

REGIONAL SYNOD OF ALBANY

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

EMPLOYMENT HANDBOOK

2023

Albany Synod Personnel Committee

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Welcome!

On behalf of the Regional Synod of Albany Executive Committee and the Personnel Committee, welcome to the special ministry you have embraced as a staff member of the Regional Synod of Albany. We wish you every success as you live into the roles and responsibilities of your staff position. Each and every staff member contributes directly to the synod's growth and success and thereby the growth of those classes, congregations and individuals we serve. We hope you will take pride in being a member of this ministry.

This staff handbook was developed to describe some of the expectations for our staff and to outline policies, programs, and benefits available to eligible staff. Staff members should familiarize themselves with the contents of this handbook as soon as possible for it will answer many questions about employment with the Regional Synod of Albany.

We hope that your experience here will be enjoyable, rewarding, and allow you to grow personally and professionally as well. Indeed, we are "In this together....for good!" May God richly bless our endeavors together!

Using This Handbook

Whether you have just joined our team or have been with the Regional Synod of Albany (hereafter referred to as "Albany Synod") for a while, we are confident you will find Albany Synod a rewarding place to work, and we look forward to a productive and successful working relationship. This staff handbook is intended to help guide our relationship.

There are several things that are important to keep in mind about this handbook. First, it contains only general information and guidelines. It is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedures described. For that reason, if you have any questions concerning eligibility for a particular benefit, or the applicability of a policy or practice to you, you should address your specific questions to the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Neither this handbook nor any other Albany Synod document confers any contractual right, either express or implied, to remain employed by Albany Synod. Nor does it guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of your employment. Your employment is not for any specific time and may be terminated "at will", with or without cause and without prior notice, by Albany Synod or you may resign for any reason at any time. No staff or other representative of Albany Synod, except the Albany Synod Executive Committee (ASEC) has the authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period, or to make any agreement contrary to the above. Any agreement entered into by the ASEC that alters the "at-will" employment relationship must be in writing.

Second, the procedures, practices, policies, and benefits described here may be modified or discontinued from time to time. The ASEC may amend this Staff Handbook in whole or in part at any time. Any such modifications or deletions will be in writing; no verbal statements or representations can change the provisions of this staff handbook. We will try to inform you of any changes as they occur.

Third, this handbook supersedes all previously issued staff handbooks and inconsistent verbal or written policy statements.

Finally, some of the subjects described herein are covered in detail in official policy documents. For example, the terms of our insurance policies are governing over and above this handbook. You should refer to these documents for specific information since this handbook only briefly summarizes those benefits.

This handbook is a tool to ensure our actions are guided by shared goals and responsibilities. Please refer to it often during your employment with Albany Synod.

SECTION 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Employment at Will

Albany Synod is an "at-will" employer, meaning the employment relationship may be terminated for any lawful reason, with or without cause or notice, at any time by you or by Albany Synod. The policy of "at-will" employment may be revised, deleted, or superseded only by a written employment agreement signed by the Synod Administrator, Personnel Committee chairperson, or ASEC.

Equal Employment Opportunity for All

It is the Regional Synod of Albany's practice to employ individuals qualified for given positions by virtue of job related standards of education, training, experience and personal qualifications.

Towards this end, the synod is committed to assuring that all employees of the organization and candidates for employment are accorded equal opportunity and equal consideration in personnel matters including recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, salaries, benefits, administration, termination, layoff and recall.

Albany Synod embraces diversity in thought, background and experience and insists on equal employment opportunities for all applicants and staff. To this end, we ensure that all employment opportunities are provided to qualified individuals irrespective of race, traits historically associated with race (including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles), creed, color, national origin, ancestry/place of birth, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy), reproductive health decision making, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, veteran status, military status, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, domestic violence victim status, stalking, or sex offense victim status, or

any other basis protected by applicable law. Albany Synod also does not unlawfully discriminate against applicants or staff based upon arrest or conviction records. All such discrimination is unlawful, and all persons involved in the operations of Albany Synod are prohibited from engaging in this type of conduct.

If you believe you have been subject to unlawful discrimination, please report it immediately using the Complaint Procedure in our Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy, which can be found in Section 7 of the handbook.

Immigration Law

Albany Synod is required to verify the identity and work authorization of all new staff members. Therefore, Albany Synod employs only individuals legally authorized to work in the United States. Each new hire, as a condition of employment, must complete an I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former staff members who are rehired must also satisfy this requirement by completing an I-9 and presenting documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility upon rehire. Failure to provide such documentation within three (3) days of the date of hire will result in the termination of a staff member's employment. If a staff member is authorized to work in this country for a limited time period, the individual will be required to submit proof of renewed employment eligibility prior to the expiration of that period to remain employed by Albany Synod. Inability to provide any renewed authorization on or prior to the expiration date of the original document and/or as required under the law may result in the staff member's immediate termination.

Background Checks

To ensure that all the requirements of employment are satisfied, Albany Synod conducts background checks on all applicants for available positions.

Personnel Files

Confidential personnel files are the property of Albany Synod and are kept for each staff member. Only the Synod Administrator, the employee, and the Personnel Committee may review an employee's personnel file. Current employees may review their files in the presence of the person in the chairperson of the Personnel Committee or the Synod Administrator by making an appointment.

Albany Synod will also grant access to a staff member's personnel file to law enforcement officials, or local, state, or federal agencies in accordance with applicable law.

A staff member's personnel file could include but not be limited to the following:

1. Profile / resume
2. Application for employment
3. Letter of employment

4. References
5. Position description
6. Employment Handbook signed acknowledgement
7. Performance reviews
8. Employment forms including but not limited to Wage Theft Prevention Act notice, tax forms, and direct deposit information
9. Other documents relevant to employment

Confidential health/medical records are not included in a staff member's personnel file. Albany Synod will safeguard these and other documents like background checks from disclosure and will divulge that information only as allowed under the law.

The information recorded in your personnel file is extremely important. Staff members are responsible for ensuring Albany Synod receives the necessary information to maintain up-to-date personnel records. Staff are required to update their change in name, address, telephone number, emergency contact, immigration status, marital status, and dependent status immediately or within at least 30 days from the date of the change. Please note this list is not all-inclusive. Staff members should report any change to the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Failure to do so may result in loss of benefits and/or delayed receipt of W-2 and other mailings.

SECTION 2: EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Employment:

Albany Synod staff shall be employed by the Albany Synod Executive Committee upon recommendation of the Personnel Committee. Position responsibilities are detailed in position descriptions, which are reviewed periodically and updated as required. All employees participate in a professional development review under the direction of the Personnel Committee.

New staff members will receive notice of employment in writing. The letter of employment will include confirmation of position starting salary, effective date of employment and any other specific terms and conditions related to the individual's employment. The employee upon his/her acceptance of the position will sign the letter of employment.

Newly hired staff members shall be hired for a probationary period of six (6) months. Upon completion of the probationary period of employment, any salary increase that is granted shall be prorated until the end of the fiscal year. It is expected the staff will meet work objectives during the probationary period. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the Personnel Committee.

References:

All reference requests should be directed to the Synod Administrator or the Personnel Committee chairperson and should include a release for information. No other staff is

authorized or permitted to provide references for a current or former staff without express permission from the Synod Administrator or the Personnel Committee chairperson. Albany Synod's policy is to confirm dates of employment and job title only unless there is a written and signed authorization to release further information by the former staff member.

Resignation:

It is expected that staff will give thirty (30) days, or four (4) weeks of notice when resigning.

Resigning staff may not use vacation time beyond the date of resignation. For example, a staff member may not put in their one (1) month notice, and then use a week of vacation time, thereby reducing the time they are actually working during the resignation notice period. In certain circumstances, Albany Synod does reserve the right to extend the time a staff member is employed by allowing them to give notice and then extend their resignation date by the amount of time they are taking off. A staff member's last day of employment must be a working day, not a vacation day. Albany Synod also reserves the right to end the employment relationship prior to the end of the resignation period.

Involuntary Termination:

As an "at-will" employer, Albany Synod reserves the right to end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice. The Personnel Committee, at the direction of ASEC, will give notice of termination. A staff member's employment may be terminated for the following reasons including but not limited to:

- Unsatisfactory work performance,
- Changes in organizational requirements, and/or
- Reduction in staff based on financial necessity.

Suspension

An employee may be suspended by the Personnel Committee Chairperson with the approval of the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee Chairperson must immediately prepare a written report for the Executive Committee describing the reasons for suspension and recommending further action. The Executive Committee will determine the amount of or whether salary will be paid during the time of suspension.

SECTION 3: COMPENSATION POLICIES

Compensation:

A. Salary

The Executive Committee, upon Personnel Committee recommendation, establishes salaries.

Salary changes may be granted by the Executive Committee upon Personnel Committee recommendation and contingent on available funds. Changes in salary are based on current

salary. New employees will be hired for a probationary period of one year, with professional development reviews as determined by the Personnel Committee. Upon completion of the probationary period of employment, any salary increase that is granted will be prorated until the end of the fiscal year.

The standard pay period is bi-weekly for all staff. Paydays are the Friday following the end of the bi-weekly pay period. Staff members are required to carefully inspect their paycheck upon receipt, and if they notice an error in their check, they must report it immediately to the Synod Administrator. Staff may also designate, by written authorization, one or more bank accounts for automatic deposit of their paychecks.

Albany Synod is required by law to take certain deductions from a staff member's paycheck each time one is prepared. Among these required deductions are federal, state and/or local income taxes and your contribution to Social Security and Medicare. Albany Synod may make other paycheck deductions that are required by applicable law, by court order for wage garnishments, for staff member benefit, for the recovery of overpayments due to clerical or mathematical errors and for repayment of advances. Any such deductions will be in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

All deductions will be itemized on a staff member's pay stub. The amount of the deductions may depend on earnings and on the information staff members furnish on their federal and state withholding forms regarding the number of dependents/exemptions they claim. The detailed pay stub indicates precisely how much a staff member's earnings were deducted for these purposes. Albany Synod recommends staff review these pay stubs for accuracy and retain their last pay stub for each year to compare with their W-2.

B. Professional Development Review Process

The Personnel Committee establishes, reviews, and oversees the implementation of the professional development review process. The Personnel Committee will use the establishment of SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound) identified by the staff, for their professional development, as criteria for the review process along with the employee's position description.

Performance will be measured according to the following:

A performance improvement plan will include specific time intervals and measurable goals that are mutually agreed upon between the employee and immediate supervisor. Three (3) months will generally be considered an acceptable time frame to expect sustained improvement. Failure to make the required improvements during the first, or an extended time interval, will be considered cause for involuntary separation from employment.

The Personnel Committee, annually, reviews the performance goals for the employees. An employee's performance is documented by the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Any employee who disagrees with the performance review shall first discuss issues with the chairperson and, if agreement is reached, the chairperson will prepare a written evaluation. The

review will be signed by the employee and the chairperson and provided to the Personnel Committee for consideration.

If agreement regarding the performance review is not reached, the employee shall have the option of preparing a written statement for the Personnel Committee citing the reasons for objecting to the chairperson's written review. The employee may request a meeting with the Personnel Committee.

An employee may appeal the Personnel Committee's decision to the Executive Committee in writing and within thirty (30) days of the performance rating notification. The written appeal shall be presented to the Synod President. The Executive Committee's decision is final.

C. Housing Allowance

In accordance with IRS regulations, housing allowances for ordained ministers are included in the salary received. Such personnel must submit, for Executive Committee approval, an estimate of actual housing costs as defined by IRS regulations. This estimate is then entered into the minutes of the Albany Synod Executive Committee at its fall meeting and provides the basis for an exclusion from taxable income for the following year.

D. Gifts, Gratuities, or Honorarium

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect the employees of the Regional Synod of Albany from accusations of wrongdoing.

2. Requirements/ Procedures

- a. Employees may not accept or solicit money, gifts, and/or favors from persons, churches, groups, organizations, contractors or clients when such money, gifts and/or favors may be considered for services from, or contracts with the Regional Synod of Albany or its ministries.
- b. Any employees receiving unsolicited gifts, gratuities, or honorarium worth \$100.00 or more from persons, churches, groups, organizations, contractors, or clients doing business with or associated with the Regional Synod of Albany or its ministries shall immediately report such to their supervisor who will report it to the Synod Administrator. The supervisor and Synod Administrator will make a determination as to the acceptability of the gift, gratuities, or honorarium and will determine its disposition or how to return it. The Personnel Committee shall be informed of such gifts, gratuities, or honorarium and the subsequent action in a timely fashion.
- c. All employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards, BY ACCEPTING (i.e. consenting to the term and conditions of) THIS HANDBOOK, agree that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.
- d. Employees violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

SECTION 4: BENEFITS

Disclaimer:

Albany Synod values the health and welfare of its staff and strives to aid staff members in the maintenance of their health and welfare by providing certain benefits. Eligibility for benefits is dependent upon a variety of factors, including employment definition and classification, as well as length of service. This portion of the handbook contains a very general description of the benefits Albany Synod offers to eligible staff. Please understand this general explanation is not intended to, and does not, provide staff with all the details of these benefits. Therefore, this handbook does not change or otherwise interpret the terms of the official plan documents. To the extent that any of the information contained in this handbook is inconsistent with the official plan documents, the provisions of the official documents will govern in all cases.

Please note that nothing contained in the benefit plans described here shall be held or construed to create a promise of employment or future benefits, or a binding contract between Albany Synod and its staff or their dependents, for benefits or for any other purpose.

Staff may also contact the Synod Administrator regarding questions or a referral to the correct resource to assist with questions and/or they can provide a copy of the Summary Plan Descriptions and other official plan documents.

Insurance:

A. Medical:

Albany Synod offers group medical insurance through either the medical program of the RCA or another similar group medical insurance program provided the cost is no greater than the program of the RCA.

Albany Synod provides group medical insurance for all employees working 30 hours or more per week and their dependents.

Qualifying lay employees may choose their medical insurance from the non-RCA group medical insurance program(s) offered by Albany Synod or participate in the RCA group plan and pay the difference between it and the more costly alternative plan offered by Albany Synod.

Occasionally employees may have other medical insurance coverage. This could be a result of being covered under a spouse or domestic partner's plan. In such instances, if the spouse or domestic partner's employer requires them to make employee payroll contributions to pay for the coverage, Albany Synod will provide a stipend equal to those employee payroll contributions, consistent with requirements in the IRS Code Section 105. The employee will need to provide proof of coverage and the associated costs in order to receive the stipend.

Staff members should consult the Summary Plan Description for more complete information about eligibility and the details of the health insurance plan. A copy of the Summary Plan Description is provided to staff members upon becoming eligible for health insurance benefits and copies of the Plan Document and Summary Plan Description are available from the Synod Administrator..

Medical coverage for terminated staff members will continue through the end of the month following the last day worked.

B. Health Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

Albany Synod offers eligible staff the option to set aside part of their pay through payroll deduction, on a pre-tax basis, into an account they can use to pay certain eligible out of pocket medical, dental, and vision expenses as outlined by the IRS Section 125 regulations and plan limits.

The health flexible spending is requested by the employee and approved by the Executive Committee at its fall meeting for the following year. Employees must submit a detailed report of unreimbursed health expenses quarterly for reimbursement. Any unused portion of the approved amount will not be provided to the employee.

C. Continuation Coverage/COBRA Coverage

Except in cases of gross misconduct terminations, the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives certain former staff members, spouses, former spouses, and dependent children the right to temporary continuation of group health benefits (called "continuation coverage") at group rates in certain instances where coverage under the plan would otherwise end. New York State law requires small employers, with less than twenty (20) employees, to provide the equivalent of COBRA benefits. Staff members are entitled to thirty-six (36) months of continued health coverage at a monthly cost to the employee of one hundred two percent (102%) of the actual cost to Albany Synod, which may be different from the amount deducted from a staff member's paycheck.

D. Life Insurance

Group Life insurance is offered through the Reformed Church of America (RCA) for eligible staff. Albany Synod will make the premium payments for the coverage on behalf of the staff. (Note: Part time ministers must work 20+ hours per week to be eligible)

E. Disability Insurance

Long-term disability coverage is offered through the RCA for eligible staff. Albany Synod will make the premium payments on behalf of the staff.

Albany Synod provides New York State Disability Insurance for all lay employees at the minimum level required by the state. Allowable employee contributions are deducted from salary payment.

F. Social Security

Albany Synod voluntarily participates in the Federal Social Security program (FICA) in the required amount for lay employees.

G. Worker's Compensation

Lay employees are protected by Worker's Compensation Insurance in the event of a job-incurred disability.

H. Unemployment Compensation

Lay employees are covered by the New York State Unemployment Insurance program. The synod does not pay federal unemployment tax.

Retirement Plan

Upon employment by Albany Synod, a new employee is eligible to enroll in the Reformed Church Retirement Plan, subject to meeting the requirements of that plan. Albany Synod will pay the stipulated amount for ministers into the Reformed Church in America Retirement Plan.

Eligibility for participation of lay persons in the Reformed Church in America Retirement Plan is limited to full-time employees (at least 30 hours per week). Albany Synod will pay the 11% of annual salary into the Reformed Church Retirement Plan.

Employees may also request Albany Synod to make additional contributions to the Reformed Church in America 403(b) Plan in lieu of salary and consistent with the regulations of the Board of Benefit Services and the IRS.

Vacation

Employees are eligible to take vacation only after being employed for six (6) months. Full time staff receive twenty (20) working days of vacation each year. After five (5) years, the Executive Committee may grant additional vacation days.

Part-time employees are awarded vacation days on a prorated basis according to the number of hours or days worked per week.

Employees are encouraged to take vacation in blocks of at least 50% of earned vacation. No unused vacation may be carried over into the following year except under unusual circumstances and also with the approval of the Synod Administrator. Employees will not be compensated for unused vacation days.

Holidays:

There are 13 (thirteen) holidays per year. Albany Synod holidays are:

- a. New Year's Day
- b. Martin Luther King's Birthday
- c. President's Day
- d. Good Friday
- e. Juneteenth
- f. Memorial Day
- g. Independence Day
- h. Labor Day
- i. Heritage and History Day
- j. Thanksgiving Day
- k. Christmas Eve
- l. Christmas Day
- m. New Year's Eve

When a holiday falls on a weekend, the Friday preceding or the Monday following will be designated as the holiday.

SECTION 6: WORK CONDITIONS

A. Office Hours and Work Schedules

Employees are entitled to compensatory time off for office hours worked in excess of the normal number of working hours. Occasionally office administrative staff is asked to work an event away from the synod office and in excess of normal working hours. In such instances, compensatory time must be granted and taken within three (3) months of the date worked.

B. Illness

A sick day is defined as a day on which an employee is absent on account of illness, sickness in the immediate family (spouse and children), or a visit to a doctor which requires one-half day or more.

Full-time employees are allowed a maximum of ten (10) sick days per year. Part-time employees will be awarded sick days on a prorated basis according to the number of hours or days worked per week. Sick days may accumulate from year to year. An employee will receive no compensation for unused sick time at the end of the year or upon termination of employment. Additional sick time, if needed, may be charged against vacation. In instances where illness occurs beyond the sick days allotted and there is no vacation time left, sick time is taken without pay.

C. Illness Requiring Short-term Disability

Disability income benefits are designed to continue income in the case of necessary absence due to non-work related illness or injury. The Albany Synod will register the appropriate paperwork with the insurance company once given a written request for medical leave from the

employee's physician. The request must include reason(s) for the leave, the date when the leave is to become effective, and other specific information required by the insurance carrier, the Albany Synod will continue paying the employee's salary and be reimbursed by the disability insurance benefit.

Health insurance will remain in force and paid by the synod during the period an employee is receiving short-term disability benefits.

D. Personal Time

Personal time may be granted to allow employees to take care of personal emergencies of business not otherwise provided for in this Handbook and that cannot be reasonably attended to at a time other than the normal working day. Requests for personal time must be approved in advance and arrangements made with the Synod Administrator or the Personnel Committee chairperson to make up lost time or for leave without pay.

E. Family Leave

"Family" is an employee's parents, spouse, daughter, son, sister, brother, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent or another individual living in the employee's residence.

1. Full-time employees will have access to up to 12 weeks of job protection, paid time off to bond with a new child, care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to assist loved ones when a family member is deployed abroad or active military service. This leave is determined by the NY State guidelines for paid family leave.
2. Part-time employees are awarded Family Leave on a prorated basis according to the number of hours or days worked per week.
3. Additional time may be negotiated on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Personnel Committee.
4. Albany Synod participates in the New York State Paid Family Leave Act.

F. Leave for Bereavement or Critical Illness of Family Member

Full-time employees may take up to three (3) days with pay in the event of a death or critical illness of a family member. Part-time employees will be awarded leave days on a prorated basis according to the number of hours of days worked per week. Additional time may be granted by the Synod Administrator and taken as personal time or leave without pay.

G. Leave of Absence and Emergency Leave

An employee will be eligible to apply to the Executive Committee for a leave of absence after completing three (3) years of employment. The length and conditions (salary and benefits) of a leave of absence will be at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

The Personnel Committee may grant an employee an emergency leave for up to one (1) month. The Synod Administrator will immediately prepare a report detailing the circumstances of the emergency for the Personnel Committee.

H. Jury Duty

Employees who are selected for jury duty are encouraged to serve their community in this manner and will be granted time off without loss of pay. An employee on jury duty should report to work when his/her attendance by the court is not required.

I. Continuing Education

1. Full time staff position descriptions allow for participation in one week annually of continuing education, training workshops and/or spiritual growth related to synod responsibilities. Continuing Education Funds (equaling 1/52 of the annual cash salary) may only be used within one fiscal year and may not be accumulated unless pre-approved by the Personnel Committee.

2. Professional Development: All employees are offered opportunities for professional development, training workshops and/or spiritual growth related to synod responsibilities.

J. Staff sabbaticals

The sabbatical recognizes that effective and faithful full time staff need a time of refreshment and renewal on a regular basis. A sabbatical is not a vacation but an alternative form of employment which provides that person with an opportunity to be exposed to new ideas, experience a different context, be renewed and refreshed, deepen the resources of his/her spiritual life, broaden perspective, provide opportunity for renewal and as appropriate, learn new skills.

1. Full time RSA staff may request a sabbatical leave for up to three (3) months after seven (7) years of continuous service or after seven (7) years of service since the last sabbatical. This request should be made to the Albany Synod Personnel Committee for review and recommendation to the Albany Synod Executive Committee.

2. At least six (6) months prior to the beginning of the sabbatical leave, a detailed plan must be presented to the Albany Synod Personnel Committee for its approval. The plan must include a description of the planned sabbatical, its relevance to the ministry in that place and a plan for covering work responsibilities during the time required for the sabbatical.

3. Expenses incurred during a sabbatical leave (cost of tuition, travel, etc.) are the responsibility of the staff person.

4. Within one (1) month following the completion of a sabbatical, a reflective report of the experience shall be provided to the Personnel Committee and the Albany Synod Executive Committee.

5. Following the completion of a sabbatical, the staff person is ethically obligated to remain in his/her position with the Synod for at least one (1) year, unless released from this obligation by the Albany Synod Executive Committee.

SECTION 6: EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff Appeal

Albany Synod seeks to develop and maintain cooperative working relationships among staff based on mutual respect and understanding. The following procedures enable staff to call attention to work-related matters they feel need correction. A staff member with a complaint,

problem, or misunderstanding, which affects performance or satisfaction as a staff member of Albany Synod may bring the matter to the attention of the Synod Administrator or the chair of the Personnel Committee. If the matter cannot be resolved as a result of this discussion the staff may request in writing that the Synod Administrator arrange a conference with the Personnel Committee of ASEC who will make a decision regarding the appeal. The appeal may be heard in a manner determined by the Personnel Committee. The determination of ASEC on the matter shall be final.

During the appeal process, the staff member is encouraged to choose a member of the Personnel Committee to act as a liaison between them and their supervisor. This is to ensure the staff has a proper voice in a complaint, problem, or misunderstanding.

Accommodating Staff

Albany Synod is committed to making reasonable accommodations to ensure that staff do not face unfair limitations in the workplace.

Individuals with Disabilities and Pregnancy-Related Conditions

Albany Synod will attempt to reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with known disabilities or pregnancy-related conditions unless doing so would create an undue hardship on the organization. Any qualified applicant or staff member with a disability or pregnancy-related condition who requires an accommodation in order to perform the essential functions of the job should contact the Synod Administrator.

After receiving your request, Albany Synod will engage in an interactive process with you to determine the precise limitations of your medical condition on your ability to perform the essential functions of your job and explore potential reasonable accommodations that could overcome those limitations. To assist in this process, Albany Synod may request medical documentation to support your request for accommodation. Requests for documentation will be limited to information regarding the nature of your medical condition, your functional limitations, your need for accommodation and the anticipated duration of your medical condition and need for accommodation. Failure to provide this information may result in a denial of your request for accommodation. Albany Synod encourages you to suggest specific reasonable accommodations that will allow you to perform your job. However, Albany Synod is not required to make the specific accommodation requested by you and may provide an alternative accommodation.

Albany Synod will not discriminate or retaliate against any staff member for requesting an accommodation under this policy.

Religious Beliefs

Albany Synod respects the religious beliefs and practices of all staff. If a staff member's religious beliefs or practices conflict with an aspect of their job, Albany Synod will work with the

staff to determine an accommodation which will eliminate the conflict, if possible, to do so without causing an undue hardship on Albany Synod's business. To request an accommodation, contact the Synod Administrator.

Victims of Domestic Violence, Sex Offenses or Stalking

Albany Synod supports victims of domestic violence, sex offenses and stalking and encourages any staff member who is a victim of domestic violence, sex offenses and/or stalking to seek help. To ensure a staff member's job does not stand in the way of their safety and wellbeing, Albany Synod will provide reasonable accommodations to victims of domestic violence, sex offenses or stalking unless doing so would create an undue hardship on Albany Synod's operations.

Reasonable accommodations may include modifications or adjustments which allow a staff member who is a victim of domestic violence, sex offenses, and/or stalking to satisfy the essential functions of their job. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations also may include time off from work for reasons such as:

- seeking medical attention for injuries caused by domestic violence, including for a child who is a victim of domestic violence (provided that the staff member is not the perpetrator of the domestic violence against the child);
- obtaining services from a domestic violence shelter, program, or rape crisis center as a result of domestic violence;
- obtaining psychological counseling related to an incident or incidents of domestic violence, including for a child who is a victim of domestic violence (provided that the staff member is not the perpetrator of the domestic violence against the child);
- participating in safety planning and taking other actions to increase safety from future incidents of domestic violence, including temporary or permanent relocation; or
- obtaining legal services, assisting in the prosecution of the offense, or appearing in court in relation to the incident or incidents of domestic violence, sex offenses, and/or stalking.

A staff member should contact the Synod Administrator to request an accommodation. If a staff member is uncomfortable speaking with the Synod Administrator, they may contact the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Albany Synod will protect the privacy of any staff member who makes an accommodation request and prohibits retaliation against any individual who makes such a request.

Prohibition on Discrimination Based on Reproductive Health Decisions

Albany Synod respects staff members' and their dependents' right to make their own reproductive health care decisions and will not discriminate against any staff member based on their own or their dependents' reproductive health decisions. Albany Synod maintains confidentiality of staff members' protected health information and will not access a staff member's personal information regarding their own or their dependent's reproductive health

decision making, including but not limited to, the decision to use or access a particular drug, device, or medical service, without the staff member's prior informed affirmative written consent.

Any staff member who believes they have been discriminated against or retaliated against on the basis of their own or their dependent's reproductive health decision making should immediately report it using the complaint procedure set forth in our Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy. Staff may also choose to pursue legal remedies by initiating a civil action to enforce their right to be free from discrimination based on their own or their dependent's reproductive health decision making.

Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment & Retaliation

Albany Synod strives to maintain a culture where staff look forward to coming to work each day and we expect all staff to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation have no place at Albany Synod, and Albany Synod expects all staff to share the responsibility of creating a work environment free from all forms of discrimination. This policy applies to all applicants, staff members, fellows, volunteers, Board members, vendors, and independent contractors who do business with or on behalf of Albany Synod. It prohibits discrimination, harassment and retaliation whether engaged in by fellow staff members or by a third party who does business with or on behalf of Albany Synod. Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable in the workplace and outside the workplace between staff, including but not limited to, business trips, business meetings, social events and over the Internet.

Prohibited Discrimination —As an equal employment opportunity employer, Albany Synod insists on providing all available employment opportunities without regard to an individual's race, traits historically associated with race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, physical or mental disability, pregnancy-related condition, predisposing genetic characteristics, reproductive health decisions, military status, sexual orientation, domestic violence victim status, arrest or conviction records, or any other basis protected by law. Prohibited Discrimination includes treating individuals differently (either bias against or preference toward) because of their protected status, treating individuals differently because of their association or affiliation with a protected group, failing to accommodate a staff member's disability, pregnancy-related condition or sincerely held religious belief, subjecting staff to harassment because of their protected status or retaliating against an applicant or staff member who has engaged in protected activity, including participation or opposition to unlawful discrimination.

Prohibited Harassment — Prohibited Harassment is a form of Prohibited Discrimination and includes verbal, visual or physical conduct directed at an individual because of their protected status. Examples of Prohibited Harassment include:

- verbal conduct such as threats, epithets, derogatory comments, or slurs;
- visual conduct such as derogatory posters, photographs, cartoons, drawings, gestures, emails, file transfers and postings on personal websites, social networks, weblogs, and similar forms of social media;

- physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching or blocking normal movement.

Sexual Harassment

Albany Synod expects its employees to respect the integrity, dignity, and potential of coworkers and others with whom employees work in performance of responsibilities. Sexual harassment is a form of employee misconduct which harms individuals and diminishes their ability to work together effectively. The Synod will not condone or tolerate such behavior from its employees. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other gender-based verbal or physical conduct. Any such conduct violates this policy. This type of conduct violates the law when it subjects a covered individual to inferior terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of that individual's sex, gender identity or expression or sexual orientation.

The Sexual Harassment Handbook (see Appendix 1) provides the definition, the complaint process, the investigation procedure, and discipline which will be followed, in case of misconduct.

The Albany Synod will provide training for all its employees according to New York State guidelines.

Technology and Social Media

Although Albany Synod respects the right of staff to access and use technology and social media, any use of technology, social media, or the Internet to discriminate, harass or retaliate is unlawful and prohibited by this Policy.

Notice of Policy Violations — The responsibility to detect and eliminate discrimination, harassment and retaliation in the workplace is one that is shared by everyone who works at Albany Synod. If a staff member believes they have been the subject of discrimination, prohibited harassment or retaliation or if they are aware of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against another, they must report it immediately. Albany Synod encourages staff members to tell the offending individual(s) to stop the unwelcome behavior. If they do not feel comfortable about confronting the individual, or if they do confront that individual and the behavior continues, they must immediately report the situation to the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. If the Synod Administrator is the subject of the complaint, the staff member should report it to the chairperson of the Personnel Committee. All staff members must immediately report any knowledge of such conduct (including if they receive a complaint of or witness such conduct) to the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee

Reports of discrimination, harassment or retaliation may be made verbally or in writing. To assist with Albany Synod's investigation of a staff member complaint, they need to be prepared to provide details such as the nature of the complaint, where and when the alleged incident occurred, what was said or done by whom, and if there were any witnesses to the allegation. A

complaint form for staff members to report conduct that potentially violates this policy can be found attached to this handbook.

