters. Any employee who speaks to the press without the specific approval of the Senior Pastor or Board of Elders is subject to disciplinary and/or dismissal action.

Conflict Resolution –Church staff members/employees shall endeavor to keep peace in times of conflict. They are encouraged to apply Matthew 18:18 principles to talk to the person directly, and if necessary to bring another person into the conversation. In no case shall the church staff members/employees expose their disagreement to public scrutiny using social media.

Scripture instructs Christians to handle disputes among members of the church within the church, not in civil courts. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8.) If a church staff member feels there is an offense or misunderstanding with another member, the pastor, member of the board of elders, staff pastor, or ministry leader, he or she shall go to the other individual promptly in love in order to resolve the difference.

Resolution outcomes:

- **Unresolved** – If the offense cannot be resolved on an individual basis, the two parties shall meet together with an appropriate church leader to resolve the dispute.
- **Church Mediation** – In the event that the conflict cannot be resolved with the assistance of a church leader, they shall submit the dispute for mediation or judgment within the church, through the pastor or board of elders.
- **Open Bible Mediation** – In the event of a dispute between a church staff member and the pastor or board of elders, the pastor or board of elders may request the regional executive director to provide a mediator to resolve the dispute.

Children of Staff Members/Employees - Staff members/employees must not allow their children to be at church in an unsupervised manner for prolonged periods of time. The intent of this policy is to keep employees from bringing their children to work and babysitting them. Secretaries are not expected to provide child care.

Pay Information

The Board of Elders determines compensation packages for the Senior Pastor and the other Pastors. Compensation packages for all other staff are determined by the Senior Pastor and approved by the Board of Elders. To ensure consistent progress based on the scope of the job description, performance and attitude, all compensation packages are reviewed annually. Changes in pay or benefits are based on a number of factors including overall budget, financial condition of the church, cost of living considerations, performance, and value to the church.

Support Staff – Support staff are paid on an hourly basis and required to report hours worked to the payroll personnel. Employees are paid the 1st and 15th of each month, assuming that the agreed hours are fulfilled. Actual hours worked must be turned in to the payroll personnel the Tuesday before payday.

Payroll Deduction - We participate in the Federal Insurance Compensation Act (Social Security) which is funded by a specific percentage of each staff member's salary. Also, federal and state income tax deductions are based on the amount of salary, less exemptions. The foregoing includes all non-pastoral staff. Pastoral staff makes payment directly to the proper agency. Payments for insurance premiums are also deducted from each employee's paycheck if that employee qualifies for these benefits.

Permanent Part-time - Hours for part-time employees shall be set by the employer. Any change in these hours should be authorized by the Senior Pastor. Health and disability will be made available when the employer declares the employee as full time. When a holiday falls during normal work time, the employee will receive pay for that portion of time he or she should have been working. If holiday time falls at a time when the employee would not have been working, no holiday pay will be given and no time off will be given.

A part time employee working thirty (30) hours in a week does not immediately change his/ her status to full time. Full time will occur when it is declared by the employer.

Insurance, Long-Term Disability, Workman's Compensation

The church has the option to make available insurance coverages for its fulltime employees. Employees should discuss details of benefits, application, premium payment, etc., with the Senior Pastor. Employees should carefully review the benefit descriptions they receive from insurance carriers.

Fulltime pastoral staff will receive an employer-provided life insurance benefit. Employees who opt out of the insurance plan(s) provided by the church may not receive reimbursement for premiums or expenses.

Full-time Pastoral Staff are offered an "individual" disability insurance policy, which will provide replacement income up to a percentage of their salary as determined by the specific product. This product is in addition to social security and other state, federal or private benefits. Due to required medical evaluations, there is no guarantee that an employee will be qualified for this benefit.

Full-time Associate and Support Staff are offered a "limited" disability insurance policy, which will provide replacement income up to a percentage of their salary as determined by the specific product. This product is fully coordinated with social security or other state or federal benefits. Due to required medical evaluations, there is no guarantee that an employee will be qualified for this benefit.

Federal and State Unemployment (FUTA) under federal and state law the church is exempt from participation in the unemployment program of the federal government and state of Arkansas. Employees, upon termination from Hope Church, will not be eligible to draw/file unemployment insurance based upon their tenure of employment at Hope Church.

Paid Time Off (PTO)

Eligibility and Accrual for Non Pastoral and Support Staff - Permanent full time employees shall earn annual paid time off (PTO) as follows: 2 times their normal work week or approximately 12 days of PTO accumulated the first year. After five years of employment, the PTO is increased to 2.5 times the normal work week to a maximum of 18 days per year.

