

# Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church Policy Document

---

Approved May 7, 2026

# 1 Contents

1	Contents.....	2
1	Framing Statements.....	5
1.1	Mission.....	5
1.2	Vision.....	5
1.3	Core Values.....	5
1.4	Affirmation of Welcome.....	5
2	Congregational Governance and Ministry.....	5
2.1	Alcohol and Illegal Drug Use.....	5
2.2	Staff Performance Evaluations.....	6
2.3	Administrative Assistant.....	7
2.4	Payment for Worship Leadership by Members.....	7
2.5	Paid Holidays.....	7
2.6	Bereavement Policy.....	7
3	Safe and Healthy Congregational Life.....	9
3.1	Prevention of Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, and Bullying.....	9
3.2	Prevention of Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, and Bullying.....	9
3.2.1	Definitions.....	9
3.2.2	Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination and Bullying Prevention Policy.....	14
3.2.3	Reporting Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, or Bullying.....	16
3.2.4	Leadership Responsibilities.....	16
3.2.5	Bystander Intervention.....	17
3.2.6	Investigation of Complaints.....	17
3.2.7	Legal Protections and External Remedies.....	18
3.3	Social Media.....	20
3.4	Staff & Volunteers.....	20
3.5	Supervision and Environment.....	21
3.6	Dismissal for Children/Youth.....	21
3.7	Special Considerations for Young Children.....	21
3.8	Travel.....	22
4	Worship and Music.....	22
4.1	Worship Assistants.....	22
4.2	Wedding Policy.....	23
4.2.1	The Pastor.....	23
4.2.2	The Facility.....	23

4.2.3	Music.....	24
4.2.4	Worship Space and Decorations.....	24
4.2.5	Wedding Bulletin.....	24
4.2.6	Photographs.....	25
4.2.7	Clean-up.....	25
4.2.8	Rehearsal and Wedding Schedule.....	25
4.2.9	Fees and Donations.....	25
4.3	Funeral Policy.....	25
4.3.1	Dates, Times, and Officiant(s).....	26
4.3.2	Structure of the Service.....	26
4.3.3	Pastoral Services to Members of Other Congregations and Non-Members.....	26
4.3.4	Funeral Music.....	27
4.3.5	Decorations and Casket.....	27
4.3.6	Parking/Traffic Assistance.....	28
4.3.7	Fellowship Meal.....	28
4.3.8	Bulletins.....	28
4.3.9	Memorial/Tribute Gifts.....	28
5	Finance.....	28
5.1	Financial Accountability.....	28
5.2	Contract Approval.....	29
5.3	Reimbursement and Bill Payment.....	29
5.3.1	Background.....	29
5.3.2	Payment Process.....	29
5.3.3	Reimbursement by Individuals for Items Purchased through Messiah.....	30
5.4	Fundraising.....	30
5.4.1	Background.....	30
5.4.2	Funding of Ministries.....	30
5.4.3	Payment for Supplies.....	31
5.4.4	Services.....	31
5.4.5	Gambling.....	32
5.4.6	Examples (all in the name of Messiah).....	32
5.5	Solicitation.....	32
5.6	Designated and Donor Restricted Funds.....	32
5.6.1	Carryover Fund (Unrestricted).....	33
5.6.2	Concord Fund (Unrestricted).....	33

5.6.3	Greater Messiah Fund (Unrestricted + Donor-Restricted) .....	33
5.6.4	Youth Gathering Fund (Unrestricted + Donor-Restricted).....	33
5.6.5	Capital Campaign Fund (Donor Restricted).....	33
5.6.6	Endowment Fund (Donor Restricted) .....	34
5.6.7	Memorial Fund (for Memorials and Tributes) (Donor Restricted) .....	34
5.6.8	Other Designated Funds .....	34
5.7	Grant Tracking.....	35
5.8	Gifts of Life Insurance .....	35
5.9	Audits .....	35
6	Property .....	35
6.1	Safety/Emergency Procedures.....	36
6.1.1	Fire/Evacuation .....	36
6.1.2	First aid.....	36
6.1.3	Sick or Injured Child or Adult .....	36
6.1.4	Hostile Intruder .....	36
6.2	Facility Use .....	37
6.3	Building Key Form .....	37
6.4	Personal Safety and Security.....	37
6.5	Parking Lot Use .....	38
7	Outreach Ministry .....	38
8	Privacy and Social Media .....	38
9	Forms .....	39

# 1 Framing Statements

## 1.1 Mission

We at Messiah are:

- Called into community, gifted to serve;
- Glorifying God through love in action.