Albany Synod will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation in response to reports of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation. Albany Synod's investigation will generally proceed as follows:

- Review of the allegations and implementation of interim measures, as appropriate;
- Interviews with the complaining party, the person accused, and/or witnesses; Review of relevant documents;
- Make a determination, based on factual findings, whether a violation of this policy occurred and, if so, appropriate remedial action;
- Notification of the final determination to the parties; and
- Implementation of remedial measures if a violation of policy is found.

All staff members are required to cooperate in investigations, and confidentiality will be maintained to the maximum extent possible.

Any staff member or supervisor who, after investigation, is found to have engaged in discrimination, prohibited harassment or retaliation may be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. Any vendor, supplier, visitor, customer, or other non-staff member who, after investigation, is found to have engaged in conduct prohibited by this Policy may be subject to appropriate remedial action, as determined by ASEC. Any staff member who fails to report harassment or knowingly allows such behavior to continue will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.

Retaliation Prohibited— Albany Synod will not tolerate retaliation of any kind against anyone who opposes a discriminatory practice, makes a good faith complaint about discrimination and/or harassment, or furnishes information or participates in any manner in an investigation of such a complaint. Retaliation includes any conduct, whether or not workplace or employment-related, directed at someone because they opposed a discriminatory practice, made a complaint of discrimination, or participated in such an investigation, which might deter a reasonable worker from making or supporting a charge of harassment or discrimination. Retaliation is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Any individual who believes they have been subject to retaliation should file a complaint using the procedure set forth above.

Other Remedies — Workplace harassment not only violates this policy, but federal and state law as well. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal antidiscrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Staff members who believe they have been subjected to discrimination in the workplace can file a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC. The EEOC investigates complaints and determines whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred. The EEOC can be contacted at 1-800-6694000 (1-800-669-6820 (TTY)), via email at info@eeoc.gov, or by visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov. The EEOC may pursue the case in federal court on behalf of

complaining parties or may issue a Right to Sue letter permitting an individual to file a complaint in federal court. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred.

The New York Human Rights Law also prohibits discrimination. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed with the Division of Human Rights or New York Supreme Court. The Division of Human Rights has the power to award relief, including damages, attorney's fees, and civil fines. The DHR has a toll-free, confidential hotline for employees of workplace sexual harassment. Employees can call the hotline to connect with pro bono attorneys on sexual harassment issues or submit a complaint. The Hotline is 1-800-HARASS-3 (1-800-427-2773) and operational Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The DHR's main office contact information is NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458, (718) 741-8400 www.dhr.ny.gov. The DHR can be contacted at (888) 392-3644. There may also be local laws protecting individuals from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. If the harassment also constitutes a crime, staff members may contact the local police department.

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city, or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists.

Liability - Any staff member, who engages in conduct prohibited by this policy, including any supervisor or member of management who knew about such conduct but took no action to stop it, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, and may also be held personally liable. Any supervisor or member of management who failed to report it as required by this policy may also be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Albany Synod does not consider conduct in violation of this policy to be within the course and scope of employment or the direct consequence of the discharge of one's duties. Accordingly, to the extent permitted by law, Albany Synod reserves the right not to provide a defense or pay damages assessed against staff members for conduct in violation of this policy.

This policy will be provided to all staff and posted prominently to the extent practicable and provided to staff upon hiring. All questions about this policy should be directed to the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee.

Whistleblower Policy

Albany Synod requires its staff members (current and former), as well as all persons who provide Albany Synod with contracted services (each, a "Protected Person"), to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the performance of their duties on Albany Synod's behalf. As staff members and representatives of Albany Synod, Protected Persons are expected to practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and are required to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, local ordinances, executive orders, and judicial and administrative decisions, rulings, and orders. All Protected Persons are encouraged and enabled, without fear of retaliation, to report any activity, policy, or practice of Albany Synod that:

(1) a staff member reasonably believes is in violation of any law, rule, or regulation; or

(2) a staff member reasonably believes poses a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety, raise concerns regarding suspected unethical and/or illegal conduct or practices on a confidential and, if desired, anonymous basis so that Albany Synod can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions.

This policy is not intended as a vehicle for reporting violations of Albany Synod's applicable policies, problems with co-workers or supervisors, or for reporting issues related to alleged employment discrimination or sexual or any other form of unlawful harassment, all of which should be dealt with in accordance with the Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation and other applicable policies outlined in this handbook.

Protected Persons are responsible to report, in good faith reasonable belief, any concerns they may have regarding actual or suspected activity, policy or practice of Albany Synod's which may be illegal or a threat to the public health or safety, including but not limited to, or in violation of Albany Synod policies, all laws, regulations, local ordinances, executive orders and judicial and administrative decisions, rulings and orders with respect to, without limitation, fraud, theft, embezzlement, accounting or auditing irregularities, bribery, kickbacks, and misuse of Albany Synod's assets, as well as any violations or suspected violations of Albany Synod's business and personal ethical standards, as such standards related to Albany Synod in accordance with this policy.

Any concerns should be reported as soon as practicable to the Synod Administrator or to any federal, state, or local department or executive branch of government. Concerns may be reported verbally or in writing, including by e-mail, using the contact information set forth below:

Rev. Robert Hoffman, Synod Administrator, by calling (518) 496-1844 or by email at rev.robert.hoffman@gmail.com. If the Synod Administrator is the subject of the report, the concern should be reported to the chairperson of the Personnel Committee of ASEC.

