

MISSION STATEMENT

*Our mission is to promote the ministry
of church office administration.
Together we will renew our spirit through
personal development, professional affirmation,
and mutual support.*

Beyond the Sunday Bulletin

HANDBOOK OF PROFESSIONAL CHURCH OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Since the 1970's the **Edmonton and District United Church Office Administrators Association** has been meeting to share information and support one another in their work in the church office. A relationship with Edmonton Presbytery and the Pastoral Relations and Oversight Committee was formalized in 1986. This has resulted in better communication with Ministry and Personnel Committees, support for workshops, salaries and benefits, and some financial assistance. Church office administrators continue to need support and recognition at all levels of the church structure as a unified body of professional administrators with a very real ministry within their congregations.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for the church office administrator or secretary, ministry personnel, Official Board members and Ministry and Personnel Committees.

The purpose is:

- to help understand what a church office administrator does
- to know what can be expected of this person
- to advise appropriate conditions and remuneration for the job performed
- to be aware of the requirements in the church office environment.

This handbook will guide you beyond the Sunday bulletin...

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WHAT IS CHURCH OFFICE MINISTRY?

As we prepare to worship on Sunday mornings, we receive a neatly printed Order of Worship - the Sunday Bulletin, a product of the church office. But much more happens during the week.

Church Office Ministry includes administration, reception, providing an atmosphere of caring and trust, effective communication within the church family and with the community, and support to the congregation and the work of the church.

The day to day operation of the church office is directed by an office administrator or church secretary. This person is an integral member of the professional staff team. It is a multi-faceted position which varies from church to church. In larger congregations, the work may be divided among more than one office staff person.

The church office is usually the initial contact for all who phone or drop in. Questions range from the time of worship services to help in the midst of crises. These queries must be responded to with caring, understanding, patience and confidentiality, and where necessary directed to the appropriate source for assistance.

The church office is the core of communications. Ministry personnel and other staff, official board members and committees, their volunteers, the congregation and the community depend on accurate information through the church office. This includes answering inquiries, relaying policies and practices of the local church or the United Church of Canada, preparing announcements, newsletters, advertisements, booking space or searching for requested records.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

To carry out the many diverse tasks involved, the administrator/secretary needs excellent interpersonal, communication, organizational and computer skills along with traits of diplomacy, caring, understanding, confidentiality and trust. There should be knowledge of office equipment and an understanding of building maintenance. The administrator/secretary must be able to work independently, assess situations and respond accordingly.

Church Office Ministry includes listening and responding to the needs of the church family, support to the pastoral team and the work of the church, administration and fiscal stewardship. How the church office functions will be determined by the Terms of Employment and the Procedures Manual which each church should establish specific to its own needs.

The Terms of Employment for the church administrator/secretary consist of three parts:

- the job description
- the salary and benefits agreement
- specific terms negotiated

The job description allows a clear understanding of what is expected. The Terms of Employment are particularly important for the church office administrator/secretary because members of the Ministry and Personnel Committee to whom they are usually responsible, are volunteers. There may not be continuity on this committee, therefore guidelines are needed to establish professional working relationships and to promote the consistent and efficient operation of the church office.

The Job Description

A complete job description for a Church Office Administrator/Secretary, full or part time, should contain the following components:

- TITLE
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- SKILLS REQUIRED
- RESPONSIBILITIES
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Sample Job Descriptions

While each congregation has different requirements, a job description will reflect individual congregational office needs. Responsibilities will vary from church to church. The skills and responsibilities required differ in each level. It is important to remember that skills can be acquired through part-time education and/or years of experience. Three sample job descriptions are provided.

Level A

This person is an integral member of the staff team. S/he provides vital front line contact with people, supports the work of the church, works with little supervision, provides reception duties, word processing, data entry, photocopying and general assistance to ministry personnel, the Official Board and committees of the Board.

TITLE: Office Assistant, Administrative Secretary or other appropriate title.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- The church administrator/secretary is directly responsible to the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

SKILLS REQUIRED:

- excellent interpersonal skills
- good computer skills
- knowledge of office equipment
- ability to listen and respond to requests with discretion, tact, patience, confidentiality.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To receive all persons in a friendly and polite manner
- To be in the office and available to conduct the business of the church Monday to Friday (excluding holidays) during hours specified under Terms of Employment.
- To receive and dispense information regarding church scheduling
- To coordinate booking of church facilities
- To refer inquiries to appropriate individuals regarding

church groups, baptisms, weddings, funerals, membership, donations, social or financial assistance, etc.

- To provide word processing for the minister and others as required (Order of Worship, announcements, newsletters, minutes, annual report, etc.)
- To enter data on membership, donations, etc.
- To photocopy as requested
- To maintain files
- To assure all office equipment is in working order
- To order and maintain office supplies
- To distribute mail.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- To attend meetings and workshops of the Edmonton and District United Church Office Administrators Association.
- To take a professional course or classes as needed to enhance job responsibility (computer, stress management, time management, interpersonal skills).

PERFORMANCE REVIEW:

- Annual review will take place between the administrator/secretary and the M & P Committee. At this time goals, job description, performance appraisals and terms of employment should be reviewed.
- Absence from the office for illness, bereavement, family emergency or workshops, should be covered by a suitable replacement approved jointly by the administrator/secretary and the M & P Committee, at a fair rate of pay.

Level B

The work of the church administrator at this level requires interaction and discussion with the ministerial staff and/or supervising committee. Responsibilities are performed to completion and more administrative skills are required.

Accountability, Professional Development and Performance Review will be included as in Level A.

TITLE: Church Office Administrator, Administrative Secretary or other appropriate title

SKILLS REQUIRED:

In addition to those skills required in Level A, skills required will include:

- Exceptional communication skills
- Exceptional organizational skills
- Intermediate computer skills
- Able to work with minimum or no supervision

RESPONSIBILITIES:

In addition to those responsibilities of Level A, responsibilities may include:

- To assess inquiries and direct to appropriate personnel
- To gather information as well as produce announcement bulletins, newsletters, annual reports and other documents.
- To place advertisements with local media
- To maintain current membership list
- To maintain records such as Historic Roll, Baptism, Wedding and Funeral Registers
- To organize volunteers to assist with office tasks such as folding bulletins, collating, stapling and distributing the newsletter or annual report, etc.
- To order and maintain supplies for bulletins, offering envelopes, baptismal candles and certificates, memorial cards, visitors book, confirmation certificates, etc.
- To order audiovisual resources
- To keep bulletin boards accessible and up-to-date.
- Manage a petty cash fund
- Manage inquiries for use of church facilities, book appropriate space, complete contracts and collect fees.
- Manage inquiries involving financial or social assistance
- Assist with the handling of weekly offerings, posting weekly offerings and other deposits, and assist in the preparation of tax receipts under the direction of the treasurer.

Level C

TITLE: Office Administrator, Office Manager or other appropriate title:

This person is familiar with the policies and procedures of the local church and the United Church of Canada. S/he is responsible for the daily administration and functioning of the church office. At this level, the church administrator/secretary takes initiative and works independently performing the responsibilities as directed by the ministerial staff and/or Official Board and its committees as designated. Accountability, Professional Development and Performance Review will be included as in Levels A and B.

SKILLS:

In addition to the skills required in levels A and B, the following will also be required:

- Exceptional computer skills
- Business management skills
- Knowledge of the United Church of Canada
- Works independently

RESPONSIBILITIES:

In addition to those responsibility of Levels A and B, responsibilities may include:

- Manage inquiries regarding the church, membership, baptisms, weddings, funerals, use of building facilities.
- Manage inquiries of those requiring financial or food assistance
- To assess calls and as appropriate refer individual as required
- To provide assistance to the minister as requested including making initial or follow-up contacts by telephone or mail, relaying messages and requesting resources
- To assist various organizations within the congregation, including helping to coordinate events and attend meetings as may be necessary or appropriate.
- To compile and submit census information

- To prepare budget submissions for the church office and be responsible for administration of budget items including the purchase of equipment.
- To make immediate decisions on matters arising in the course of general daily operation and use of church property, referring appropriate matters to Board committees for ratification or future actions
- To work with the Property Committee to ensure proper maintenance of the church property and grounds
- To provide staff, Board and congregational activity information which might assist in performance of the duties of the staff team.
- To provide input to Ministry and Personnel Committee as required concerning job descriptions, performance evaluation, problem solving and applications for staff development.
- May act as Secretary to the Official Board

TABLE OF RECOMMENDED SALARIES 2009

Salaries are to be reviewed annually with a suggested minimum salary increase to reflect the Annual Cost of Living Allowance as stipulated by the United Church of Canada, Government information and other relevant information.

Anniversary and merit increases may be awarded annually on the date the employee commenced work. Movement on an established salary scale should reflect increases with a set minimum and maximum salary level for each position. A recommended step within the salary scale may be 25 cents per hour based on satisfactory performance at each level. Years of service, previous experience, and economic factors should be recognized.

Several sources of information were used to produce the following recommendations: the first was a survey of administrative/secretarial positions in both the private and public sectors in Edmonton in 2007-2008, the second was internet sources for office positions of varying degrees, extrapolation of information from newspaper ads, and personnel companies guideline for payment based on description of qualifications. The third was to apply the recommended increases based on the predicted Consumer Price Index as supplied by the United Church of Canada.

FULL TIME STAFF- 30 or more hours per week

PART TIME STAFF- 14 - 29 hours per week

Level A: minimum \$ 15.23/hour

Level B: minimum \$ 17.46/hour

Level C: minimum \$ 19.69/hour

CASUAL STAFF - less than 14 hours per week

It is recognized that employment of less than 14 hours per week is of a casual nature and terms of employment and salary should be negotiated between employer and employee.

Benefit Guidelines

Mandatory Benefits: United Church Pension Plan and Group Insurance (includes long-term disability), as required by the National Church. These benefits are required for all full time employees. In addition, employees who work 14 hours per week or more are required to pay into the pension and CORE benefits plan. Persons who work less than 14 hours per week may have to negotiate these issues, but we urge individual congregations to treat their workers with justice and generosity.

Holiday Pay and Statutory Holidays: Minimum 2 weeks or 4% after the first year of employment; minimum 3 weeks or 6% after second year; minimum 4 weeks or 8% after 5 years. All provincial statutory and civic holidays. The United Church of Canada General Council and Conference Offices provide Easter Monday, Civic Holiday (the first Monday in August) and a float holiday in addition.

Sick Leave Plan and Compassionate & Bereavement Leave

Sick Leave: 1.5 days per month minimum.

Compassionate &/or Bereavement Leave: up to 4 days for family members, and close personal relations. When travel is involved 6-8 days.

Maternity Leave: Minimum Alberta Code of Labour Standards (2004).

Continuing Education: Opportunities to be supported and negotiated, for the mutual benefit of the staff person and the church. Suggested minimal amount \$200.00 course costs per year plus paid study leave.

Short Term Disability: Members of the Group Insurance Plan are entitled to a Short Term Disability benefit following a 2 week disability period. The maximum duration of Short Term Disability is 24 weeks.

Mileage: Job related mileage allowance at current United Church travel expense rate.

Overtime: Lieu time or hourly rate following Alberta Code of Labour Standards to be negotiated with Personnel Committee or equivalent.

Note: Benefits and years of service should be transferable between churches. Variations on these benefits may be negotiated with individual churches.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE CHURCH OFFICE

The church administrator/secretary has not just one work relationship in the church office but many, including ministry personnel, the Official Board, committees, church groups, as well as requests from the congregation and the community. As a team member, the church administrator/secretary must be kept well informed of activities and changes in policies and procedures. Consideration must be given to the amount of work expected and the number of hours worked. A phone call can take a considerable amount of time depending on the nature and urgency of the request. Appropriate information must be gleaned and patience is required. The following need to be discussed regularly:

- Workload in relation to hours worked
- Timelines for specific projects mutually agreed to by the administrative person and M & P Representative.
- Attendance at Sunday worship is separate from work. Work-related matters should be discussed during work hours.
- Work space is personal space. Not all offices, desks, files or office supplies are for general use. Locked spaces are required for privacy, confidentiality and fiscal management and work space must reflect these needs.

Any job-related matters should be handled with privacy, and consideration and should be initiated by the appropriate person, agreed to in the job description/contract under specific terms.

Covenanting Service

The Church office worker is a dedicated professional. To recognize this important ministry, a congregation may wish to covenant with the church administrator/secretary.

Leader: Today we covenant with *(name)* who has been chosen to be our church office worker. This ministry is a blessing and a serious responsibility. It recognizes your special gifts as an integral member of the staff team and calls you to nurture the work of our church family. We thank you for accepting this calling and challenge you to offer your best to God, to this congregation, and to our ministry in the community and world.

One: I promise to listen and respond to the needs of the church family and support the pastoral team in the work of the church.

All: We enter into this covenant with you, promising to encourage your ministry of church office administration. May God bless us and guide us as we support each other. Amen.

The Procedures Manual

Each church office administrator/secretary should compile and keep a current Procedures Manual. This document contains a detailed description of the daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal tasks of the administrator. Names, addresses, phone numbers, forms to use, where the forms are kept and samples should be included in the Procedures Manual. Many church administrators/secretaries use a 3-ring binder which can be edited easily to reflect the changing requirements of the work. It is of vital importance for new church office administrators or for replacements in the event of illness or vacation. Some useful references include The Manual, United Church of Canada (most recent edition), Record Keeping in the United Church of Canada, Policy on Personnel Records, the United Church of Canada and The United Church of Canada Employment Guidelines for lay employees in pastoral charges and other church-related organizations. These references are available from the United Church Resource Distribution, Revelations or on-line at www.united-church.ca.

Ministry and Personnel Committees

The Ministry and Personnel Committee of each congregation is responsible for the relationships between employees and the congregation. It is vital for the M & P Committee to recognize and support the work performed and provide advocacy for the office worker if necessary. This includes assessment of work load, evaluation of continuing education and review of salaries and benefits. Should a problem arise in this relationship, each Presbytery has a Pastoral Relations Committee which oversees M & P Committees. Conferences have a Personnel Minister to whom disputes or problems not solved at a lower level may be taken. These groups exist for the express purpose of mediating disputes within the church.

A Secure Working Environment

In many churches today, locks on the entrance doors, the sanctuary, office and church school are commonplace. There are security measures for fire and theft. Everything from kitchen supplies, to toilet paper, is kept under lock and key. One area that is most often overlooked, however, is the protection of the Church Office Staff. The uniqueness of these positions often means that staff are alone in a large, empty public building for extended periods of time. This presents a very real element of personal risk. Incidents of theft and assault have been reported. Even threats of personal injury can be devastating.

To promote personal security of office staff, we suggest you work with the Ministry and Personnel Committee and Board or Session to establish a security plan for your protection. The Edmonton Police Service Crime Prevention Unit will provide a security assessment on request.

Measures must be taken to protect the security of staff alone in a building. Some suggestions include:

- 1 Severely limiting the number of people with keys to access the church office.
- 2 Insist that a personal alarm system be installed to protect the office and you.
- 3 Have controlled access to the building during the day.
- 4 If office staff are alone, lock the entrance doors, and have a bell/buzzer/intercom system installed.
- 5 Use a mirror system to allow you to see who is approaching the entrance or the office at all times.
- 6 Install a panic button connected to an alarm company.

Occupational Health and Safety

Each office must meet requirements for occupational health and safety.

Computer Stations

- Must be ergonomically correct
- 17 inch screens are recommended
- Lighting must not create glare

Photocopiers

- Must not be in the same room as staff

Verbal and Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons based on unequal power relationships and usually on gender. Sexual harassment has been defined as any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship or to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention or to punish a refusal to comply. It is dehumanizing, and violates our rights as human beings. It leads to alienation and mistrust. It is also against the law.

Complaints of sexual harassment should be taken seriously, and dealt with in a compassionate and just manner. In each congregation, there should be someone to whom you can turn if needed, who will act on any complaint of harassment, with the strictest confidentiality. Harassment must not be tolerated.

If you are, or become the victim of harassment, act. Contact someone with personnel responsibilities in your church hierarchy.

Discuss the experience with them, and ask for their assistance in dealing with the offender. If satisfaction is not received and a stronger action is required, you can file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of your province. Such a complaint is protected from reprisals. As a final course of action, you can hire a lawyer and file for civil and/or criminal action.

RESOURCES:

United Church Benefits Centre (Aon Hewitt at July 1, 2011)

Call or go online to confirm pension amounts, or adjust coverages in case of a Life Event:

- Gaining a spouse (legal marriage or common-law)
- Birth or adoption of a child
- Loss of a spouse
- Loss of a child, or the child becomes/is no longer eligible for coverage
- Divorce/separation or one year/disqualification of common-law relationship
- Gain/loss of coverage under another plan
- Begin a recognized leave
- Return to work from a recognized leave
- An increase or decrease in your pensionable earnings (PE) of 25% or more

Member Website: <http://www.ybrcanada.hewitt.com/ucc>

Treasurer (or administrator) Website:

<http://www.ybrcanada.hewitt.com/uccadmin>

Member and treasurer (or payroll administrator) Call Centre:

1-866-859-5025

Change Address:

Active members: Please inform your Treasurer or payroll administrator. Treasurers will update address via ADP, or directly with the Benefits Centre.

Pensioners: Please call the Benefits Centre directly: 1-866-859-5025

Conference or General Council Office Staff: contact Employee Relations at GCO (1-800-268-3781) to have your address updated.

Health/Medical and Dental Insurance

Note: *Active Member and Pensioner Member Coverages are different.* To confirm coverage for treatments or durable equipment including any limits or qualifications around coverage (for example: a doctor's note to verify required treatments) please call

Green Shield Canada: 1-888-711-1119

- Predetermination of benefits (for treatments or durable medical equipment over \$300)
- Confirmation of coverage for overseas travel (especially to jurisdictions with inconsistent access to adequate medical care)
- Any questions with regard to billing or reimbursement of claims, including status of claims

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

For Active members of the benefits plans, confidential short-term counselling for any concern, available 24hrs/7 days a week:

1-800-387-4765 or www.shepellfgi.com.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If the M & P Committee in your congregation cannot support your concerns in a fair manner, you are encouraged to contact:

The Chair, Ministry Support

Edmonton Presbytery, Phone 780-438-6619

Presbytery.office@uccedm.org

SHORT TERM DISABILITY

For applicable forms contact:

Ministry and Employment Policies and Services - Pension and Benefits
Suite 300, 3250 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ont. M8X 2Y4

Switchboard: 416-231-5931

Message Line: 1-888-344-1234 (call & leave a message)

A SECURE GROUP FOR SUPPORT:

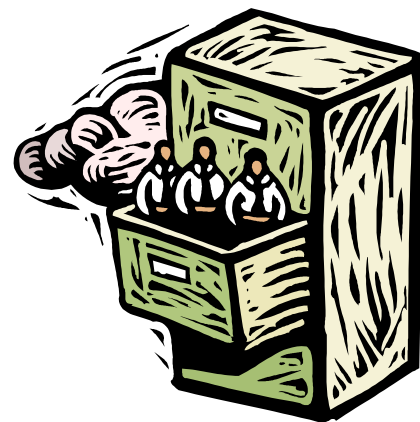
The United Church Office Administrators Association of Edmonton offers support and accumulated wisdom and experience. A friendly group who listen and offer some ideas that may help you sort out and understand your available options. Go to our website

www.unitedchurchadministrators.ca for information or contact

Edmonton Presbytery at Phone 780-438-6619

Email presbytery.office@uccedm.org

Website www.uccedm.org



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