## 1.2 Vision

We welcome all into our faithful and joyous Christian community. Guided by prayer and the Holy Spirit, we proclaim and spread God's love and peace in the world. We serve others, working toward a just society where all are valued as beloved children of God and each person can live a life of dignity.

## 1.3 Core Values

We at Messiah value:

- Vibrant relationships with God – evident in our worship, prayer, and daily lives
- Serving others together – using our gifts to meet others' needs
- Generosity – as faithful stewards of our God-given time, talents and resources
- Growing in faith – through personal and community prayer, study, and discipleship
- Community and fellowship – living as brothers and sisters in Christ, encouraging and holding each other accountable
- Compassion and kindness – loving and building up one another
- Inclusion and affirmation –welcoming everyone with God's love
- Spirit-led momentum – continuously discerning and growing as a community
- Trust – in God and each other, to share our joys and struggles
- Forgiveness and reconciliation – embracing God's forgiveness and extending it to others

## 1.4 Affirmation of Welcome

We believe that nothing can separate us from God's unconditional love. We believe that God is the God of all people, regardless of our various ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, physical and mental abilities, educational levels, income, strength of faith or socioeconomic backgrounds. Messiah is committed to the work of confronting racism and moving forward toward equity and justice in the world. If you have ever felt excluded, unwelcome or marginalized, we welcome you in Christ's love.

# 2 Congregational Governance and Ministry

## 2.1 Alcohol and Illegal Drug Use

Inasmuch as the use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs as a part of social activities is believed to be inconsistent with the use of the House of God as a place of worship and faith formation; may reflect a lack of support for those struggling with addiction; and on the advice of legal counsel, it is the policy of Messiah Lutheran Church that the use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs on the premises will not be

permitted with the exception of wine used for the celebration of Holy Communion. In addition, staff shall not use alcohol or illegal drugs during their work hours.

## 2.2 Staff Performance Evaluations

To support Messiah’s ministry and strategic goals, the Mutual Ministry Team is responsible for maintaining staff job descriptions, evaluating staff performance, providing feedback to encourage continuous improvement, and monitoring and supporting performance improvement with training and resources as needed.<sup>1</sup>

Performance evaluations shall be completed annually for all employees of Messiah in order to provide performance feedback in a way that encourages continuation of effective behavior and improves effectiveness over time. The Staff Evaluation form and process should, to the degree possible, include feedback from a broad population of church members. In the spirit of speaking the truth in love<sup>2</sup>, anonymous congregational feedback may not be included in Staff Evaluations.

Staff Evaluation summaries will be prepared by the Mutual Ministry Team and discussed with each Staff Member. Staff members will be asked to complete their own separate self-assessment for discussion at the annual Staff Evaluation Review, and goals for the coming year will be mutually agreed upon to support the mission and goals of the congregation. The same Mutual Ministry team members (whenever possible) will meet with each staff member during the year to review progress toward the annual goals and offer support, resources, or changes as appropriate. The Senior Pastor will participate in the discussions with all other staff members.

Timeframe	Action
June-August	Finalize any changes to Staff Evaluation form
Early September	Finalize communication plan (newsletter, bulletins, other) and form distribution (online & paper) to solicit congregational feedback
September newsletter deadline	Newsletter article submitted
Bulletin announcements to run mid-September through early October (3-4 weeks)	Accept survey input
October Mutual Ministry Team meeting	Review aggregated Survey data
~October 20	Staff to complete self-evaluation w/1-3 proposed goals & focus areas for following year
~October 20	Mutual Ministry Team to complete Staff Evaluation summaries for each Staff Member

<sup>1</sup> Continuing Resolution Authorizing Congregational Committees, January 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:15

Timeframe	Action
~November 4	Complete Staff Evaluation Reviews w/Staff
October	Congregation President to research compensation benchmarks (Synod recommendations for clergy, Bureau of Labor Statistics for other staff)
November Mutual Ministry Team meeting	Debrief Staff Evaluation Reviews; Make staff compensation recommendations
December Council meeting	Council to finalize staff compensation recommendations for draft budget
May/June	Mid-year review of goals and performance

### 2.3 Administrative Assistant

To most fully support the spiritual life of our staff, it is our policy that the paid position of Administrative Assistant not be filled by a member of Messiah. Exceptions may be made by the Congregational Council by vote, provided that the Mutual Ministry Team provides oversight and safeguards to ensure that the Administrative Assistant is able to maintain an appropriate distinction between their paid work and their participation as a congregational member.

