



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**EMPLOYEE
HANDBOOK**

February 2021

care - connect - equip

Approved by Synod Council on _____

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1. WELCOME

Welcome to the South-Central Synod of WI of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (sometimes referred to below as the “Synod,” or “we, “us,” or similar pronouns). We hope you will find your job challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding, and we wish you success. We are pleased that you have joined our staff. We believe each employee contributes directly to our ministry and mission, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our staff.

Please read this handbook carefully and retain it for future reference. We have tried to anticipate questions you may have about your benefits and opportunities as well as our policies and procedures. Do not hesitate to raise any additional questions you may have.

2. IMPORTANT NOTICE

This handbook is a summary of the human resources policies, practices, and procedures followed by the Synod with regard to employees of the Synod. It does not apply to employees of congregations within the Synod.

The handbook is designed to provide you with information about working conditions, employee benefits, and some of the policies affecting your employment. We publish this handbook to provide a convenient resource for all employees, to assist in the orientation of new employees, and to promote consistency in the administration of the ministry we provide. You are expected to read, understand, and comply with all provisions of the handbook.

No employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question. Therefore, this handbook is not intended to create, nor does it create, contract rights. Notwithstanding any provision of this handbook, the Synod has the right to make employment-related decisions on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, the Synod has the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policy or portion of the handbook from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole discretion and with or without advance notice.

If any provision of this handbook is inconsistent with a federal or state law or regulation or a third-party benefit plan, the law, regulation, or third-party benefit plan will ordinarily be controlling.

As a religious institution, the Synod has certain rights implementing religious freedom under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and state law. Similar rights are embodied in certain federal and state statutes. The rights inherent in the concept of religious freedom are a key element of American democracy and nothing in this handbook constitutes a waiver of any of those rights. Employees whose duties are primarily “ministerial” in nature—whether or not they are ordained—are not covered by the employment discrimination laws. The same is true for applicants for employment in such ministerial positions. Further, depending on the particular

circumstances, such ministerial employees and applicants for employment may not be entitled to assert other employment-related claims against the Synod.

In addition, the applicability of this handbook to rostered ministers of the Evangelical Church in America (“ELCA”) or a related church body depends on the particular circumstances. For example, the Synod recognizes that a rostered minister on its staff is subject to the standards established by the ELCA. Because of the nature of the ministerial office, the application of this handbook to rostered ministers is subject to the following guidelines:

- To the extent a rostered minister functions as a supervisor of other employees, he or she is expected to follow the guidelines of the handbook relating to supervision.
- This handbook describes certain benefits and practices—for example, paid vacation, leave benefits, and holidays—available to all employees of the Synod, and those benefits will generally be available to rostered ministers as well.
- This handbook also describes certain policies—for example, no-smoking policies, policies relating to computer and e-mail usage and other electronic communications, and policies describing on-the-job behavior and conduct—that will also be generally applicable to rostered ministers.
- Nothing in this handbook, however, is intended to detract from a rostered minister’s rights and responsibilities as a rostered minister of the ELCA (or a related church body), including, but not necessarily limited to, the rostered minister’s rights and responsibilities under the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Synod or from the obligations and procedures applicable under a letter of call or imposed by reason of the governing documents of the ELCA.

3. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The South-Central Synod of Wisconsin is a part of the universal church of Christ and of the ELCA. The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. In length, the Church acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day.

All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of the Synod are to be carried out under his rule and authority.

In all their service, the employees of the Synod are expected to carry out their duties in faithfulness to the faith and mission of the ELCA and the Synod.

4. EMPLOYMENT

4.1. Nature of Employment

Employment with the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin is voluntarily entered into, and, unless a specific written contract or letter of call has been agreed upon, the employment relationship is “at will.” This means that, subject to applicable legal, constitutional, governing document, and letter-of-call provisions, the employment relationship can be terminated at any time for any reason, with or without cause or notice. The employee is free to resign at any time. Similarly, the Synod may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice, provided it complies with applicable governing document procedures.

Rostered ministers under call to the Synod serving on Synod staff have a call coterminous with the Bishop’s call. For example, the Assistant to the Bishop’s call ends on the same date as the Bishop’s call.

Nothing in this handbook creates contractual obligations on the part of the Synod or contractual rights on the part of employees. By way of illustration, the Synod retains the following rights:

- To determine the necessary qualifications for employment, and to recruit, select, and hire employees;
- To determine both the extent and the type of work to be performed by all employees and to establish and maintain efficient procedures, standards, and methods necessary to achieve the work;
- To determine the design and size of the work force; to assign work; and to transfer employees from job to job;
- To classify, promote, and assign employees;
- To take disciplinary action when necessary or appropriate, which may include termination of employment;
- To determine work schedules; to implement layoffs; and to make all other management decisions.

4.2. Equal Employment Opportunity

As an equal opportunity employer, the South-Central Synod of WI is committed to employing individuals who are qualified to meet the responsibilities of their jobs. Therefore, the Synod’s policy is to employ, retain, promote, treat, and terminate employees and applicants for employment on the basis of merit, qualifications, and competence. This policy of non-

discrimination governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training.

At the same time, as a religious institution, the Synod is entitled under the Constitution and laws of the United States and the State of Wisconsin to call or hire certain employees (whether rostered or non-rostered) without regard to any anti-discrimination laws. Therefore, this Equal Opportunity Policy will be interpreted and applied in accordance with the constitutional and statutory provisions that in certain circumstances allow the Synod to discriminate in favor of certain individuals on the basis of religion, and to call or hire certain employees without interference by any governmental authority and without regard to non-discrimination or reasonable accommodation restrictions that might otherwise apply. Nothing in this policy or this Handbook waives any of the Synod's constitutional or legal rights.

Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Bishop, or a member of the Synod Council's Executive Committee. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

4.3. Management Philosophy

Our experience has shown that dealing openly and directly with employees enhances the work environment. The Synod values and respects, integrity, excellence, and independence, and believes these values give a sense of shared purpose and help us focus on the needs of the members we serve. Employees are encouraged to ask questions about their job and to express any concerns about job-related issues directly to the Bishop.

Staff meetings are held regularly in order to foster open communication. Staff meetings are mandatory for all employees and attendance is considered working time for non-exempt employees. Staff meetings will include the opportunity to share ideas on our work and our mission. All employees are expected and encouraged to participate and to treat with respect all opinions expressed.

4.4. Introductory Period

All employees other than rostered ministers work on an introductory basis during their initial employment with the Synod. The introductory period is 90 days.

The introductory period is intended to give employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether their position meets their expectations. The Synod uses this period to evaluate employees' work habits and overall performance. During the introductory period, an employee is expected to discuss his or her progress with the Bishop and to ask questions about the duties he or she is performing. Either

the employee or the Synod may end the employment relationship at any time during the introductory period without regard to the principles of progressive discipline (see Part 8) or problem resolution (see Part 9) that may apply once the introductory period has been completed.

If the designated introductory period does not allow sufficient time to evaluate the employee's performance, the introductory period may be extended. Any significant absence will automatically extend an introductory period by the length of the absence. Employees who are promoted or transferred within the Synod may be required to complete a secondary introductory period.

4.5. Personal Relationships in the Workplace

The employment of relatives or individuals in a family, partnership, or dating relationship may cause conflicts and problems with favoritism—real or imagined—and employee morale. In addition to claims of partiality in treatment at work, personal conflicts from outside the work environment can be carried over into day-to-day working relationships.

Relatives of current employees may not occupy a position in which they will supervise, or be supervised by, their relative(s). Individuals involved in a dating relationship with a current employee will not be permitted to supervise or be supervised by that employee. The Synod also reserves the right to take appropriate action if an actual or potential conflict of interest arises involving relatives or individuals in a dating relationship.

If a relative relationship or dating relationship is established between employees who are in a supervisory situation as described above, the supervisor involved in the relationship must disclose the existence of the relationship to the Bishop.

If a conflict or potential conflict arises because of a relationship between employees, even if there is no supervisory relationship, the employees may be separated by reassignment or terminated from employment.

4.6. Ethical Conduct and Confidential Information

The Synod's reputation depends on the ethical conduct of our employees. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires careful observance of the spirit and letter of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as due regard for appropriate standards of conduct and personal integrity. The Synod expects its employees to conduct themselves in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

The mission and ministry of the Synod also depends on the trust and confidence of congregations in the Synod and members of the public. Employees are expected to act in a way that will merit the continuation of this trust and confidence. Subject to applicable legal requirements, certain information must be held in confidence by all employees, including allegations of misconduct, financial matters, medical, psychological, and family matters pertaining to rostered leaders of the

congregations within the Synod's territory; and other sensitive information involving such congregations and their members. All such confidential information is not to be discussed or divulged to anyone, within or outside of the Synod, unless disclosure is required by law or limited disclosure is made for a compelling reason.

4.7. Conflicts of Interest

Employees are expected to perform their duties in a way that avoids actual or potential conflicts of interest.

An actual or potential conflict of interest exists when an employee is or may be in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain, either for the employee or for the employee's relative or close friend.

The mere existence of a family relationship or a friendship does not violate this policy if the relationship is fully disclosed and appropriate safeguards are followed. Therefore, employees must promptly disclose to the Bishop the existence of any family relationship or friendship that may be considered an actual or potential conflict of interest. Any doubts should be resolved in favor of disclosure.

A violation of this policy may be found not only in cases where an employee or relative has a significant ownership in a firm with which the Synod does business, but also when an employee or relative receives any kickback, bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration as a result of any transaction involving the Synod.

4.8. Disability Accommodations

The South-Central Synod of WI recognizes that disabled individuals have challenges to overcome. Therefore, to help overcome these challenges, the Synod may attempt to make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities of applicants or employees. Generally, any such accommodation must permit applicants or employees to perform the jobs held or applied for without causing an undue hardship for the Synod. All accommodation decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account applicable legal requirements, the qualifications and the particular circumstances of the individual in relation to job-related criteria, and the Synod's resources.

4.9. Job Posting and Employee Referrals

The South-Central Synod of WI provides employees an opportunity to indicate their interest in open positions and advance within the organization according to their skills and experience. While job openings may be posted, the Synod has the right, in its discretion, not to post a particular opening. Posted job openings will normally remain open for at least one calendar week. Each job posting notice will normally include the dates of the posting period, job title, essential duties, and required qualifications and skills.

Job posting is only one of a variety of ways to inform employees of openings and to identify qualified and interested applicants who might not otherwise be known. Other recruiting sources may also be used to fill open positions.

4.10. Employment Classifications

The South-Central Synod of WI defines employment classifications so that employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time or affect the rights of either the Synod or the employee to terminate the employment relationship at any time. Further, unless otherwise required by law, these classifications are subject to change at the discretion of the Synod.

Employees may be designated as either non-exempt or exempt for purposes of overtime pay. Non-exempt employees will receive overtime pay at the rate of one-and-one-half times their regular rate for hours worked in excess of 40 during a single workweek. Exempt employees are not entitled to overtime pay.

All employees will also be classified in the other employment categories described below:

Regular full-time employees are those who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work 32-40 hours per week for the full year. Generally, they are eligible to participate in the Synod's benefit programs, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each program. As noted above, regular full-time employees may be either **exempt** (not eligible for overtime) or **non-exempt** (eligible for overtime) depending on the position.

Regular part-time employees are those who are regularly scheduled to work less than the full-time work schedule, but at least 20 hours per week on a full-year schedule. Regular part-time employees are eligible for some benefits sponsored by the Synod, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

Limited part-time employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 20 hours per week. They are not eligible for benefits.

Temporary employees are those who are hired as interim replacements, to cover only a portion of the year, or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Employment assignments in this category are of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain that status unless and until notified of a change.

4.11. Access to Personnel Documents

The South-Central Synod of WI maintains a personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes information such as the employee's job application, résumé, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and pay adjustments, records of counseling and discipline, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of the Synod and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally, only appropriate supervisory personnel who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees may review and obtain copies of their own personnel documents in accordance with applicable legal requirements. Original personnel documents may not be taken from the premises.

4.12. Accuracy of Information

The South-Central Synod of WI relies on the accuracy of information contained in the employment application or provided as part of the hiring process or during the employment relationship. Any individual who falsifies, misrepresents, or omits material information may be rejected from hiring consideration or, if already hired, terminated from employment.

4.13. Personal Data Changes

Employees must promptly notify the Synod of any changes in their personal home mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, names and number of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and similar data.

4.14. Business Travel Expenses

“Reasonable and Necessary”

1. Reasonable herein is deemed to mean efforts to conserve the financial resources of this church, being cautious about all expenditures, avoiding the appearance of extravagance, and not indulging in spending inappropriate for the work, programs and activities of this church.
2. Necessary in this context, involves legitimate charges that arise from the work, programs and activities of the Synod. Good cautious common sense must prevail.

All business travel must be submitted in accordance with policies approved by the South-Central Synod of WI.

If the employee is issued a synod credit card, policies pertaining to the use of the card must be adhered to (this policy will be outlined on the synod credit card usage agreement).

All employees who use a private vehicle for work-related activities must keep proof of automobile insurance on record with the Synod in such amounts as the Synod may specify.

The Synod will reimburse employees for their reasonable expenses when traveling from their normal work locations in accordance with such specific procedures as the Synod may from time to time establish. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable expenses. Generally, the actual costs of travel, meals, lodging, and other reasonable expenses will be paid. Frequent flyer miles from airlines may be accumulated by the employee for personal use. If the employee uses his or her private vehicle, the employee will ordinarily receive a per-mileage rate in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines provided the total amount does not exceed the cost of appropriate public transportation.

Mileage between an employee's residence and the Synod office is not reimbursable. The opportunity to work from home is a privilege therefore mileage to meetings will be the lesser of the miles. Mileage will be paid figured as the shortest distance to location of meeting and the Synod office or employee home and meeting location. The expenses reimbursement form that includes mileage must indicate the destination and purpose of the travel with odometer readings.

Filing of the expense reimbursement reports must be done promptly. All reimbursement reports normally are to be filed within 30 days. Expenses will not be reimbursed if the expense was incurred more than 120 day before the expenses report is submitted. Detailed invoices for documentation of all travel expenses must accompany the employee signed monthly expense report.

You should contact the Bishop for guidance with regard to the procedures related to travel arrangements, expense reports, reimbursement for specific expenses, or any other business travel issues.

4.15. Performance Reviews

Each employee should receive a performance review at the end of an employee's introductory period and annually thereafter. The performance review shall be both a self-assessment and supervisor assessment. Performance evaluations may be conducted whenever necessary to provide the opportunity to discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for achieving goals.

Performance reviews shall be considered in all aspects of the employment relationship, including promotions, training or retraining, reassignments, pay adjustments, and disciplinary and discharge decisions.

The annual performance reviews will be done with the Bishop All performance reviews shall be maintained in a file housed in the office of the Bishop.

5. PAY AND BENEFITS

5.1. Compensation Philosophy

The purpose of the compensation program is to provide appropriate and adequate pay for services rendered. The South-Central Synod of WI seeks to recruit, attract, and retain the best possible candidates for its Synod staff. One important tool in this effort is to offer suitable compensation, including salaries and benefits that are competitive with defined benchmarks and consistent with appropriate market analysis.

The following factors will be considered in compensation decisions:

- Compensation paid to high-quality motivated staff in comparable positions in congregations located in the Synod.
- Applicable Compensation Guidelines issued periodically by the Synod.
- Data available from other ELCA synods and similar organizations.
- The employee's experience level.
- The responsibilities involved in the particular position.
- The employee's job performance and achievements.
- Cost-of-living factors.

5.2. Pay Periods

Pay periods are the 15th and the 30th of the month or the preceding time period. If a normal pay day falls on a non-working day, paychecks will be issued on the last working day proceeding the non-working day.

5.3. No Pay Advances

There will be no pay advances to any employee for any reason.

5.4. Pay Deductions

The Synod makes certain deductions from every employee's pay. Among these are applicable federal and state income taxes and Medicare taxes. The Synod also deducts Social Security taxes up to the federally designated limit. The Synod pays an equal employer amount of Social Security for non-rostered employees. Rostered ministers will receive a Social Security allowance in the amount of the employer's typical contribution as specified in the Synod's

published Compensation Guidelines. Rostered ministers are responsible for following Internal Revenue Service regulations regarding estimated tax payments.

The Synod also offers voluntary programs and benefits. Eligible employees may voluntarily authorize payroll deductions to participate in these programs.

5.5. Pay Adjustments

The Synod generally evaluates the amount of an employee's pay on or about the annual anniversary of the employee's hire date. Annual pay increases are not guaranteed. Any pay adjustment will be based on the employee's performance appraisal and the Synod's financial resources.

5.6. Timekeeping

All employees who are required to record time worked must do so accurately. Proper recording of hours worked is especially important when working hours may vary from day to day or week to week. The Synod is committed to paying employees properly and will promptly correct any errors in paychecks and reimburse employees as required. If you believe there has been an improper deduction or other pay error, you should notify the Bishop promptly.

5.7. Overtime

At times, certain jobs require extra time and effort. There will be times when an employee will need to come in early or stay late because of workloads or the demand of a particular project. Employees whose job responsibilities require them to work additional hours should accept this as part of the job. Non-exempt employees may not work beyond their normally scheduled hours without advance permission from the Bishop.

Non-exempt employees who are required or permitted to work overtime will receive overtime pay in accordance with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable state law. Overtime pay is based on one and one-half of the employee's regular rate for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in each workweek. "Hours worked" means time actually spent on the job, and therefore do not include paid time off, holiday time, or unpaid leave.

Under limited circumstances and only when requested by the employee and approved in writing by the Bishop, a non-exempt employee may be granted time off in lieu of overtime pay on an hour-per-hour basis, but only if the time off is taken during the same work week. For example, if a non-exempt employee worked 40 hours from Thursday through Tuesday, the employee may be authorized to take off on Wednesday of the same work week.

5.8. Employee Benefits—In General

Eligible employees are provided a wide range of benefits. Several of the benefit programs are described in this Part 5. Benefits involving time away from work are described in Part 6.

Benefits eligibility depends on a variety of factors, including employee classification, and benefits are subject to change at any time. The Bishop will identify the programs for which you are eligible.

Certain employee benefits are obtained through Portico Benefit Services. Detailed information about any particular benefit plan is available in the applicable summary plan description. Further information can be obtained by contacting Portico Benefit Services (800-352-2876 or www.porticobenefits.org).

Important Note: The Synod has the right to change insurance companies or to modify eligibility requirements or coverage at any time. Further, as stated in Part 2, if a provision of this Handbook is not consistent with an applicable law, regulation, or third-party benefit plan, the Synod will normally follow the law, regulation, or benefit plan.

5.9. Insurance Benefits

Through the ELCA, the Synod offers Portico Benefit Services insurance plans providing for long-term disability coverage, survivor benefits, and medical/dental benefits. Separate plan documents explain each benefit in detail, and the benefits are controlled by the language of the plan documents and the actual policies. Benefit policies may be modified, added, or terminated at any time at the ELCA's or the Synod's discretion or by the insurance company. Further inquiries or questions should be directed to Portico Benefit Services.

5.10. Retirement Contributions

The Synod provides a retirement benefit for its regular full-time employees and regular part-time employees through Portico Benefit Services. The benefit for regular part-time employees is based on the ratio of their regularly scheduled hours to a 40-hour week. Detailed information is contained in brochures published by Portico Benefit Services and available to all employees.

A signed agreement between the Synod and the employee reduces the employee's compensation by an amount credited to the benefit plan on a tax-sheltered basis consistent with Internal Revenue Service regulations. The employee may also contribute to another pension or annuity plan of his or her choice, provided the total of all contributions, including the employer's contribution, does not exceed the current allowable limits of the Internal Revenue Service regulations.

The benefits are controlled by the language of the plan documents and the actual policies. Benefit policies may be modified, added, or terminated at any time at the ELCA's or the Synod's discretion. Further inquiries or questions should be directed to Portico Benefit Services.

5.11. Survivor Benefit

In the event of death of an employee, the employee's salary will be paid to the surviving spouse (if any) for the next thirty days. If there is no surviving spouse or if the deceased employee is unmarried at the time of death, these payments will be made to the dependent(s) or person(s) previously designated by the employee or, in the absence of a designation, to the estate of the deceased employee.

5.12. Workers' Compensation Insurance

The Synod provides a comprehensive workers' compensation insurance program at no cost to employees. This program covers injuries or illnesses sustained in the course of employment. Workers' compensation insurance provides benefits after a waiting period in accordance with the policy plan. The appropriate forms are available from the Bishop.

Employees who sustain work-related injuries or illnesses, no matter how minor, must inform the Bishop promptly. Employees with temporary work restrictions must keep the Bishop regularly advised as their current medical treatment and restricted work status.

5.13. Unemployment Insurance Not Available

Employment with a religious, non-profit corporation like the Synod is not covered by Wisconsin unemployment insurance law, so unemployment insurance benefits are not available upon termination of employment.

5.14. Continuing Education

The South-Central Synod of Wisconsin will provide a Continuing Education Plan (CEP) for use by all employees. An employee's continuing education plans for the coming year may be discussed in conjunction with their annual performance appraisal.

1. **Enrollment and Participation:** To participate an employee may annually contribute a minimum of \$50 to a maximum of \$250, the synod will double the employee's contribution. If the employee elects to contribute \$250, the synod will contribute a \$50 bonus for a total synod contribution of \$550 annually. Employee contributions are collected only via payroll deduction and are held in the office in an Equity account until utilized by the employee.
2. **Funding:** CEP funds are made available to the employee upon request, with the approval of the Bishop. Interest is not accumulated. Employer-contributed funds are considered as taxable income by the Internal Revenue Service, and will be annually reported on the employee's W-2 form.
3. **Time:** Each employee will have up to 12 days of CEP time each year to participate in work-related training courses, seminars, and actual classroom attendance. The amount of

time available to the employee is calculated on the basis of one day per year for every twenty dollars (\$20) annually contributed by the employee. Time to be taken for continuing education purposes is to be arranged, in advance, with the Bishop. CEP time not taken does not accrue and may not be carried over into the following year.

4. **Transfers and Termination:** If the employee's service with the synod is terminated for any reason, including retirement, only the balance of the funds contributed by the employee will be returned to the terminating employee.
5. **Withdrawals:** CEP requests for withdrawal must be submitted with accompanying documentation as to the type of training, start and end dates, cost, and other relevant details. This documentation may be in the form of a brochure, course description, registration materials, a training catalog, or other documentation from the organization providing the training. The Bishop must sign the request for withdrawal.
6. **Accountability:** Within two weeks after completion of his/her course of study, the employee is required to submit program related receipts and at least one of the following items as satisfactory documentation of his/her attendance and course completion:
 - transcript of grade (college/university courses)
 - name tag, handout, certificate of completion (seminars and workshops)
 - a written summary of what was learned and how it applies to the employee's job responsibilities (for other types of training programs, including individual study with travel and sponsored study/travel tours)
7. **Internal Training and Educational Opportunities:** Ongoing, internal educational opportunities are granted at the discretion of the Bishop and may not be available each year. Funding may be obtained from accumulated CEP OR from unit funds.
8. **Individual or Sponsored Study Programs With Travel:** Individual or sponsored study programs and travel tours offer employees an opportunity to learn about ELCA issues, concerns and programs in the setting where they occur, through direct interaction with the people involved. Such tours also instill in participants a more meaningful understanding of the ministry being carried out by the ELCA.
9. **Personal Development Plan:** with the approval of the Bishop, an employee may be given personal development opportunities aimed at assisting him/her to: a) better fulfill the requirement of the position he/she holds or, b) qualify for a new position within the synod.

5.15. Sabbatical Leave

The Synod recognizes that full-time executive staff members have a need to increase and extend their knowledge and competency in their fields of specialization. This may be accomplished through a sabbatical leave, normally a period of three (3) months, during which time full salary and benefits will be continued. After five (5) years on Synod staff, a sabbatical leave may be granted. Subsequent leaves for the same employee may be considered at five-year intervals, pending completion of sabbatical leaves by other eligible employees. An executive staff member granted a sabbatical leave will be expected to commit to a minimum of one year of service to the synod after the conclusion of the leave unless an exception is granted by the Bishop in consultation with the Synod's Executive Committee. The employee is responsible for any tuition, materials, travel, or other costs associated with the leave. Budgeted continuing education and professional development funds may be applied to these expenses upon completion of the sabbatical. Employees on sabbatical leave do not earn sick leave during their sabbatical period. Normally, vacation time is not added to sabbatical time. Requests for sabbatical leaves, including the program of study, must be submitted in writing to the Bishop a minimum of 180 days prior to the requested sabbatical. The Bishop will notify the Executive Committee of the proposed program of study. Sabbatical leaves are to be granted so that employee's sabbaticals do not overlap with leaves granted to other members of the Synod staff. Within two months after completion of the sabbatical leave, the employee will provide a full report to the Bishop on the work completed. Sabbatical leave does not accrue. An employee who leaves employment without using eligible sabbatical leave is not entitled to any sabbatical payments.

5.16. Housing Allowance

Staff rostered ministers may request that a portion of the employee's annual salary be designated as a housing allowance, in compliance with Internal Revenue Service regulations. The employee assumes full responsibility for compliance with federal and state tax requirements, including Internal Revenue Service definitions of "cost to provide a home." Requests for housing allowances, on the form provided, must be submitted and approved prior to January 1st of the ensuing year by the Synod Council.

5.17. Severance Pay

These severance benefits are to be understood as providing support during the transition time prior to another call or employment. Severance benefits are not extended beyond such time when the individual begins work under call or finds other employment. Responsibility for notification of a call or other employment rests with the severance benefits recipient.

The persons eligible for these severance benefits who were either:

- elected Bishop of the Synod, or

- selected as Synod staff whose office or employment by the Synod was involuntarily terminated due to action of the Synod by any of the following: non-election of the incumbent Synodical Bishop, budget restraints, change of position functions, or resignation upon request of a newly elected Bishop.

Disability is not covered under these provisions, since disability is covered under the provisions of the Disability Benefits Plan of the Board of Pensions.

Persons planning retirement and, therefore, voluntarily declining election or appointment, are not eligible for these severance benefits.

Eligible persons will be hereinafter referred to as severance benefits recipients. The severance benefits shall:

- Be effective for the severance benefits recipient who has served at least one full term as Bishop or, normally, in the case of other executive Synodical staff, who has served a term concurrent with the Bishop's term of service.
- Begin upon vacating the Synodical office or position and following the period covered by unused vacation time.
- Be paid on the benefits recipients' regular pay periods.
- Be one month of benefits.

Benefits recipients will receive:

- Current monthly compensation (salary, housing and FICA reimbursement, if applicable).
- Participation in the ELCA Board of Pension Plans - pensions at the designated rate, Survivor Benefits Plan, Major Medical/Dental Benefits Plan, and Disability Benefits Plan for the one month of severance benefits.

Following the expiration of the severance benefits, benefits recipients may retain their participation in the Survivor Benefits, Major Medical/Dental Plan, and Disability Plan at their own expense according to the provisions of the applicable plans. Solely for the purpose of determining rights to continue benefits under those plans, the benefits recipient's termination of call/employment will be deemed to occur on the date severance benefits cease.

In case of a difference of opinion in interpretation of this Severance Benefits Policy, the Synod Council will make the final disposition.

6. TIME AWAY FROM WORK

6.1. Paid Vacation

The South-Central Synod of WI recognizes the need for time away from work for rest and relaxation.

All vacations must be approved by the Bishop and are to be scheduled in a manner that allows continuous office coverage.

Full time non-exempt employees earn paid vacation as follows:

- 1-3 years = 2 wks.
- 4-6 years = 3 wks.
- 7 or more years = 4 wks.

Part time employees earn paid vacation on a pro-rated basis.

Full time exempt employees earn 4 weeks paid vacation annually.

Employees may carry over up to one week of vacation each year. The maximum number of days taken in any calendar year may not exceed 35 days. Unused paid vacation time will be paid upon termination.

Previous employment with a congregation, agency, or other church body related to the ELCA may count toward meeting the foregoing years-of-service requirements.

Holidays observed by the Synod occurring during an employee's vacation time do not count against the employee's vacation allotment.

All staff members should schedule vacation as far in advance as possible—normally at least 60 days—and obtain the Bishop's permission for vacation absences. If workplace needs preclude two or more employees in the same functional area from being absent at the same time, the Synod will normally give preference to the employee who made the first request. The Synod has the right to deny a request for vacation based on its business needs.

Staff members are also encouraged to take vacation in increments of at least a week.

The amount of pay for a non-exempt employee on vacation is based on the employee's regular rate of pay exclusive of overtime.

Employees are responsible for having their work in a satisfactory condition before leaving on vacation and for coordinating with other employees regarding coverage during their absence.

Employees who leave employment after completing six months of continuous service with the Synod will normally be paid for accrued and unused vacation. As an exception to this normal practice, however, employees discharged for serious misconduct or gross negligence and

employees who quit without providing at least two weeks of advance notice will not be paid for accrued vacation.

6.2. Sick Days

Eligible employees accrue paid sick leave at the rate of 1 day per month starting from their employment date and can build up to a maximum of 45 working days which can be carried over from year to year. (Employees are not paid for unused sick leave when they terminate.) Absences for sickness longer than 4 consecutive days require a doctor's written statement. Failure to provide such a statement will result in a pay deduction equal to the number of days missed.

In cases where an employee has insufficient accrued sick leave, and there are compelling and extenuating circumstances, the Bishop will review such case on an individual basis.

Family Illness

In cases where there is an illness of an immediate family member that requires the employee's presence, accrued sick leave may be used with approval by the Bishop. Immediate family includes: spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or legal guardian.

6.3. Paid Holidays

The South-Central Synod of Wisconsin provides paid time off to regular full-time employees on the following legal holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day After Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve Day
- Christmas Day

A holiday falling on Saturday will normally be observed on the preceding Friday. A holiday falling on Sunday will normally be observed on the following Monday.

An employee whose religion requires the observance of holiday(s) other than those listed above should contact the South-Central Synod of WI to request approval of religious holidays in place of one or more of the holidays specified above.

Regular full-time employees will receive their regular rate of pay for each paid holiday. Regular part-time employees will receive their regular rate of pay for four hours.

6.4. Personal Days

Full-time employees may take two personal paid days off per calendar year. Paid personal days must be approved in advance by the Bishop and must be scheduled to avoid disruption with workplace needs. Personal days not taken are not carried over to the next year.

6.5. Election Day and Time Off for Voting

For the purpose of voting on the day of an election, each employee will be allowed up to two paid hours away from work, either at the beginning or the close of the normal working day. The specific time selected must be approved in advance by the Bishop.

6.6. Maternity/Paternity and Parenting Leave

The Synod provides up to twenty working days of paid maternity/paternity leave in connection with the birth of an employee's child or the placement of a child with the employee for adoption. An employee desiring to take such a maternity/paternity leave must notify the Bishop with as much advance notice as reasonably possible. To be eligible for leave, the employee must have been employed by the Synod for at least twelve consecutive months when the leave begins. The leave must begin not more than six weeks after the child's birth or adoptive placement, except that, if a newborn child must remain in the hospital longer than the mother, the leave may begin not more than six weeks after the child leaves the hospital.