New employees are eligible for earned PTO following 6 consecutive months of service. PTO eligibility will be based on the employee's anniversary date.

Part Time Paid Time Off – Part time staff (less than 30 hours per week) will accumulate 2.5 times their normal work week, per year, after 6 months of employment. This will include sick days, weather related days, and vacation days. For example: If you work an equivalent of 2 full days per week, paid time off would equal 5 days per year.

Pastoral Staff – Pastoral staff will not be based on the above PTO. Pastoral staff (those persons holding ministerial credentials) will be based on signed contract and approval from the Senior Pastor/Board of Elders. In addition to PTO, sabbatical study time is considered for all pastoral staff.

Administration of PTO - All PTO must be pre-approved by the Senior Pastor. In approving such PTO, the needs of the church and wishes of the employee shall be considered. Seniority of service may be a governing factor in the event of conflicting requests. Please submit a leave request at least 2 weeks prior to the start of vacation.

Accrual of PTO – Upon approval, a maximum of 5 days PTO days may be carried over into the following year.

Holidays - Every full time staff member receives the following paid holidays every year. New Year's Day, Easter, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Day, Day after Christmas.

Holidays Occurring on Weekends - Holidays which fall on Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday. Holidays which fall on Sunday will be observed on the following work day.

Holidays Occurring During PTO - When a holiday comes during PTO for which an employee received compensation, the holiday will not be counted as part of the PTO.

Holidays On Day Off - If a holiday falls on an employee's day off, the employee may take another weekday off during that week. Exceptions must be approved by the Senior Pastor.

Sick Leave and Weather Related – Sick leave and weather related leave are considered part of an employee's PTO.

Bereavement Leave - Employees shall be eligible for paid leave of absence up to 5 days for a death in the immediate family. Immediate family shall be defined as including: spouse, child, parent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother, or sister.

Maternity Leave - Hope Church grants eight paid weeks of maternity leave for time during which an employee is physically unable to work because of temporary disability caused or contributed to by pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth and recovery therefrom. Such time will be granted only when certified by an employee's physician on the "Request for Maternity Leave" form.

The employee whose spouse is pregnant may be granted two weeks of paid paternity leave following the delivery of their child. Church holidays that fall within a period of authorized

maternity leave with pay will be granted as holiday pay rather than PTO.

Leave of Absence - Permanent employees shall be eligible for unpaid leaves of absence. The Senior Pastor may authorize leave without pay for a period not to exceed a total of 10 working days in any year.

The Board of Elders and the Senior Pastor may authorize a leave of absence without pay for any period up to 6 consecutive calendar months. Employees who are granted an unpaid leave of absence may continue their health, dental, life, and disability benefits at the employee's expense. PTO does not accrue during the time an employee is on an unpaid leave of absence.

Jury Duty - Employees are encouraged to cooperate in citizen responsibilities. The employee on jury duty will receive full pay in addition to his/her jury fees. The employee, however, should file an absence report with the Senior Pastor prior to the time he/she is to be on jury duty.

Staff Development

Seminars - Pastoral staff may attend one seminar or conference of their choice per year. Their spouses are encouraged to attend with them. Funds are budgeted for this purpose each year. The cost for any seminar that exceeds the amount budgeted must be approved by the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor must approve the schedule. Support staff may attend seminars at the discretion of the Senior Pastor.

Pastoral Ministry Reimbursement - Pastoral staff is encouraged to meet with other staff as well as church members regularly to develop relationships, planning, and team building. An amount shall be yearly budgeted for this type of ministry, which includes but is not limited to meals, special meetings, and special outings. This yearly amount is not to be exceeded without prior approval from the Board of Elders. All receipts must be turned in to the church office in order to receive reimbursement.

Education - We support and encourage our pastoral staff to continue their formal education. Funds are budgeted each year for this purpose. In order for these funds to be disbursed, the below guidelines must be met: Class plan and schedule should be planned in advance. It should be in line with the area in which the pastor is currently ministering. The class or classes must be passed with a minimum GPA of 3.0. A pastor's yearly attendance of one seminar or conference may be forfeited during the year(s) in which he or she is using the formal education funds.

Outside Ministry - All supporting pastoral staff is entitled to time off for outside ministry. Two Sunday mornings of ministry will be allowed per year. Outside ministry must be approved by the Senior Pastor. Any additional time must be determined in consultation with the Senior Pastor.