### 2.4 Payment for Worship Leadership by Members

The church benefits from the gifts of all its members in many roles, and we encourage broad lay member participation in the life of the church and in worship services. When church members lead worship through Pulpit Supply or stand in as Music Director or guest organist, it is our policy that they be offered appropriate compensation if these are their normal professional roles (e.g. clergy members for Pulpit Supply or professional musicians/conductors leading music). Members with these vocations may choose not to be compensated as a gift to the congregation, at their discretion. Members with gifts in these areas but for whom worship leadership/music is not their profession will be offering their gifts as part of their personal stewardship, as do the many members who volunteer in other roles within the life of the congregation.

### 2.5 Paid Holidays

Paid holidays are New Years Day, Martin Luther King Day, Easter Monday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving (2 Days), and Christmas (2 Days).

### 2.6 Bereavement Policy

In the event of a death of an immediate family (to include spouse/partner, children, parents, stepchildren, stepparents, brother, sister, grandparents, step grandparents, grandchildren, step

grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or legal guardian), staff members will be allowed up to two weeks leave with pay. Staff members will be allowed paid leave of up to one week for other family members (e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins). The Congregational Council has the latitude to adjust or allow additional leave based on individual circumstances.

### 3 Safe and Healthy Congregational Life

The way that Christians interact with others should imitate and model God's love and create a safe environment for faith formation. Demonstrating God's love in this way also provides a unique and practical opportunity for personal faith development. Treating each person we meet as a beloved child of God fosters trust, respect, and spiritual maturity. The following policies outline specific ways that we will interact with one another to promote community and faith formation for all ages.

This policy exists to:

- Safeguard the employees, members, and visitors of our church from harm, especially children/youth and other particularly vulnerable individuals.
- Protect church staff and volunteers from allegations of improper behavior.
- Comply with state and federal laws regarding sexual harassment and discrimination.
- Limit the church's legal risk and liability.

#### 3.1 Prevention of Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, and Bullying

God's church is intended to be a strong, nurturing community that supports individuals and healthy, loving relationships. Harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying violate our call to love one another. All members of Messiah are responsible for ensuring that harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are prevented, and are equally responsible for responding appropriately if such behavior is suspected. This policy covers behavior by church staff and members both on and off church premises, as well as our interactions with vendors, visitors, and others in the community.

#### 3.2 Prevention of Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, and Bullying

God's church is intended to be a strong, nurturing community that supports individuals and healthy, loving relationships. Harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying violate our call to love one another. All members of Messiah are responsible for ensuring that harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are prevented, and are equally responsible for responding appropriately if such behavior is suspected. This policy covers behavior by church staff and members both on and off church premises, as well as our interactions with vendors, visitors, and others in the community.

##### 3.2.1 Definitions

- **Sexual Harassment** is a form of gender-based discrimination that is unlawful under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment is a violation of Messiah's policy for employees, members of the church, and visitors. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender. Sexual harassment is not limited to sexual contact, touching, or expressions of a sexually suggestive nature. Sexual harassment includes all forms of gender discrimination including gender role stereotyping and treating any individual differently because of their gender.

Understanding gender diversity is essential to recognizing sexual harassment because discrimination based on sex stereotypes, gender expression and perceived identity are all forms of sexual harassment. The gender spectrum is nuanced, but the three most common ways people identify are cisgender, transgender, and non-binary. A cisgender person is someone whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Generally, this gender will align

with the binary of male or female. A transgender person is someone whose gender is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. A non-binary person does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. They might identify as both, somewhere in between, or completely outside the gender binary. Some may identify as transgender, but not all do. Respecting an individual's gender identity is a necessary first step in establishing a safe work environment and church community.

Sexual harassment is unlawful when it subjects an individual to inferior terms, conditions, or privileges. Harassment does not need to be severe or pervasive to be illegal. It can be any harassing behavior that rises above petty slights or trivial inconveniences. Every instance of harassment is unique to those experiencing it, and there is no single boundary between petty slights and harassing behavior. However, the New York State Human Rights Law specifies that whether harassing conduct is considered petty or trivial is to be viewed from the standpoint of a reasonable victim of discrimination with the same protected characteristics. Generally, any behavior in which an employee, community member, or visitor is treated worse because of their gender (perceived or actual), sexual orientation, or gender expression is considered a violation of Messiah's policy. The intent of the behavior, for example, making a joke, does not neutralize a harassment claim. Not intending to harass is not a defense. The impact of the behavior on a person is what counts. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome conduct which is either directed at an individual because of that individual's gender identity or expression (perceived or actual), or is of a sexual nature when:

- The purpose or effect of this behavior unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or participation in the church community, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. The impacted person does not need to be the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- Employment or participation in the church community depends implicitly or explicitly on accepting such unwelcome behavior; or
- