



CHURCH OF THE  
HIGHLANDS

# Employee Manual



***Chris Hodges***  
***Senior Pastor***

Welcome to the Team!

I am pleased to welcome you to the Church of the Highlands family. Over the years, God has consistently led faithful men and women of God to us with the same spirit of sacrifice and simplicity. We really believe you are sent of God!

Your purpose is defined by God. Your role here will make use of the unique talents and gifts that He placed inside of you to fulfill the destiny for which you were born. You are here because you have demonstrated a passionate desire to honor God by serving Him with diligence and excellence.

Our purpose is to reach people with the life-giving message of Jesus that they might become fully devoted followers of Christ. This purpose can only be accomplished if we each contribute what God has deposited in us. We appreciate your commitment to work with the highest degree of excellence so together we can reach our destiny.

Thank you for accepting this challenge and we will do everything we can to develop, nourish and encourage you to become all that God wants you to be.

Together we win,

Chris

*This employee handbook is not meant to be a contract of employment. Its only purpose is to inform employees about Church of the Highlands' policies, benefits, and regulations. Church of the Highlands reserves the right to change the handbook at any time, with or without notice.*

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## *Our Story*

Pastor Chris dreamed of planting a church with a simple goal: help people connect with God in a church without letting structures and programs get in the way. With the help of the Dream Team—34 people committed to seeing this dream become a reality—Church of the Highlands began on February 4, 2001. That first Sunday, over 350 attended at the Fine Arts Center of Mountain Brook High School.

Pastor Chris focused on reaching out to the non-churched community, building relationships through small groups meeting throughout the city. The life-giving message of the Gospel, the passion and joy of Sunday celebrations, and the simple style of Church of the Highlands brought immediate growth. In its first year, the church grew to 600 in weekly attendance and 371 people committed their lives to Christ. At the same time, the church helped in the planting of six other churches and gave nearly a quarter of its income to missions.

The church established an office complex in March 2002 and established a second identical service that Easter. In its third year, Church of the Highlands had over 1,400 in weekly attendance and more than 1,600 people attending one of their 85 small groups.

As Church of the Highlands is in its second decade, the church has grown to more than 34,000 active members, and even more participate in small groups. Church of the Highlands offers contemporary, biblically-driven worship services that are alive with energy and creativity, as well as excellent childcare, exciting children's and student ministries, and dynamic small groups.

## ***Our Purpose***

Every church needs to have a purpose statement that answers the question, “why do we exist?” At Church of the Highlands, we filter every idea, program, and budget request through our purpose statement. If what we plan doesn’t help us meet our purpose, then we don’t do it.

Our purpose at Church of the Highlands is summarized in a single statement:

*“To reach people with the life-giving message of Jesus that they might become fully devoted followers of Christ.”*

Our statement of purpose is based on two teachings of Jesus:

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart ...soul and ...mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe...” Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (Mark 16:15-20)

Church of the Highlands exists:

- To worship God with sincere expression.
- To share the Good News of Jesus with others.
- To connect with other believers in meaningful relationships.
- To prepare disciples to fulfill their purpose.
- To encourage leaders in their God-given destiny.

## ***Spiritual and Ministry Expectations***

Those of us who have been called to full-time ministry and selected to be a part of Highlands Full-Time Staff consider it an honor to continue our personal walk with the Lord, being a part of leadership at Highlands and living as best we can to be an example to others and pleasing Christ with our life.

As full-time staff, we commit to live according to the Employee Core Values and spiritual and ministry expectations listed below.

## ***Employee Core Values***

### **LOVE GOD**

- We love God and commit first to inviting the presence of God into our daily lives. We recognize effective leadership only comes from an overflow of a vibrant relationship with Jesus.
- We pursue God by spending time with Him daily through prayer, worship, and reading His Word.
- We live and model a lifestyle of prayer by participating in Highlands's prayer services and leading people to pray first.

### **LOVE PEOPLE**

- We love people and are called to serve them in every way we can.
- We are in the people business. We are always seeking to spend time with, listen to, encourage, and resource the people that God has placed around us.
- We believe every person is a 10 in some area. Everyone has potential, and we are always looking for opportunities to develop that potential.

### **PURSUE EXCELLENCE**

- We pursue excellence in the big things and the small things.
- We do not wait for permission to take ownership. We make things better whether it falls into our job description or not.
- We do more with less, knowing that efficiency and frugality are a part of excellence.
- We never stop getting better. We continually grow because we never stop reading, learning, and studying others who are doing what we do better than us.



## **CHOOSE JOY**

- We take fun seriously. We impact every environment by bringing energy and joy.
- We have fun and choose joy. We do this not because we are paid to; we do it because God has chosen us, we love our church, and we are honored that we get to do what we would already be doing for free.
- We live in the Tree of Life by bringing life to every situation, no matter how challenging.

### **Tithing**

We recognize as full-time staff that our salary is paid by our members' tithes. In addition, as a follower of Jesus, it is our privilege to follow Him with our whole hearts and to be obedient to his Word. His instruction to believers in Malachi 3 is to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. As a full-time staff member, I understand it is a requirement to bring my tithe to Highlands where I serve, worship and receive my monthly salary.

### **Highlands Services**

As an employee of Highlands, I recognize that my personal relationship with Jesus and my spiritual growth comes before anything else. Therefore, I commit to attend weekly services at Highlands and to be a part of all conferences I am able to as a Dream Teamer or participant.