The most effective investigations are based on the timely receipt of reports, so Protected Persons are encouraged to make reports as soon as a violation is suspected. In response to a report, Albany Synod will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation. The confidentiality of the individual making the report will be maintained to the extent practicable within the limitations of the law and the legitimate needs of the investigation.

Albany Synod prohibits retaliation against any staff member who files a good faith complaint under this policy. Albany Synod will not take any retaliatory action against a staff member because such staff member:

- (1) Discloses or threatens to disclose to a supervisor or to a public body an activity, policy, or practice that the staff member reasonably believes is in violation of law,

- rule, or regulation or that the staff member reasonably believes poses a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety;
- (2) Provides information to, or testifies before, any public body conducting an investigation, hearing, or inquiry into any such activity, policy, or practice of the Company; or
- (3) Objects to or refuses to participate in any such activity, policy, or practice.

The protection against retaliatory action pertaining to disclosure to a public body (in section (1) above) shall not apply unless the staff member has made a good faith effort to bring the activity, policy, or practice to the attention of the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee and provide a reasonable opportunity to correct such activity, policy, or practice. However, this good faith effort requirement shall not apply where:

- (1) there is an imminent and serious danger to the public health or safety;
- (2) the staff member reasonably believes that reporting to the supervisor would result in a destruction of evidence or other concealment of the activity, policy, or practice;
- (3) such activity, policy, or practice could reasonably be expected to lead to endangering the welfare of a minor;
- (4) the staff member reasonably believes that reporting to the supervisor would result in physical harm to the staff member or any other person; or
- (5) the staff member reasonably believes that the supervisor is already aware of the activity, policy, or practice and will not correct such activity, policy, or practice.

Retaliatory action includes any adverse action taken by Albany Synod to discharge, threaten, penalize, or in any other manner discriminate against any staff member exercising rights under this policy, including:

- (1) adverse employment actions or threats to take such adverse employment actions against a staff member in the terms of conditions of employment, including but not limited to discharge, suspension, or demotion;
- (2) actions or threats to take such actions that would adversely impact a former staff member's current or future employment; or
- (3) threatening to contact or contacting United States immigration authorities or otherwise reporting or threatening to report a staff member's suspected citizenship or immigration status or the suspected citizenship or immigration status of a staff member's family or household member, to a federal, state, or local agency.

Any staff member who retaliates against an individual who has made a good faith report under this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any individual who believes that they, or any of their associates, have been retaliated against under this policy should immediately notify the Synod Administrator or the chairperson of the Personnel

Committee. Filing a knowingly false and baseless complaint is a violation of this policy.

SECTION 7: STAFF TRAVEL

A. Purpose

Albany Synod pays approved expenses related to travel by staff members in the performance of their work for or on behalf of Albany Synod.

B. Accounting for Expenses

Each staff member is to submit proper and accurate expense statements. All such statements are to be signed by the person seeking reimbursement or expenses and approved by the Synod Administrator or other authorized personnel.

C. Reimbursable Expenses

Albany Synod will reimburse the following properly documented expenditures:

1. Actual cost of transportation such as taxi, limousine, subway, train, bus, airplane, etc., at economy rates.
2. Use of personal automobiles at a per-mile rate (annually established by the Executive Committee) plus tolls and parking charges.
3. Use of rented automobiles (when personal auto is not available and as approved by the Synod Administrator) at the actual rental and mileage cost plus tolls, gasoline and parking charges.
4. Lodging costs customary to the market.
5. Meals, including gratuities, customary to the market.

SECTION 8: TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

Part-Time Contract Employees

From time to time the Synod may procure various services from outside vendors and sources. The Albany Synod will provide them with the necessary tax forms. Contract employees will provide Albany Synod with appropriate certificates of insurance.

Casual Labor

There is a need, from time to time, to employ individuals for a limited time to fill in or supplement the existing staff. Such individuals will be considered as casual labor and will be paid in accordance with this policy. They shall be considered independent contractors. The Albany Synod will provide them with the necessary tax forms.

SECTION 9: CHANGES

Changes in Employment Handbook

This Employment Handbook may be amended in whole or in part at any time by the Albany Synod Executive Committee upon recommendation from the Personnel Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

This is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of Regional Synod of Albany's employment handbook and understand that it sets forth the terms and conditions of my employment as well as the duties, responsibilities, and obligations of employment with Albany Synod. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read the handbook and to abide by the rules, policies and standards set forth in the handbook. I also understand that if I have any questions about this handbook, I should contact the Synod Administrator or the Personnel Committee chairperson.

I also acknowledge that my employment with Albany Synod is not for a specific period and can be terminated at any time for any reason, with or without cause or notice, by me or by Albany Synod. I acknowledge that nothing in this handbook and no verbal statements or representations regarding my employment can alter the foregoing. I also acknowledge that this policy of "at-will" employment may be revised, deleted, or superseded only by a written employment agreement signed by the Synod Administrator or the Personnel Committee chairperson.

I also acknowledge that, except for the policy of "at-will" employment, Albany Synod reserves the right to revise, delete and add to the provisions of this handbook. All such revisions, deletions or additions must be in writing and signed by the Synod Administrator. I also acknowledge that terms and conditions of employment with Albany Synod may be modified at the sole discretion of Albany Synod with or without cause or notice at any time. No implied contract concerning any employment-related decision or term and condition of employment can be established by any other statement conduct, policy, or practice.

Staff Member Signature

Staff Member Name (printed)

Date