GUIDELINES

FOR DEVELOPING

MINISTRY PERSONNEL

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

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GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING MINISTRY PERSONNEL POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The following guidelines have been developed to assist pastoral charges through the Ministry and Personnel Committee, or Official Board (or its equivalent) and Joint Search Committees, to create written position descriptions for ministry personnel. These guidelines may also be adapted and used by presbyteries and Conferences for outreach ministries or other church positions.

"Ministry personnel" includes persons in the Order of Ministry – Diaconal and Ordained, Lay Pastoral Ministers, Lay Pastoral Ministers in Training, Staff Associates, Ordained/Diaconal Supply, Candidates Supply, Student Supply, Minister in Training (Native Ministry), and Intern Supply. (As of the rise of GC38, Lay Pastoral Ministers, Lay Pastoral Ministers in Training, and Staff Associates will be known as Designated Lay Ministers).

A written position description provides an organized summary of the duties, tasks, responsibilities, and accountability involved in a ministry personnel position.

I. VALUE OF POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

A written position description serves as:

? a guide to ministry personnel and pastoral charges outlining and clarifying the responsibilities and duties of the ministry personnel position(s)
? a guide for interviewing and selection of ministry personnel
? an aid in establishing ministry personnel and pastoral charge priorities, goals and objectives
? an aid in any review process
? an aid in producing a smooth, balanced work flow
? an effective means of examining the responsibilities of the position as they may change over time
? a means to develop and support morale.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR DEVELOPING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Within the pastoral charge, the Ministry & Personnel Committee, the Official Board (or its equivalent), and ministry personnel all have roles to play in developing position descriptions.

a) The Ministry & Personnel Committee on behalf of the Official Board (or its equivalent) will give leadership to the project. Persons with relevant skills may be consulted to assist in its completion.
b) The Ministry & Personnel Committee will consult with ministry personnel to discuss the purpose of the task and explore how it is to be carried out.
c) The Ministry & Personnel Committee will determine whether to prepare the position description itself or to delegate the task to a separate committee.
d) Approval of the position description rests with the Official Board (or its equivalent).

III. THE WORK OF THE POSITION DESCRIPTION COMMITTEE

The Position Description Committee will find the necessary information for writing a position description in the Joint Needs Assessment Report.

IV. WHEN TO REVIEW POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

There are a number of cases in which position descriptions may be reviewed:

When the incumbent is in a position and intends to stay and:

- the duties of the position and the needs of the pastoral charge have changed over time (of particular concern but not exclusive to long-term pastoral relationships)
- the writing will assist the M&P Committee with the annual review and support effective communication with the staff.
- the position description is a component of the triennial presbytery pastoral oversight visit.

When a new position is created and:

- if it is determined that a new position is necessary, through the Joint Needs Assessment Process, a position description should be written before a person is interviewed for that position.
- the new ministry position will require a change in one or more of the existing position descriptions. All ministry personnel position descriptions must be sent to presbytery for approval.

V. COLLECTING POSITION INFORMATION

The committee developing the position description will need to collect the following information:

- responsibilities of the position
- what the person does
- how the person does it
- why the person does it
- knowledge and skills involved
- resources and equipment used
- training and/or experience required
- accountability
- how the position relates to other staff positions

A) The information can be secured from ministry personnel by a position questionnaire and personal interview: (1) request ministry personnel to complete questionnaire; (2) where appropriate, interview ministry personnel individually concerning their duties and responsibilities. It may be helpful to have the person keep track of activities over a specified period of time, (e.g., one or two months).

(1) Questionnaire
A designated member of the position description committee should give a copy of the position questionnaire to ministry personnel with a full explanation of the various items on the form. People should be given at least two (2) weeks to complete the form. If there is more than one person serving as ministry personnel, each person should receive a copy of the questionnaire.

Request each person to list her/his responsibilities.

It is important that the completed position questionnaires be checked carefully with ministry personnel before the final position descriptions are written.

(2) Interview
The position description committee may assign one or more of its members to interview ministry personnel individually.

The person interviewing should be familiar with the skills required for effective work in the particular ministry position (and need to remember that this is not a work review).

The completed information on the questionnaire should then be reviewed with Ministry Personnel. This provides a check to determine if the descriptions of tasks are accurately stated and if any task has been omitted.

Completed position questionnaires and personal interviews are then analyzed carefully.

A sample questionnaire form is included in this document.

B) Information can also be obtained from committees and groups within the pastoral charge. The six profiles in the Joint Needs Assessment Committee process (as found in the Pastoral Relations Handbook) may be helpful in this regard.

C) For new positions, consultation with other pastoral charges which have similar positions could be helpful.

VI. WRITING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The following steps are suggested for writing position descriptions:

- Summarize the responsibilities of each position. Data appearing on the position questionnaire needs to be organized in a consistent format. For regular tasks, reference to the frequency of performance of the task could be included (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, etc.).
- Summarize skills and other requirements necessary for each position. Establish minimum standards.
- Use language that is direct and specific enough to be helpful for evaluation purposes but not so specific that it does not allow for flexibility. Phrases such as "as appropriate", "as required", or "required" give some indication of whether an aspect of the position is an expected or a flexible part of the position. Avoid generalized terms and complicated sentence structures. Use the present tense throughout the position description.

- Include general areas of responsibility or principle functions (headings could include: pastoral care, Christian education, worship, spiritual and personal development, outreach, administration, committee responsibilities [on the charge and throughout the wider church], community and inter-church activities).
- Under each heading there should be indication of those things for which the individual has sole responsibility as well as those things which require consultation with committees or other individuals (e.g. plan intergenerational mission study events in consultation with the Christian Education and Outreach Committees, prepare liturgy for Sunday worship in consultation with the Worship Committee).
- If pastoral charge or congregational policies exist that affect how responsibilities are to be carried out, these should be noted (e.g. conduct weddings in accordance with policies set by the congregation).
- Position descriptions could include some estimates of the percentage of time to be spent in each area; this would help in priority setting but should not be constraining. Such time estimates are particularly helpful in part-time positions.
- Upon approval all position descriptions should be signed and dated by a designate of the Official Board or by a member of the Ministry & Personnel Committee and the ministry personnel involved.
- Terms of call or appointment would not be included in positions descriptions. Terms would include salary, housing allowances, vacation, various leaves, or requests for change in pastoral relations.
- Position description should include the date of review of the position description.
- Additional information regarding position descriptions is available in "A Handbook for Ministry & Personnel Committees" and the "Pastoral Relations Handbook" (available through URCD).

VII. MAINTAINING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The Ministry and Personnel Committee is responsible for developing position descriptions and maintaining, reviewing, and revising position descriptions. All position descriptions should be reviewed annually, in the context of the annual review of ministry personnel, by the Ministry and Personnel Committee. When changes are approved, the descriptions need to be rewritten. This will be done by the Ministry and Personnel Committee in consultation with the person in the position. Approval of revised position descriptions by the Official Board or equivalent must then be obtained.

Ministry personnel should receive a copy of his/her completed, signed and approved position description.

The position description, along with the supporting position questionnaire data, should be kept with individual staff and personnel records.

SAMPLE SAMPLE

POSITION QUESTIONNAIRE

Position title: ____

Prepared by: ________________________________ Date: ______________________

1. Principle areas of responsibility (Include the percentage of time each area requires.)
    1.
    2.
    3.
    4.

2. Regular duties (List the major duties of the position, and how frequently performed.)

3. Occasional duties (List the duties sometimes required by the position, and how frequently performed.)

4. Skills and experience (Note specific skills, abilities, education requirements, etc.)

5. What routine consultation with other staff or committee is required? (List the positions and describe the nature and frequency of the consultation.)

6. Normally, what decisions are made by you without additional consultation?

Nature of decision | Frequency of occurrence

7. In your responsibilities, what contacts are made with people outside the pastoral charge? Include presbytery, Conference, General Council expectations and involvement as well as community involvement; those activities that are standard requirements as well as those that are negotiated.

8. Give any additional comment which will aid in describing your work completely.