### **Small Group Leadership**

Highlands is a church of small groups and every employee is a leader at Highlands. Therefore, each employee is required to lead a small group during the spring and fall semesters. Employees are allowed to break during the summer semester so that they can be refreshed and prepared for the fall.

### **21 Days of Prayer and Fasting in January and August**

Staff members are encouraged to participate in corporate times of prayer. The exception is for staff with a lot of scheduled office hours or those who have responsibilities at home with children. Please keep in mind that we are leaders of Highlands and, therefore, we are being watched. Our participation at prayer should be a time to worship and pray and thereby lead the Church by example.

## ***Staff Standards***

As Christian leaders, we need to be above reproach. Paul wrote “Don’t be so naïve and self-confident. You’re not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it’s useless. Cultivate God-confidence.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

The first three (3) do not apply to unmarried staff.

1. Do not go to lunch alone with the opposite sex.
2. Do not have the opposite sex pick you up or drive you places when it is just the two of you.
3. Be careful of showing affection with the opposite sex that could be misinterpreted.
4. Never visit the opposite sex alone at home.
5. Make sure you do not end up at the office alone with someone from the opposite sex.
6. Do not counsel the opposite sex alone at the office, and do not counsel the opposite sex more than once without that person’s spouse. Refer them.
7. Do not discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex in counseling. Refer them.
8. Do not discuss your marriage problems with a person of the opposite sex.
9. Be careful in answering emails, instant messages, chat rooms, cards, or letters from the opposite sex.
10. Make your co-workers your protective ally.
11. Pray for the integrity of other staff members.

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” (Ephesians 5:3 NIV)

### **Office Hours**

Office hours at Grants Mill and Grandview are Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 pm. Campus office hours may vary. Highlands Cafe' at the Grants Mill and Grandview campuses is open during office hours and during Wednesday and Sunday services. The exception is on Fridays where the Café opens until noon.

### **Employee Status**

Full-time employees are scheduled to work a minimum of 37.5 hours a week. Full-time employees are eligible for Highlands' full benefits package. Part-time employees work an average of 15-25 hours per week not to exceed 29 hours per week and do not receive benefits. Highlands may employ temporary and contract workers who work on a contractual basis. Temporary and contract workers are not eligible for benefits.

### **Fair Labor Standards Act**

It is the policy of Highlands to compensate employees in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. This policy applies to employees of Highlands (including full-time and part-time, regular and temporary, and, but not leased employees).

#### **Compensation of Non-Exempt Employees for All Hours Worked:**

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, non-exempt employees must be compensated for all "hours worked." In the event an employee is requested by a manager to work off the clock, the employee should immediately contact the Human Resources department. Whether meal and rest periods, travel time, and training time are counted as "hours worked" depends on the circumstances and is described below.

#### **Meal Periods and Rest Periods (i.e., breaks):**

Non-exempt employees will not be compensated for meal times as long as (a) the meal period lasts at least 30 minutes, (b) the employee is completely relieved from all duties, including inactive duties, such as monitoring equipment, and (c) the employee is free to leave his or her workstation (although not necessarily the premises). Employees will be compensated for rest periods of twenty minutes or less.

#### **Travel Time:**

(1) Travel between work and home: Generally, non-exempt employees will not be compensated for time spent traveling between their home and work. If an employee travels to a campus that is not their regularly worked campus, mileage reimbursement may apply. Please see Mileage Reimbursement Policies on the "P" drive.

(2) Travel within the city: When an employee is traveling within the city during the work day as part of his or her principal work activities (for example, traveling between job sites, traveling from headquarters to a job site, or traveling to purchase items for the office) that time must be compensated as hours worked.

(3) Travel out of city: Travel to another city will be counted as hours worked (regardless of whether the travel occurs before, during or after the employee's usual working hours).

(4) Travel during call-out: A non-exempt employee who has gone home after completing his or her day's work and who is subsequently called out will be compensated for all time spent on travel.

**Training Time:**

An employee's attendance at lectures, meetings, training programs and similar activities will be compensated as hours worked, when the employee is requested to attend those activities by their management. If the employee is out of town, only the time spent in the lectures, meetings or training will be compensated.

**Compensation of Non-Exempt Employees for Overtime Hours Worked:**

Non-exempt employees must be paid one and one-half times their regular rate of pay for any hours worked in excess of 40 in a particular workweek. Non-exempt employees may not start work early, work through lunch or breaks, work late, take work home, or work overtime without the knowledge and consent of their management. Non-exempt employees must be paid for all hours worked. However, non-exempt employees that work without prior management approval may be subject to discipline. When requested by the employee and authorized by management, a non-exempt employee may take time off in lieu of overtime pay as long as the time off is within the same pay period. If the time off is requested in the second week of the pay period, the time off must be given at 1 ½ hours for each hour of overtime that the employee worked. A non-exempt employee may not "bank" time off in one pay period to be taken in another pay period. Management should approve overtime in a prudent, conservative manner and should continuously minimize the amount of overtime worked.

**Deductions from the Pay of Exempt Employees:**

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, deductions may not be made from the pay of exempt employees, except in certain circumstances. The following sections describe when deductions may be made from the pay of an exempt employee once the employee has exhausted all available vacation.

**Week-Long Absences:**

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, an exempt employee's salary may be deducted for any full week in which he or she performs no work (unless a type of paid-time off is used).

**Absences of Less Than a Day:**

Except as noted below, Highlands will not deduct from the pay of exempt employees for any absences of less than one day (i.e., partial day absences).

**Absences of Less Than a Week:**

1. Absences requested by Highlands. The pay of an exempt employee for absences of less than a week that occur at the request of Church of the Highlands (e.g., lack of work) will not be deducted.
2. Absences taken for reduced schedule or intermittent leave under the FMLA. Upon the exhaustion of all available paid leave time, Highlands can deduct a proportionate amount from the pay of an exempt employee who takes intermittent or reduced schedule leave under the FMLA. The deduction may be made for full or partial days missed.
3. Absences in the initial week or final week of employment. During the first week and the last week of an employee's employment, an exempt employee may only be paid for the time he or she actually works (whether full or partial days).
4. Absences due to jury duty, witness duty or military leave. Highlands will not deduct from an exempt employee's pay for absences of less than a week for jury duty, certain types of witness duty (as provided in the Jury Duty and Witness Duty policy) or military leave.
5. Absences due to sickness or injury. Highlands may deduct from an exempt employee's pay for full-day absences after the employee exhausts his or her paid-time off leave.
6. Absences due to personal reasons. Highlands may deduct for absences of one or more full days due to personal reasons.

Concerns about Deductions: If an employee believes that improper deductions have been made from his or her compensation, he or she should bring the matter to the attention of Human Resources.

### **Personal Appearance/Dress Standard**

We who have the privilege of working at Highlands also have the responsibility of setting the example in leadership, which includes our dress. Since we are observed more closely than others are, we set a standard for what is appropriate for leaders to wear. Employee's appearance reflects not only the individual but also the Church. Employees should dress as to achieve a positive image when representing Highlands and the Lord. Above all, our attire should present a professional appearance at all times.

#### **Men**

Always be well groomed, clean and neat.  
Collared shirts are preferred.  
Beard and mustache must be well groomed.  
Clothing should be pressed or ironed.

#### **Women**

Always be well groomed, clean and neat.  
Hairstyles must be appropriate for a professional environment.  
Modesty is the guiding principle for women's dress.  
Clothing should be pressed or ironed.

#### **Unacceptable dress includes:**

- Flip flops or bare feet.
- Excessively worn, faded, torn, or tight-fitting jeans.
- Sweatshirts and sweat suits.
- Tank tops or immodest necklines.
- Skirts or dresses shorter than 3 inches above the knee.
- Any clothing with written words, messages or slogans, (Highland's apparel is acceptable).
- Tight-fitted or revealing clothing.
- Spandex.
- Shorts.

### **Background Screening**

All employees will be required to pass a series of background checks to include but not limited to, a criminal background check, social security verification, name and address search and MVR report. Highlands complies with the requirements of the Fair Credit Reporting Act in obtaining all background screening reports.

### **Personnel Files**

Highlands maintains information in employee's personnel files for the duration of employment and beyond as required by federal and state laws. Personnel files are the property of Highlands. The Human Resources department maintains the official records for each employee. *Employees should report any change of address, phone number or other information to Human Resources in order to maintain accurate personnel files.*

### **Training and Development**

Highlands recognizes that some positions require a formal training program while on-the-job training is appropriate for others. Highlands may pay for attendance at seminars and conferences that are directly related to the work the employee is performing or will be performing in the near future. Any seminars and conferences paid by Highlands will be at the discretion of the employee's Direct Report.

### **Confidential Information**

Employees may come in contact with personal and confidential information regarding Highlands' members and/or employees. This information should never be shared with anyone outside of Highlands and only shared with other employees of Highlands on a need-to-know basis. Documents containing confidential information should be shredded when no longer needed.

Employee salaries are confidential and should not be shared with anyone at any time. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including possible termination.

### **Harassment Policy**

Highlands is committed to maintaining a ministry and work environment in which individuals treat each other with dignity and respect and is free from conduct unbecoming of a Christian (meaning intimidation, exploitation and harassment, including harassment). Highlands prohibits harassment of any individual based on race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or genetic information ("a protected status"). Anyone who violates this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

### **Examples**

Examples of sexual harassment violations would include unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, displays of sexual material, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from or in the ministry or work setting under any of the following conditions:

- Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting the individual.
- The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work performance, or of creating an intimidating, manipulating, or offensive work environment.
- Submission to or rejection of the conduct by the individual is used as a basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits, services, and activities available at or through Church of the Highlands.

Other examples include:

- Derogatory or intimidating conduct or language, including bullying, slurs, epithets or other conduct or language that could intimidate, threaten or degrade based on a protected status.



- Displaying or circulating in the workplace any written or graphic material that degrades or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group based on a protected status.

**Procedures of Reporting and Investigating**

If you suspect you are the victim of a hostile work environment or sexual harassment, report the incident by contacting 1) Teri Jones in Human Resources 2) Your Lead Team Pastor or 3) Steve Blair, the Staff Pastor. Also, any bystanders and/or witnesses to harassment should report incidents as well to one of the above.

All complaints will be handled with confidentiality, and promptly investigated in the following manner.

- HR shall conduct and coordinate the investigation, including interviews with those involved:
  - Interviews with the alleged victim and anyone suggested by that person who has relevant information.
  - Interview with the alleged harasser and anyone suggested by that person who has relevant information.

All disciplinary decisions, if any, shall be made by a Lead Team member. If the complaint involves a member of the Lead Team, the elders shall make any and all necessary disciplinary decisions. HR shall keep written record of the complaint, including the records of the investigation and the final report. The record shall be maintained in a confidential file by Church of the Highlands separate from the employee's personnel file.

**Confidentiality and Protection Against Retaliation**

Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of the parties involved in any complaint; however, Church of the Highlands reserves the right to fully investigate any complaint. Church of the Highlands will not discriminate or retaliate against any person who has filed a complaint concerning harassment, or has testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in any investigation proceeding or hearing concerning sexual harassment as long as the information is truthful. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. This policy intends to encourage and enable employees and others to raise concerns within the organization of any form of harassment. False accusations of harassment have serious effects on innocent people, and can result in termination.

**Attendance**

Highlands expects employees to be at work, on time, as scheduled. Excellent attendance is a presumed standard. Employees must contact their manager each day they will not be reporting to work on time for any reason. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness is a serious offense. If an employee exhibits unexcused excessive tardiness or absenteeism, discussions and corrective action will be held with the employee.

**Performance Standards/Discipline**

As a staff member, each employee is responsible for conducting himself/herself in a manner that will glorify God. The Church uses biblical principles to guide its work ethics and policies and expects the same of staff members. If an employee engages in an activity detrimental to the best interests of Highlands, the body, or the employees, he or she will be appropriately disciplined.

Managers may utilize a number of disciplinary techniques depending on the seriousness of the offense and the number of previous disciplinary events. Highlands reserves the right to make use of any of the actions listed, or other disciplinary techniques, at any time.

These actions include:

- Verbal counseling;
- Written documented warnings;
- Suspension and/or probation; \*
- Termination.

\*While on probation, employees are not eligible to apply for a transfer, receive a salary increase, or bid on a posted job.

**Termination of Employment**

It is the desire of the management team that all employees are successful in their positions. However, Highlands recognizes that the State of Alabama is an “at will” state and either the employee or Highlands may terminate the employment relationship, for any reason or for no reason, at any time with or without notice.

Voluntary terminations require the minimum of a two-week written notice. Voluntary terminations involve participation in an exit interview with a member of Human Resources. When necessary, and in isolated cases, interviews are conducted by phone. Employees are

expected to return security cards, keys, credit cards and other property of Highlands at the time they leave employment.

### **Personal Affairs**

Employees are expected to behave in a manner consistent with employment in a local Church. Each employee is expected to conduct his/her personal affairs so that there can be no opportunity for unfavorable reflection upon themselves or Highlands. Personal behavior such as mode of dress, language, treatment of others, and financial dealings must be consistent with our Employee Core Values and Employee Staff Standards. Employee's personal behavior must line up with scripture, as it is also a reflection of the God we serve.

**Payday**

Full-time payroll is issued on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of each month. If the 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a Saturday or a Sunday, payroll checks are issued the following Monday.

Part-time payroll is issued on the 15<sup>th</sup> for the previous month's work. If the 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday or Sunday, payroll checks are issued the following Monday.

**Mileage Reimbursement**

Highlands will reimburse employees for expenses incurred when using their personal vehicles for Church business. This rate may vary according to IRS regulations. Please see Mileage Reimbursement Policy under the Policies folder on the "P" Drive for current mileage rate.

**Campus Mileage Reimbursement**

Highlands will reimburse employees for round trip mileage to satellite campuses for Church business. Mileage is based on departing from and returning to the Grants Mill campus. If the employee retains a log of the mileage, it may qualify for a tax credit on the employee's federal tax return. For specific rates, please refer to the Mileage Reimbursement Policy located on the "P" drive.

**Meal Allowances**

Please see the Meal Allowances Policy.

*Highlands is pleased to provide a full and competitive benefits package to all full-time, permanent employees. Specific benefit information is discussed during New Hire Orientation. Please contact Human Resources for questions regarding employee benefits.*

*Full-time, permanent employees are eligible for benefits on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following employment unless the employee's hire date is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month in which case the employee is eligible on the date of hire.*

### **Group Medical and Dental – Blue Cross Blue Shield**

#### **Health Benefits:**

- PPO (which allows employees to stay in-network when traveling outside of Alabama)
- \$30 co-pay for doctor visits
- Prescriptions - \$15 (generic) \$30 (preferred) \$60 (name brand)
- Major Medical Deductible - \$350 for individual/\$1,050 for family
- \$175 facility co-payment for ER visit
- \$30 doctor co-payment for ER physician
- Outpatient surgery \$175 facility co-payment
- Outpatient/physician is subject to the \$350 MM deductible
- Inpatient hospital visits - \$175 facility co-pay (days 1 through 5)
- Inpatient doctor fee – subject to \$350 MM deductible

#### **Dental Benefits:**

- Calendar year deductible - \$25 for individual/\$75 for family
- Calendar year maximum benefit - \$1,500
- Covers 2 annual dental exams and x-rays at no charge
- Fillings and tooth extractions – 100%
- Oral surgery – 100%
- Periodontics services – 80%
- Dentures, bridges, crowns – 50%

Employees who leave the Church are offered the opportunity to continue the medical and/or dental coverage they had on the day they terminated. These rights are subject to the limits established in the COBRA legislation. All eligible employees receive information on COBRA when their employment is terminated with the Church.

**Vision Insurance - EyeMed**

- Exam – In-network pays 100% after a \$10 co-pay every 12 months
- Lenses – In-network pays 100% after a \$15 co-pay (single/bifocal/trifocal vision) – every 12 months
- Frames – In-network - \$0 copay, \$150 allowance, 20% off balance over \$150 – every 24 months
- Contact Lenses – In-network - \$0 copay, \$150 allowance, 15% off balance over \$150

**Hospital Indemnity – American Public Life**

In order to assist employees with out-of-pocket expenses for emergency, accident and in-patient hospital care, Highlands provides gap insurance to employees and family members who are covered on the health and dental plan. Below is a summary of benefits:

- Daily Hospital Confinement Benefit –
  - Pays \$100 per day for an inpatient hospital confinement of at least 24 hours
  - Pays a maximum of 180 days unless due to mental/emotional disorder
  - Pays a maximum of 30 days for mental/emotional disorder
- Annual 1<sup>st</sup> Occurrence Rider –
  - Pays a lump sum benefit of \$500 the 1<sup>st</sup> time each calendar year of confinement
- Emergency/Accident Rider –
  - Pays up to \$300 for treatment of injury requiring immediate attention in a physician's office, clinic, urgent care facility or hospital ER
  - Maximum of 2 visits per calendar year for each covered adult
  - Maximum of 2 visits per calendar year for all dependent children combined
- Surgical and Anesthesia Rider –
  - Pays up to \$1,000 for covered surgery performed by a physician
  - Pays for one surgical procedure regardless of the number of procedures performed at the same time

**Health Club Benefit**

Scripture tells us that both our spiritual *and* physical health is important, (“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” Luke 2:52). Therefore, Highlands will reimburse full-time employees for health club use at a rate of \$4.00 per visit, with a minimum of 4 visits per month up to a monthly maximum of \$60.00 or 15 visits per month. Attach a

monthly attendance report from your gym to a Check Request by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month for the previous month’s attendance and submit to the Accounting Department.

**403(b) Retirement Savings Plan – GuideStone Financial Services**

Highlands provides a 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan to help employees accumulate financial resources for retirement. The Plan allows eligible staff members to elect how much of their salary they wish to contribute to the plan and to direct the investment of their funds into professionally managed investment funds.

**Eligibility**

Regular full-time staff members who regularly work 37.5 hours or more in a week are eligible to participate in the 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan. Eligible employees may choose to enroll at any time after their hire date. A participating employee’s first deduction will be made from their earnings on the first payroll following the employee’s enrollment into the plan.

**Eligible Earnings**

Eligible employees may elect either a flat rate contribution or a percentage of earnings to be diverted to the 403(b) plan. For those calculating deductions based on a percentage, eligible earnings will be considered to be all regular wages including overtime, bonuses or any other supplemental income. Please note that the sum of all tax-exempt or tax-deferred reductions from income may not exceed the amount of required deductions, including but not limited to benefit premium contributions, or employee portions of taxes.

**Vesting**

Because Highlands pays 100% of individual and family health and dental benefits, Highlands does not offer employer contributions through a matching program for retirement at this time. An employee is fully vested in his/her own contributions and is entitled to those contributions upon withdrawal or rollover eligibility regardless of length of employment.

**Group Short-Term Disability – Lincoln Financial**

In order to protect your family in the event of a short-term disability, Highlands provides a short-term disability policy to all full-time, eligible employees.

- Elimination period is 15 consecutive calendar days. *Highlands will give the employee one week toward the elimination period and the employee can use vacation for the additional week of elimination period.*
- Benefit duration is 11 weeks.
- Maximum benefit is 60% of weekly salary up to \$1,000 per week.

**Group Long-Term Disability – Lincoln Financial**

In order to protect your family in the event of a long-term disability, Highlands provides a long-term disability policy to all full-time, eligible employees.

- Elimination period is 90 days.
- Maximum benefit is 60% of weekly salary up to \$4,000 per month.

**Group Life Insurance – Lincoln Financial**

Highlands provides a life insurance policy for all full-time, eligible employees.

- Life Benefit is 100% of the employee's annual salary with a maximum amount of \$50,000.
- An additional benefit equal to the life insurance amount is payable if death is due to an accident.

**Missions Benefit**

Our purpose is to reach people with the life-giving message of Jesus that they might become fully devoted followers of Christ. Every lost person matters to God and therefore, our efforts at reaching people for Christ are world-wide. As an employee of Highlands, we desire that you have an opportunity go on a mission trip. This policy describes the guidelines for staff mission trips.

Employees who desire to participate in a Highlands mission trip will receive one week of "ministry time off" per year. This is in addition to your earned vacation time. There is a limit of one week per year and the time cannot be carried over from year to year. The "ministry time" is subject to the approval of your Direct Report. If the mission trip requires you to be off



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longer than a week, you will be required to use earned vacation for the extra days. The church will not be responsible for any of the employee's travel expenses.

If an employee is "required" to lead a Highlands mission trip, Highlands will pay the employee's cost of the trip and provide "mission time off" for the duration of the trip. As in the example above, this is subject to the approval of your Direct Report. To qualify, the employee must be asked to lead the trip by the Direct Report overseeing the trip and give significant oversight to the planning and execution of the trip.

Highlands will pay the travel expenses of one mission trip for each child of a full-time staff employee. This is limited to one paid trip only, and the child must still be considered a dependent of the parent at the time of the trip. Once the trip has been taken, the child will no longer be considered eligible for future paid trips.

### **Workers' Compensation**

All employees are covered by workers' compensation insurance, which compensates an employee for lost time, medical expenses, and loss of life or dismemberment from an injury arising out of or in the course of work. Employees must report any accident or injury immediately to his/her manager and the Human Resources department immediately.

### **Additional Information**

The above summary of benefits is not a binding agreement. All benefits are governed by specific Plan Documents provided to all eligible employees. Specifics of all benefits are discussed during New Hire Orientation. In addition, staff is encouraged to thoroughly review the plan documents and plan administrative manuals for full details of benefits.

**Summary**

Highlands provides paid-time off for full-time employees to include holidays, vacation, bereavement and jury duty as described in the following paragraphs. Part time, temporary and contract workers do not receive paid-time off. Highlands complies with all of the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

**Holidays**

Highlands recognizes the following 9 paid annual holidays. If a Highlands’ holiday occurs on an employee’s regularly scheduled day off, the employee will earn one (1) day of compensatory leave.

- New Year’s Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Monday after Easter
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day
- Day after Christmas

**Vacations**

Full-time employees receive 10 to 15 vacation days during the first year of employment depending upon their hire date.

<b>If hire date is between:</b>	January – March	10 days
	April – June	7 days
	July – September	5 days

<b>Pastor/Director Vacation:</b>	January – March	15 days
	April – June	12 days
	July – September	10 days

Employees earn one additional day per year in January of each year. The employee in their second year of employment will have 11 days of vacation during the second year and pastors will have 16 days of vacation in their second year. Once employees reach 20 days of vacation

(or after 11 years of employment), no additional vacation days are added to the employee's time off. (See chart below). *Vacation can be used in ½ day increments.*

Years of Employment	Staff Vacation Days	Pastor Vacation Days
1	10	15
2	11	16
3	12	17
4	13	18
5	14	19
6	15	20
7	16	-
8	17	-
9	18	-
10	19	-
11	20	-

### **Vacation Roll Over**

Employees are encouraged to use their vacation each year. If, however, an employee has time off at the end of the year, the employee can roll over up to 5 vacation days to the following year. The rollover time will be added to the next year's vacation and if the employee leaves during the year, the following vacation payout policy will apply.

If an employee is having a baby in the first quarter of the following year, they will be allowed to roll over 10 vacation days to use for maternity leave.

### **Vacation Pay Out**

Since vacation is deposited into the employee's time-off account in January of each year, the following payout schedule will apply when an employee submits a voluntary resignation of employment and offers Highlands a minimum of a 2-week notice of resignation. If an employee is terminated for disciplinary reasons of any kind, no vacation will be paid out.

Termination Date	Payout on last paycheck
January – March	25%
April – June	50%
July – September	75%
October – December	100%

### **Sick Leave**

Sick leave is intended to help protect each employee against loss of earnings because of personal illness or accident. It is not intended as additional vacation, maternity leave or personal time off.

Each employee will receive 12 days of sick leave in January of each year. The time can be used in ½ day or whole day increments (4 hours/8 hours). Sick leave can be used for the employee’s personal illness and doctor appointments, as well as immediate family member’s illness and doctor appointments.

Sick leave cannot be rolled over to the following year, and sick leave will not be paid out upon the employee’s termination from Highlands. Sick leave will be pro-rated for new staff on the following schedule:

January – March	12 days
April – June	9 days
July – September	6 days
October – December	3 days

If an employee is having surgery in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the following year, they are allowed to roll over 10 sick days, but they must be used before March 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year.

If an employee exhausts all sick leave and needs additional time off, they will be required to use vacation leave before requesting time off without pay.

### **Maternity Leave**

Maternity leave is intended to assist full-time staff with time off after delivery of a baby. Short-Term Disability (STD) is also available during this time. Highlands will give employees an additional 5 days to use for maternity leave.

Employees are then required to use their remaining vacation days while on maternity leave, but are allowed to save up to 1 day per month for each month left in the calendar year when they return from leave. For example, if an employee returns August 1<sup>st</sup> they are allowed to save 5 vacation days to use the remainder of the year. All other vacation days will be used during maternity leave.

If an employee is delivering in the first quarter of the year, they can roll over up to 10 vacation days to be used during maternity leave (which is 5 additional days over our rollover policy).

STD disability pays out as follows:

- *Standard maternity claim pays 4 weeks @ 60% of the employee's pay.*
- *C-section pays 6 weeks @ 60% of the employee's pay.*

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of Family Medical Leave following the birth of a baby. The time off is paid according to the employee's vacation allowance and STD. Therefore, some of the time off may be unpaid.

### **Paternity Leave**

Male staff are given an additional three (3) days paid leave when they have a child born or adopt an infant.

## Family Medical Leave

Church of the Highlands complies with the Family and Medical Leave Act.

### ELIGIBILITY

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that gives qualified employees the right to request up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave. Under FMLA, qualified employees must:

1. Work at locations where there are at least 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius, and
2. Have worked for Highlands at least one year and at least 1250 hours in the previous 12 months.

An employee who takes leave under the provisions of FMLA must comply with the notice requirements under the Act as well as other policies described herein.

### TYPES OF FMLA LEAVE

An eligible employee may take up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave during a rolling 12-month period for the following reasons:

- **Birth, Adoption or Foster Care:** for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care; to care for the employee's child after birth; or placement for adoption or foster care.
- **Employee's Own Serious Health Condition:** a serious health condition as defined by the FMLA.
- **Family Member's Serious Health Condition:** to care for the employee's son, daughter, parent, or spouse who has a serious health condition.
- **Active Duty Exigency:** qualified exigencies arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child, or parent is on, or has been notified of an impending call to, active duty with the National Guard or Reserves.

An eligible employee may take up to twenty-six (26) weeks of unpaid leave during a single 12-month period for the following reason:

- **Military Caregiver Leave:** to care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is a current member of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of active duty or who is on the temporary disability retired list.

During the single 12-month period during which leave is granted for Military Caregiver Leave, an employee shall only be entitled to a combined total of twenty-six (26) weeks of leave for both that Military Caregiver leave and FMLA leave taken during that period for any other reason.

**INTERMITTENT OR REDUCED SCHEDULE LEAVE**

In certain circumstances, employees may take FMLA leave intermittently (e.g. in blocks of time) or by reducing their work schedule. In certain circumstances, Highlands may temporarily assign an employee to an alternative position with equivalent pay rate and benefits that better accommodate the employee's approved intermittent or reduced leave schedule. When the need for intermittent or reduced schedule leave is foreseeable based on a planned medical treatment, the employee must make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment.

**PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

To request leave, the employee should notify Human Resources and obtain a "Request for Leave" form. This form should be completed and forwarded to Human Resources. An employee utilizing FMLA leave must give written notification and must provide the anticipated timing, duration, and reason for the leave.

When the need for Active Duty is foreseeable, the employee must provide his or her supervising manager with such advance notice as is reasonable and practicable. When the need for all other types of FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee must provide his or her manager with at least a 30-day notice of the need for FMLA leave. When this is not practicable due to medical reasons or other warranted conditions, notice should be verbally provided within two business days of when the employee is aware of the need. When the need for leave is foreseeable based on a planned medical treatment, the employee must make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment so as not to unreasonably disrupt the operations of the department. If an employee fails to give proper notice for foreseeable FMLA leave, the leave may be delayed until at least thirty (30) days after notice is provided.

**CERTIFICATION**

Highlands requires employees to provide certification and/or recertification of the need for FMLA leave. Such certifications may be required prior to FMLA leave approval or while on FMLA leave as allowed by law. Failure to furnish appropriate certification within 15 days of request, unless not practicable under the circumstances, may result in leave denial.

**BENEFITS WHILE ON FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

Benefits paid by Highlands will remain in effect while an employee is on leave. Any supplemental benefits paid by the employee through payroll deduction must be received by Highlands prior to invoice date in order to be kept current.

**RETURNING FROM LEAVE**

As provided by the FMLA, eligible employees who return from FMLA leave will be reinstated to the same job they left, or one with substantially equivalent benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of employment to the extent required by the FMLA. If the employee's medical condition indicates the employee may be unable to perform an essential job function or presents a significant safety concern, a fitness-for-duty certification may be required and may be subject to further medical review. The consequences of not returning from leave when FMLA leave time expires include the loss of the potential right to job restoration.

**Bereavement Leave**

Full-time employees are eligible for Bereavement leave to provide a time for mourning after the loss of a loved one for immediate family. For purposes of this policy, "immediate family" is defined as the following relatives of the employee and the employee's spouse: spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren and other relatives living in the employee's home. For the passing of an aunt or uncle, Highlands will provide 1 day of bereavement to attend the funeral.

In most situations, Highlands will provide up to 3 days off depending upon travel time needed. The time off an employee receives is subject to Direct Report approval.

**Jury Duty**

If an employee is called to jury duty, Highlands will provide the difference between jury duty pay and the employee's regular day's pay while the employee carries out his/her civic responsibility. Upon receipt of notification from the state or federal court, the employee should notify their manager. The employee is required to provide copies of the subpoena or summons to the manager and Human Resources.

**Military Leave**

Highlands complies with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) that gives the employee the right to be reemployed in their civilian job if they leave their job to perform service in the military. The following guidelines are outlined in the Act.



- The employee is required to give the employer advanced written or verbal notice of the service;
- The employee has 5 years or less cumulative service in the military with a particular employer;
- The employee returns to work or applies for reemployment in a timely manner after conclusion of service; and
- The employee has not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions.

USERRA will be followed in determining reinstatement rights following military service. The employee can use part or all of their vacation while serving if they desire to be paid.

### **Requesting Leave**

Full-time employees request time off through the Webb Payroll and Timekeeping System. Employees are given instructions on setting up a user name during HR Orientation. For assistance, please contact the Human Resources department.

**Violence-Free Workplace**

Highlands provides a workplace that is safe and free from all threatening and intimidating conduct. Therefore, we will not tolerate violence or threats of violence in any form in the workplace or at any Highlands' functions. This policy applies to all employees, members, guests and vendors. It is a violation for any individual to engage in any conduct, verbal or physical, which intimidates, endangers or creates the perception of intent to harm persons or property.

It is a violation for any staff member to bring any type of weapon on the premises of a Highlands campus, unless they are a member of the security team. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Drug-Free Workplace**

The possession, sale, use, transfer or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any illegal substances on Church premises or in Church vehicles is strictly prohibited. The Church will not tolerate the use of illegal drugs by employees, either on or off the job, or the use of alcohol off the job if it results in a DUI, criminal activity, or damage to the reputation of the Church.

Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The Church reserves the right to require any employee to take a drug-screening test at any time. Employees who are suspected of alcohol use during work through observation of objective signs of such use (e.g., smell of alcohol, slurred speech, possession of alcohol at work) will be subject to alcohol testing.

**Device and Software Use Policy**

The IT Department is currently revising the Highlands Device & Software Use Policy. As soon as it is completed, it will be included in this manual.

## Child and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Reporting Guidelines and Procedures

### Purposes

- To provide guidance for identifying and reporting suspected abuse involving any child between the ages of birth to 18 years of age or abuse of any vulnerable adults in our Special Needs Adult Program.
- To comply with state and federal laws requiring mandatory reporting of actual and reasonably suspected cases of child or vulnerable adult abuse.

### Policy

All staff members, pastors and volunteers acting on behalf of Church of the Highlands are required to report both actual and suspected cases of child abuse to the proper authorities by following the procedures listed below. Alabama law provides a confidentiality privilege for pastors, but Church of the Highlands does not honor that privilege. We require Highland's pastors to report any potential abuse situations disclosed to them as a result of a personal counseling session. Staff members should be familiar with reporting requirements that are required by the State of Alabama. Abuse includes harm already caused or harm that has been threatened to the child or vulnerable adult.

There are four types of child and vulnerable adult abuse:

- **Physical** – a physical act directed at a child or vulnerable adult that causes injury;
- **Sexual** – contact or interactions between a child and an adult, or another child, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This includes exploitation through photographs, videos, or other communication methods;
- **Emotional** – acts or omissions by the parent or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders;
- **Neglect** – failure to provide for the child or vulnerable adult's basic needs. This includes adequate adult supervision, medical attention, housing, food, and clothing. Most cases of physical neglect involve inadequate adult supervision that has caused harm to the child or vulnerable adult, or places them in danger of such harm.

The following are some warning signs that abuse may have occurred:

- Unexplained injury, patch of hair missing, a burn or bruises on strange places (back of arms, stomach, back, etc.);
- Drawings in conjunction with statements from a child or vulnerable adult;
- Prayer requests of protection from pain or injury from specific individuals;
- Statements from the child or vulnerable adult;
- Complaints about numerous beatings;
- Consistent poor hygiene;
- Age inappropriate comments regarding sex or violence.

Failure to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse can result in criminal and civil liability for the church, staff member, or volunteer that failed to report it. It is the staff member or volunteer's responsibility to report suspected abuse. It is not his or her responsibility to investigate and draw a conclusion as to whether or not abuse has actually occurred.

The following information is needed when reporting child abuse:

- Name of child;
- Age of child;
- Address of child;
- Parents or guardian of child;
- Alleged abuser's name and address;
- Nature of abuse.

All suspected cases of child abuse must be handled in a confidential manner. Communication of the suspected abuse should only be made with the staff member or authorities that are involved. Campus Pastors provide pastoral support and care to the family through the entire process.

**Suspected Abuse Reporting Procedures:**

- ✓ Any volunteer that becomes aware of any form of suspected child or vulnerable adult abuse must report it to the staff member that supervises them. If a staff member becomes aware of suspected child abuse, either through a report from a volunteer or through his or her own observations, he or she will report it to their manager and complete a Child or Vulnerable Abuse Report within 24 hours.
- ✓ The departmental manager will provide the report to the Direct Report and a copy to Pastor Marcus Wright.
- ✓ Pastor Marcus will work with John Lucas to determine whether a suspected child abuse report is required to be filed with the proper authorities.
- ✓ Pastor Marcus will complete the *Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Follow-Up* and have the staff member and Direct Report approve and sign it.
- ✓ If it is determined that an abuse report is required to be filed with local authorities, Pastor Marcus and John Lucas will work together with the staff member and Direct Report and file a report with the proper authorities.

**Note:**

- ✓ If the abuse is reported when a uniformed police officer is present, the staff member will report the abuse to his/her manager AND to the uniformed officer. The uniformed officer will determine if an immediate notification to law enforcement authorities is required. No report is required by Highlands in this instance.
- ✓ A pastor that becomes aware of abuse through a counseling session will report the disclosure to their Direct Report and the Direct Report will report to Pastor Marcus and John Lucas. The same forms will be completed and the same procedures will be followed.

**The Child or Vulnerable Abuse Report form can be located in the HR folder.**

**Using Staff, Interns and HC Students for Childcare Services:**

In order to protect the integrity of our staff, the following is the church's policy on how and when Highlands' staff can utilize other staff, interns or HC students for personal childcare services.

- Employees must not utilize anyone they supervise or manage for personal childcare;
- Employees must not utilize staff, interns or HC students for childcare during their work or class hours;
- Any employee utilizing staff, interns or HC students must pay that person for their services.

This concludes the Employee Manual. If you understand and agree with the contents herein, please sign the *Employee Handbook, At Will Employee Status, Confidentiality and Harassment Acknowledgement* you received at orientation and return it to the HR Department.

If you have any questions regarding this material, contact the Director of Human Resources prior to executing the acknowledgement.