Regular part-time employees who meet the twelve-month requirement are eligible for paid maternity/paternity leave on a prorated basis, based on a comparison between their regularly scheduled hours to the hours regularly scheduled for a full-time employee.

Employees desiring to take additional unpaid leave following the birth or adoptive placement of a child may apply as specified under the "Leave Without Pay" heading.

A synod employee who regularly works at least half time and who has been employed by the Synod for at least twelve consecutive months may be eligible for up to six weeks of unpaid leave in conjunction with the birth or adoption of a child. If the Act applies, such a leave must begin not more than six weeks after the birth or adoption, unless the child must remain in the hospital longer than the mother, in which case the leave must begin not more than six weeks after the child leaves the hospital.

6.7. Leave Without Pay

Up to twenty working days of unpaid leave is available to regular full-time and regular part-time employees on a yearly basis. Employees who wish to use this benefit are expected to provide the Bishop with as much advance notice as possible. Such leave without pay is ordinarily not available unless the employee has used all available sick leave and at least one-half of accrued vacation. A request for unpaid leave may be denied based on the Synod's work requirements.

The availability of a leave without pay in excess of twenty working days is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Bishop in consultation with the Personnel Committee. An employee taking such an extended unpaid leave may not be eligible for benefits during the leave or for reinstatement following the completion of the leave. Time spent on an extended unpaid leave does not count toward vacation accrual.

6.8. Bereavement Leave

Paid absences in the event of a death in the employee's immediate family will be allowed for up to five days depending on individual circumstances. Normally, the final day of the leave will occur on the day following the funeral service. A request for leave should be submitted to the Bishop and the Bishop will determine the number of paid days available. Employees may choose to use accrued paid time off to extend the paid absence if the situation warrants additional time away from work. The following are considered to be immediate family:

- Spouse/Significant Partner
- Child/Step-Child or Spouse of Child
- Parent
- Sibling
- Parent-in-law
- Grandparent/grandchild

Unpaid absences may be allowed for attendance at funeral services in the event of the death of a non-immediate family member or close friend.

6.9. Jury Duty

Time off will be granted during jury duty. An employee serving on a jury will continue to be paid by the Synod but must remit to the Synod the amount of compensation received for jury service. An employee called to jury duty must provide the Synod a copy of the court order or subpoena when requesting time off for jury duty. An employee who reports to court for jury duty but who is not selected to serve on a jury is expected to return to work.

6.10. Leave to Perform Military Service

The Synod grants military leave to employees who perform military service on a part-time and regularly occurring basis or who perform military service on a full-time but temporary basis.

The Synod grants reinstatement to employees who perform military service on a full-time but temporary basis and to individuals who have resigned from their employment with the Synod in order to perform military service on a full-time basis.

This policy is intended to be subject to and to be interpreted in accordance with the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, applicable provisions of state law, and regulations adopted pursuant to federal and state law.

6.11. Service Day

In keeping with the theme “God’s Work. Our Hands,” employees of the South-Central Synod of WI are encouraged to share their time, talents, and gifts by taking an active, visible role in volunteer activities.

To that end, all full-time employees may take one day (eight hours) of paid leave each calendar year to use for volunteer activities. Part-time employees may take such leave on a prorated basis. An employee must apply in advance and in writing to the bishop, and provide an explanation of the proposed activity, including the time place, and sponsor. Any unused community service day may not be carried forward to the next calendar year or paid out at the end of employment.

7. PERFORMANCE AND BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

7.1. Safety

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules, to exercise caution in all work activities, and to report promptly any unsafe condition to the Bishop.

7.2. Business Hours and Work Schedules

The South-Central Synod of WI office is open and staffed Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m and Friday 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Non-exempt employees will normally organize their work schedules to perform their duties within these specified hours, subject to the approval of the Bishop.

The hours of operation may change. Also, your hours may depend on your particular assigned duties during any given day.

The needs of the job must be given appropriate priority. Staff members are expected to be flexible in the accommodation of workplace needs and to come in early or stay late when necessary. Of course, non-exempt employees will be paid for all hours worked.

7.3. Attendance and Punctuality

Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other employees. The Synod expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work and, except for prior authorization or a legitimate reason, to remain throughout the scheduled shift. Employees who cannot avoid being late to work or who are unable to work as scheduled must notify the Bishop promptly, normally before their scheduled starting time.

Acceptable attendance is an essential requirement of every job, and absenteeism and tardiness problems are performance issues. All employees must establish and maintain acceptable attendance and punctuality standards. Depending on the circumstances, an employee who is absent more than four consecutive workdays may be required to present a statement from a health care provider before returning to work.

Employees are not permitted to work at home or away from the office without advance permission from the Bishop on a case-by-case basis.

7.4. Personal Appearance, Grooming, and Fragrances

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the image the South-Central Synod of WI presents to the public. During business hours or when representing the Synod, employees are expected to present a clean, neat, and tasteful appearance and to dress according to the requirements of their positions and accepted social standards. This is particularly true for employees whose jobs involve personal contact with congregations of the Synod or the public.

You should also be aware that other individuals may be chemically sensitive in the sense that they suffer reactions to fragrances found in cologne, after-shave lotion, perfume, perfumed hand lotion, fragranced hair products, and similar items. Therefore, you are expected to refrain from using such products at work, as well as any particular products that are irritating to other employees or visitors. This prohibition, of course, does not extend to deodorant or bath soap.

If the Bishop determines your personal appearance is inappropriate, you may be asked to leave the workplace until you are properly dressed or groomed. Consult with the Bishop if you have questions as to what constitutes appropriate appearance. At no time is the following clothing permitted during business hours:

- Sexually provocative, imprudent, or revealing clothing;
- Clothing with alcohol, tobacco, inappropriate language, or offensive graphic logos;
- Athletic tank tops, halter-tops, or other tops baring the midriff; and
- Spandex or leggings unless the top covers to mid-thigh.

7.5. No Use of Tobacco Products in the Workplace

Smoking or the use of other tobacco products is not allowed in the workplace.

7.6. Meal Periods and Rest Breaks

Non-exempt employees working six or more hours per day are normally given an unpaid meal period of one hour, and no less than 30 minutes. Meal periods will be scheduled to accommodate operating requirements. Employees will normally be relieved of all active responsibilities and restrictions during meal periods. If work demands prohibit at least a 30-minute meal period for a non-exempt employee on a particular day, the meal period will be considered paid time.

Non-exempt employees may also take a 15-minute paid rest break each morning and afternoon. Except in unusual circumstances approved by the Bishop, these paid breaks may not be combined with the unpaid lunch period or taken at the beginning or end of the work day.

7.7. Safeguarding Property

Employees are responsible for safeguarding all property issued or otherwise made available to them by the Synod during their employment, such as the following to the extent applicable:

- Computers, computer software, and manuals;
- Cell phones;
- Keys and access cards.

On or before their last day of work, employees must return all property belong to the Synod. The Synod may also take all legally appropriate steps to recover or protect its property.

7.8. Inclement Weather

Weather conditions such as snow, ice, and extreme cold are part of winter. Employees should make every reasonable effort to report to work unless weather and road conditions where you live indicate you should stay home.

With the exception of cold weather days, the synod office will be closed when visibility drops or driving conditions degrade and school is closed or closes.

A non-exempt employee who makes a personal judgment not to come to work due to bad weather on a day the Synod office has not been closed may be allowed to use paid personal time or vacation time to cover the hours missed or may be allowed to make up the hours missed under arrangements approved by the Bishop.

7.9. Dealing with the News Media

Only the Bishop may speak to reporters on behalf of the Western Iowa Synod. Reporters seeking a Synod representative should be referred to the Bishop.

7.10. Sexual Harassment and Other Inappropriate Behavior

A fundamental policy of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin is that the workplace is for work. Our goal is to provide a workplace where employees behave courteously, professionally, and feel safe at all times. Tension created by conduct not related to work—including animosity caused by ethnic, racial, or sexual remarks, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, loud swearing or yelling, or similar conduct—does not belong in our workplace. Similarly, inappropriate displays of affection or sexually related conduct, even if welcome, are inappropriate at work and will not be tolerated.

7.10.1. Harassment

Harassment of employees or applicants for employment is prohibited. “Harassment” is defined as persistently bothering, disturbing, or tormenting another person. Harassment may be based on a variety of factors, such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, marital status, physical appearance, or personal dislike. The basis for the harassment does not matter. The Synod prohibits all forms of harassment, including, but not limited to:

- Verbal harassment, such as making derogatory statements, epithets, or slurs to or about another person or group;
- Visual harassment, such as displaying offensive posters, cartoons, or drawings; and
- Physical harassment, such as threatening, assaulting, or physically interfering with another person or making other inappropriate or unwelcome physical contact.

7.10.2. Sexual Harassment

“Sexual harassment” is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of employment;
- Submission or refusal to submit to such conduct is used as the basis for a tangible employment action; or

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or work environment.

Sexual harassment is prohibited. Individuals cannot be forced to submit to sexual harassment as a basis for any employment decision. In addition, the Synod attempts to prevent and promptly eliminate any conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment for our employees.

7.10.3. Examples of Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct, when occurring in the workplace or when it may adversely affect the work environment, will be considered to be harassment or inappropriate behavior:

- Sexually suggestive or off-color comments or jokes;
- Sexual flirtation, innuendo, advances, propositions, or other sexual activities;
- Unprofessional touching, such as massages, embracing, or inappropriately putting an arm around another employee;
- Repeated and unwelcome invitations for social interactions outside of the workplace;
- Sexual or racial slurs, derogatory remarks, or offensive gestures;
- Swearing or loud yelling over the telephone;
- Displaying or distributing sexually explicit or otherwise off-color materials, including books, magazines, articles, pictures, greeting cards, photographs, drawings, cartoons, and email messages, text messages; and
- Including or excluding any individuals from workplace activities, assignments, or responsibilities based on their refusal to participate in or tolerate sexual or other forms of harassment or based on other factors not related to job performance or legitimate reasons.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. A consensual relationship does not justify inappropriate displays of affection or other sexual statements or activities during working hours or at work-related functions. Any questions about whether particular conduct is prohibited under this policy should be discussed with the Bishop.

7.10.4. Reporting Harassment or Other Inappropriate Conduct

If you believe that any sort of sexual or other harassment or other inappropriate conduct is interfering with your work or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment,

you are urged to contact the Bishop. You may be asked to sign a written complaint or other summary of the information you report.

7.10.5. Investigation and Follow-Up

Complaints of harassment will be promptly and thoroughly investigated and you will be advised of the results of the investigation. The Synod understands these matters are sensitive and will therefore attempt to keep all employee complaints and communications, such as interviews and witness statements, in confidence.

The Synod may take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, against any employee who engages in sexual or other harassment or who otherwise violates this policy. Further, the Synod may correct any adverse employment action you or another employee experienced due to conduct forbidden by this policy.

If an individual involved in harassing or inappropriate conduct is not employed by the Synod, the individual will be informed of our policy and appropriate action will be taken. In all cases, the Synod will make follow-up inquiries to make sure the harassment has stopped. If you are not satisfied with the results of the investigation or follow-up action, or if further harassment or other unacceptable conduct occurs, you should contact the Bishop.

7.10.6. Retaliation Forbidden

The Synod will not tolerate retaliation against any employee who complains of sexual or other harassment or who provides information in connection with any such complaint. If you believe that you have been retaliated against for bringing a complaint or providing information related to a complaint, you are urged to use the reporting procedure described in this policy.

7.10.7. You Are Responsible For:

- Behaving courteously and professionally toward your fellow employees;
- Reading this policy and understanding fully its requirements;
- Refraining from conduct forbidden by this policy;
- Reporting promptly any incidents of sexual or other harassment or other inappropriate behavior; and
- Cooperating in any investigation conducted under this policy by providing accurate and complete information about any incidents with which you are familiar.

7.11. Use of Telephone and Mail Systems

The Synod wishes to maintain effective telephone communications, and employees should always use the approved greeting and speak in a courteous and professional manner.

Personal use of the telephone system for long-distance and toll calls is normally not permitted. Employees should practice discretion when making local personal calls and may be required to reimburse the Synod for any charges resulting from their personal use of the telephone. Personal calls should be limited to meal times and other breaks.

The use of Synod-paid postage for personal correspondence is not permitted.

7.12. Cell Phones

The Bishop and Synod staff are required to carry cell phones to carry out their duties. Whether their cell phone is provided by the Synod or paid for by an individual employee, Synod staff members are expected to observe the following guidelines in their use of cell phones during working hours:

- Employees should refrain from texting, checking or sending email, and taking or making personal calls during meetings.
- Employees should always be conscious of their surroundings and refrain from discussing confidential matters in a public setting or under circumstances where their conversation could be overheard.
- Employees are required to abide by the law or ordinance of a particular jurisdiction with regard to the use of a cell phone in a motor vehicle away from the office, and will be solely responsible for any traffic violations relating to such use.
- Safety must always be of paramount concern, and employees should never place themselves or others at risk to fulfill work-related needs.
- Employees should never attempt to send or review text or email messages while operating a motor vehicle.
- Employees are encouraged to place calls either prior to driving or while on rest breaks, and to pull off to the side of the road and safely stop before accepting calls.

As is the case with all policies summarized in this Handbook, this cell phone policy is subject to revision or supplementation at any time. The synod will reimburse staff members a set rate for use of personal cell phones. This will be set by the Bishop and Synod Council each calendar year.

7.13. Computer and Internal Email Use

Computers, computer files, the email system, and software furnished to employees are the property of the Synod and are intended for business use. Employees should not expect any information stored in their computers or included in their emails to be private. Computer and email usage may be monitored.

The South-Central Synod of WI strives to maintain a workplace where its employees, members, and visitors are not subject to offensive or demeaning conduct. Therefore, the Synod prohibits the use of computers and the email system in ways that are disruptive or offensive to others.

Employees are expected to refrain from loading any software that has not been checked for viruses or approved by appropriate information technology personnel.

7.14. Electronic Communications

Internet access to the global electronic information resources on the Internet, email, voice mail, and other electronic communications may be provided by the South-Central Synod of WI to assist employees in obtaining work-related data and technology. The following guidelines have been established as a basis for usage of these electronic communications. While this usage is intended for job-related activities, incidental and occasional personal use is permitted within reasonable limits. Electronic data composed, transmitted, or received via our computer communications systems may be considered part of the Synod's official records. No employee should expect any such data to be private and employees should be aware that such data is subject to disclosure to management, law enforcement personnel, and other third parties. Consequently, employees should exercise good judgment so that all information (whether or not business related) contained in Internet email messages and other electronic transmissions is accurate, appropriate, ethical, and lawful.

The equipment, services, and technology provided to access electronic communications remain at all times the property of the Synod, which reserves the right to monitor electronic communications use and retrieve and read any data composed, sent, or received through these methods and stored in our computer systems.

Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet or other electronic means must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person. Examples of unacceptable content include, but are not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments or images that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

The unauthorized use, installation, copying, or distribution of copyrighted, trademarked, or patented material by electronic means is expressly prohibited. As a general rule, if an employee did not create material, does not own the rights to it, or has not received authorization for its use, the employee should refrain from any electronic distribution.

Internet users should take the necessary anti-virus precautions before downloading or copying any file from the Internet. All downloaded files are to be checked for viruses; all compressed files are to be checked before and after decompression.

Abuse or misuse of the Synod's electronic communications systems in violation of law or the Synod's policies is forbidden. Employees may also be held personally liable for any violations of this policy. The following behaviors are examples of previously stated or additional actions and activities that are prohibited and could result in disciplinary action:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images;
- Using the Synod's time and resources for personal gain;
- Stealing, using, or disclosing someone else's code or password without authorization;
- Copying, pirating, or downloading software and electronic files without permission;
- Sending or posting confidential material, trade secrets, or proprietary information outside of the organization;
- Engaging in unauthorized transactions that may incur a cost to the organization or initiate unwanted Internet services and transmissions;
- Sending or posting messages or material that could damage the organization's image or reputation;
- Downloading or participating in the viewing or exchange of pornographic or sexually explicit materials;
- Sending or posting messages that defame or slander other individuals;
- Attempting to break into the computer system of another organization or person;
- Refusing to cooperate with a security investigation;
- Sending or posting chain letters, solicitations, or advertisements not related to business purposes or activities;
- Using the Internet for any sort of gambling;

- Jeopardizing the security of the Synod’s electronic communications systems;
- Passing off personal views as representing those of the organization;
- Sending anonymous email messages; and
- Engaging in any other illegal activities.

7.15. Social Media Policy

The South-Central Synod of WI understands that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends, and co-workers around the world. Nonetheless, the use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. This policy, which applies to all Synod employees, is intended to assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media.

For purposes of this policy, “social media” is defined as all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, whether or not associated with the South-Central Synod of WI, including postings to your own or someone else’s blog, journal, diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board, or chat room.

The same principles and guidelines found in this Handbook apply to your activities online. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any conduct that adversely affects your job performance or the job performance of other Synod staff members or that adversely affects other people or firms associated with the Synod may result in disciplinary action.

- Maintain confidentiality. Never divulge information that would be considered confidential.
- Observe the other policies in this Handbook. Refrain from inappropriate postings that contain discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence, or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct.
- Be respectful. Always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, members, suppliers, and other people who work with the South-Central Synod of WI or on the Synod’s behalf. Keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers than by posting to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid posting anything that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, or intimidating; that disparages fellow employees or congregations within the Synod; or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm

someone's reputation and posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other legally protected status.

- Be honest and accurate. Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and, if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any rumors or information you know to be false about the South-Central Synod of WI, congregations within the Synod, or your fellow employees.
- Represent yourself accurately. If you are participating in an online community and commenting on topics related to the South-Central Synod of WI, you must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the Synod. Do not create a link from your blog, website, or other social media site to a Synod website without identifying yourself as a Synod employee.
- Don't post at work. Refrain from using social media while on work time or on our equipment unless your activities are related to your duties or have been specifically authorized by the Bishop. Do not use your Synod email address to register on social networks or other sites for personal use.
- Check comments by others. Any photos or messages that are linked or "tagged" from "friends" and attached to your site(s) or profile(s) that violate these guidelines are not permitted and, if not promptly removed from your own page or site, will be attributed to you.
- No Retaliation. The South-Central Synod of WI prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation of a possible deviation.

Nothing in this policy or any other Synod policy should be interpreted in a manner that unlawfully prohibits any right employees may have to engage in protected concerted activity.

7.16. Use of Synod Facilities and Property

Office supplies or equipment may not be used for personal use unless you have obtained advance written permission from the Bishop.

Equipment, documents, official records, or other property belonging to the South-Central Synod of WI may not be removed from the Synod's office for any reason without advance permission.

7.17. Security and Workplace Monitoring

All entrances to the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin's offices are kept locked during non-business hours.

The Synod's management may conduct monitoring in the workplace for purposes of maintaining appropriate security and quality control. Computers provided to employees are the property of the Synod. All computer files and emails are subject to review and monitoring.

Perilous conditions caused by fires, storms, tornadoes, or other emergencies are reasons for evacuating the office. Employees receiving a threatening telephone call are to get as much information as possible from the caller and notify the Bishop or the appropriate law enforcement authorities promptly.

All incidents of theft or damage involving personal or organizational property should immediately be reported to the Bishop. To help prevent theft, all valuables should be secured in a file or desk drawer during working hours.

7.18. Security Inspections

The South-Central Synod of WI wishes to maintain a work environment that is free of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms, explosives, or other improper materials. To this end, the Synod prohibits the possession, transfer, sale, or use of such materials in the workplace.

Desks, and other storage locations may be provided for the convenience of employees but remain the sole property of the Synod. Employees should have no expectation of privacy with respect to the contents of their desks or other storage locations on the Synod's premises. Accordingly, any authorized agent or representative of the Synod may inspect them, as well as any articles found within them, at any time, either with or without prior notice.

The Synod further wishes to discourage theft or unauthorized possession of the property of employees, the Synod, members, and visitors. Any authorized Synod agent or representative may also inspect persons entering and/or leaving the workplace and any packages, briefcases, backpacks, or other belongings in the possession of such persons. Any employee who wishes to avoid inspection of any articles or materials should not bring them to the workplace.

7.19. Preventing Workplace Violence

All employees should be treated with courtesy and respect. Employees are expected to refrain from fighting, "horseplay," or other conduct that may be dangerous to others.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, a visitor, or a member of the public at any time, including off-duty periods, will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes all acts of harassment.

All threatened or actual violence, both direct and indirect, should be reported as soon as possible to the Bishop. This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by visitors, vendors, solicitors, or members of the public. All suspicious individuals or activities should also be

reported as soon as possible. When making such a report, you should be as specific and detailed as possible.

The Synod will promptly investigate all reports of actual or threatened violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as is practical. To attempt to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, the Synod may suspend employees, either with or without pay, during any investigation.

The Synod encourages employees to bring any disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of the Bishop before the situation escalates into potential violence. The Synod will assist in the resolution of employee disputes and will not discipline employees for raising legitimate or reasonable concerns.

7.20. Weapons Policy

The South-Central Synod of WI prohibits weapons of any type on Synod property and at any Synod sponsored events. This general prohibition includes visible or concealed weapons, even those for which the owner has a valid permit. This policy applies to all Synod employees and also to contractors, vendors, and visitors. Prohibited items include any form of weapon as well as any explosive that is illegal under federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.

To ensure that prohibited weapons and other contraband are not present on the property, the Synod reserves the right to inspect work areas, desks and personal belongings including, but not limited to, items such as employee packages, purses, backpacks, or lunch bags when it has a reasonable suspicion of possession of prohibited weapons or substances.

Employees who observe or have knowledge of any violation of this weapons policy should immediately report it to the Bishop.

7.21. Vehicle Use and Insurance

Employees who use their personal vehicles for the South-Central Synod of WI's business must first provide proof of adequate insurance coverage and maintain the appropriate driver's license. Such employees must promptly inform the Bishop of any restriction or revocation of their driver's license and of any cancellation or modification of their personal vehicle insurance coverage.

7.22. Drug and Alcohol Use

The South-Central Synod of WI desires to provide a drug-free, healthful, and safe workplace. To promote this goal, employees are required to report to work capable of performing their jobs in a satisfactory manner.

While on the Synod's premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Illegal drug use includes the unauthorized use or possession of a legal drug as well as the unauthorized use or possession of a controlled substance. The legal

use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the workplace. Depending on the circumstances, employees may consume alcoholic beverages at church-related functions but are expected to use common sense and to avoid intoxication.

Violations of this policy may lead to notification of the appropriate law enforcement authorities, disciplinary action up to and including discharge, or required participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation or treatment program.

The Synod believes that it is in the public interest to provide a program to assist employees suffering from alcoholism or other chemical dependencies through proper referral to appropriate community and professional agencies for help. Employees with drug or alcohol problems that have not resulted in or are not the immediate subject of disciplinary action may request approval to take time off to participate in a rehabilitation or treatment program through the Synod's health insurance benefit coverage. Leave may be granted if the employee agrees to abstain from use of the problem substance; abides by all the Synod's policies, rules, and prohibitions relating to conduct in the workplace; and if the leave will not cause the Synod any undue hardship. An employee in these circumstances may be requested to sign a conditions-of-continued-employment agreement.

Employees with questions about either this policy or issues related to drug or alcohol use in the workplace should contact the Bishop.

7.23. Additional Employment

Employees may not accept additional employment that will conflict with their present job responsibilities. Such inappropriate additional employment includes employment that interferes with the efficient performance of the employee's duties or creates a conflict of interest. Failing to disclose additional employment or continuing to work at an additional job that interferes with employment with the Synod may be determined to be a conflict of interest.

7.24. Gifts

Employees may not accept gifts from outside vendors or members of the Synod's congregations. A gift from a vendor is defined as anything offered directly by or on behalf of a vendor to any employee, other than advertising materials of little value such as pens, pencils, calendars, and similar items intended for wide distribution and that bear the donor company's name or advertising slogan. A gift from a congregational member is anything of value other than a personal trinket or food item. "This provision does not apply for gifts or honoraria for services rendered (including, but not limited to, pulpit supply) that are in addition to the employee's regular job responsibilities." Questions arising about the propriety or appearance of impropriety of receiving a gift should be directed to the Bishop. If acceptance of a monetary gift is

determined to be appropriate, the gift will be deposited in the Synod's Bishop's Discretionary Fund.

7.25. Solicitation Prohibited

In an effort to provide a productive and harmonious work environment, persons not employed by the South-Central Synod of WI may not solicit or distribute literature in the workplace at any time for any purpose.

The Synod recognizes that employees may have interests in events and organizations outside the workplace. Nonetheless, employees may not solicit or distribute literature concerning these activities during working time. (Working time does not include meal periods, work breaks, or any other periods in which employees are not on duty.)

In addition, the posting of written solicitations on bulletin boards is restricted. These bulletin boards display important information, and employees should consult them frequently for:

- Employee announcements;
- Job openings;
- Synod announcements;
- Information on upcoming events; and
- Other information required to be posted by governmental authorities.

If employees have a message of interest to the workplace, they may submit it to the Bishop for approval.

8. DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE

8.1. Progressive Discipline

Disciplinary action ordinarily follows counseling by the Bishop and may call for any of four steps—verbal warning, written warning, suspension with or without pay, and termination of employment—depending on the severity of the problem and the number of previous occurrences.

With respect to most disciplinary problems, the four steps mentioned above will normally be followed:

- A first offense may call for a verbal warning;
- The next offense may be followed by a written warning;
- Another offense may lead to a suspension; and
- Still another offense may then lead to termination of employment.

By using progressive discipline, the Synod seeks to correct most employee problems at an early stage. The policy of progressive discipline does not change the employment-at-will relationship, however. The Synod may bypass any one or more of the progressive disciplinary steps. Problems that are serious enough to justify either a suspension or discharge will be dealt with accordingly even if counseling or warnings were not previously given.

Generally, in the administration of discipline, the Synod will give primary consideration to the employee's disciplinary record for the past two years. Depending on the frequency, pattern, and seriousness of previous violations, however, the Synod may consider the employee's total employment record with the Synod.

8.2. Grounds for Discipline or Discharge

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are not acceptable at work. Without changing your status as an at-will employee, the Synod wants you to know that the actions listed below are examples of conduct that may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment:

- Unsatisfactory job performance;
- Unauthorized disclosure of any confidential information;
- Violating any of the Synod's policies or rules, whether described in this Handbook or elsewhere;
- Excessive tardiness, absenteeism, or absence without call (no call, no show);
- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property or money;
- Falsifying time records or other Synod-related documents, including, but not limited to, an application for employment, a request for a leave, or any business document;
- Violating safety or health rules at work;
- Working or attempting to work under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Possessing, distributing, selling, transferring, or using alcohol or illegal drugs at work, while on duty, or while operating employer-owned vehicles or equipment;
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace;
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace, including malicious gossip;
- Negligence or improper conduct that causes or could have caused injury to other person(s) or damage to property, equipment, or vehicles;
- Intentionally injuring or damaging or attempting to injure or damage other person(s) or property, equipment, or vehicles;
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct toward the Bishop or co-workers;
- Smoking or using other tobacco products at work;
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment or inappropriate behavior;

- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, at work;
- Unauthorized absence from your workstation during the workday;
- Unauthorized use of computers, telephones, the Internet, or other electronic communications systems, the mail system, or other equipment;
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information;
- Other unsatisfactory performance or conduct, whether or not described in this Handbook.

The Synod has the right and will exercise the right to take appropriate action based on the individualized circumstances of a particular case. The Synod's action may include any level of discipline up to and including discharge based on conduct that warrants that action, whether or not the conduct is described in this Handbook.

9. PROBLEM RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

All Synod employees are expected to treat each other with mutual respect and to offer positive and constructive criticism. The Synod encourages an atmosphere in which any job-related problem, complaint, suggestion, or question receives a timely response. Not every problem can be resolved to everyone's total satisfaction, but the Synod will consider complaints in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

Employees who disagree with established rules of conduct, policies, or practices or a particular decision or action may express their concern through the problem resolution procedure described below. No employee acting in a reasonable manner will be penalized for voicing a complaint or using this problem resolution procedure. The steps described below are intended to facilitate an informal resolution, and attorneys are not allowed to participate directly in the process.

- Step 1. The employee describes the problem to the Bishop within five days after the problem arises. If the matter is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction, he or she may proceed to Step 2.
- Step 2. Within five days after the initial discussion with the Bishop in Step 1, the employee sends a written complaint to the Bishop. The Bishop will try to send a written reply to the employee within ten days. If the written reply does not resolve the complaint to the employee's satisfaction, he or she may proceed to Step 3.
- Step 3. Within five days after receiving the written reply referred to in Step 2, the employee sends a written statement to the Synod Council Executive Committee requesting consideration of the complaint. The Executive Committee may, but is not required to, meet personally with the employee in connection with the requested consideration. The Executive Committee will send a written decision to

the employee, normally within 30 days after the receipt of the written statement requesting further consideration. The Executive Committee's decision is final.

Not every problem can be resolved to everyone's total satisfaction, but only through understanding and discussion of mutual problems can employees and management develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important to the maintenance of an efficient and harmonious work environment.

10. ENDING THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

10.1. Types of Employment Termination

Some of the most common circumstances under which employment is terminated are listed below:

- Completion of a specific term – employees of the South-Central Synod of WI serving for a specific term – whether because of a call term, election to an office with a specific term, a written employment agreement for a specified time, or other reason – will be separated from employment at the end of that period. The preceding sentence does not preclude employment in a different capacity.
- Resignation or retirement—voluntary employment termination at the choice of the employee.
- Discharge—involuntary employment termination at the choice of the employer.
- Layoff—involuntary employment termination (either temporary or permanent) taken by the employer for non-disciplinary reasons.

The vacation policy in Part 6 explains the circumstances under which the Synod will make payment for accrued but unused vacation upon termination of employment.

10.2. Requested Notice and Cooperation in Transition

The Synod asks that you give at least two weeks advance notice of resignation. The Synod also asks that when an employee's resignation becomes effective, all work assignments be completed to the extent possible, files be brought up to date, and that the employee participate in an exit interview.

Exit interviews provide a way for the employee to reflect on his or her experience at the South-Central Synod of WI and to offer comments, advice, or suggestions regarding the Synod's policies and practices. An employee who does not provide notice or who does not cooperate in the transition may not be eligible for rehire.

10.3. Job Abandonment

If you fail to report to work or call the Bishop for three consecutive days when you are scheduled to work, the Synod may determine that you have abandoned your job as of the first day of your absence.

10.4. Rehire

As a former employee, your eligibility for rehire may depend on your past performance. Former employees are not guaranteed rehire. Generally, rehired employees start over with respect to eligibility for benefits if the break in the employment relationship lasted more than a year.

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

By signing this form, I acknowledge that on the date of my signature as shown below I have received a copy of the Employee Handbook dated November 2020 from my employer, the South-Central Synod of WI of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (referred to as the “Synod”). I understand the handbook describes important information about working for the Synod and that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with the contents of the handbook and to comply with the policies it contains. I also understand that the Synod may change or add to the handbook or adopt or change other policies as it deems appropriate, with or without advance notice.

Employee’s Signature

Date Signed

Employee’s Printed Name