Denominational Meetings - Attendance at denominational conferences, related to one's ministry, of the Open Bible Standard Churches for the pastoral staff and their spouses will be paid provided they hold credentials with Open Bible Standard Churches. Knowing that some

conferences are ministry specific and are not intended for all pastoral staff, this will be determined at the discretion of the Senior Pastor.

Professional Expense - Pastoral staff may receive a professional expense allowance each year. These funds are to be used at the personal discretion of the employee to enhance their abilities, performance, and training or work environment. The employee owns any items or resources purchased. These expenses should be requisitioned as a normal expense, with indication of the employee's professional expense. Every purchase needs to be substantiated with a receipt. This, of course, is no different from any other expenditure we make for the church. Additionally, all expenditures using the professional expense accounts need to be submitted to the Senior Pastor for authorization.

Leadership Appreciation Expenses - Appreciation for worker-leaders is totally appropriate within a budget area as funds are available. For accountability purposes, gifts over \$50 in a calendar year to an individual need secondary authorization from the Senior Pastor.

Staff Expenditures

Expense Approval - The Board of Elders approve a budget each year for the general operations of the church. This budget serves as a guideline for all Hope Church expenditures. In addition to the budget, the church has specific procedures that assist staff in the stewardship of the church resources that have been entrusted to us.

Spending Authorization - Each section of the budget is assigned to a person for "primary authorization" control. For example, the youth ministry budget, once approved by the Board of Elders, is designated to the youth pastor. Their responsibility is to make requisitions, oversee, control and report on their budget items assigned to the youth ministry. This person is accountable to spending and mission effectiveness.

All persons with "primary authorization" for a budget will be given a set amount they will be authorized to spend without prior approval, providing it is already approved in their budget. All amounts over the assigned limit will need authorization prior to any type of purchase. *Non-budgeted* or *over-budget* expenses require additional authorization. Staff should direct such requests to the Senior Pastor who is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Elders on such matters.

Offerings - The paid pastoral staff is not to be involved in the collection, sorting, handling or counting of any offerings. However, there will be occasions when handling of monies from registrations and fees or sales will be necessary.

Ending of Employment

Resignation - Pastoral staff members who wish to resign from their position must submit a "Letter of Resignation" to the Senior Pastor no less than four (4) weeks prior to the date of expected

release. All support staff must submit a "Letter of Resignation" through the Senior Pastor no less than two (2) weeks prior to the date of termination.

Discharge - Before any staff employee can be discharged, they must be given a written evaluation/warning, stating the nature of the offense and the necessary corrective action. A sincere effort must be made by the employee to correct the situation within thirty (30) days from the date of the evaluation/warning.

Failure to comply with corrective action and/or response is cause for discharge upon the recommendation of the supervisor to the Senior Pastor. A notice of discharge/dismissal action may be given to the Board of Elders.

Immediate Dismissal - Reasons for immediate dismissal would include: Immoral conduct or indecency; making false, vicious, or malicious statements about the church, its pastors, or fellow employees.

Severance Pay - Severance pay will be paid to employees only upon agreement between the employee and the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor will report his recommendations to the Board of Elders for a final decision. The agreement is not final until it is approved by the Board of Elders.

Accrued Leave - All accrued paid time off will be paid upon termination of employment, in accordance with the policies established within this manual. All questions concerning this topic shall be directed to the Senior Pastor.

Hope Church Staff Policies and Practices

Receipt of Documentation

I have received a copy of Hope Church's Staff Policies and Practices, revised October, 2016, and have read it carefully. I understand all its rules, policies, terms, and conditions and agree to abide by them. I realize failure to do so may result in disciplinary action or termination of employment status. I understand and agree my employment status may be terminated at will, so both Hope Church and I remain free to choose to end our work relationship at any time. I also understand that Hope Church remains free to change, revise, or eliminate any or all of the employment benefits provided at any time.

I understand signing this agreement in no way creates an express or implied contract of employment between Hope Church and me. I also understand this information is only intended to provide a better and more understandable working atmosphere so long as the employee/employer relationship exists.

I accept and agree with the Statement of Faith³ and Official Statements⁴, as set forth in the Open Bible Manual.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Name (Printed): _____

³ The *Open Bible Statement of Faith* is available at <https://www.openbible.org/About-Us/Core-Beliefs>

⁴ *Open Bible Official Statements* can be found in The Open Bible Manual available at <https://www.openbible.org/About-Us/OBC-Manual>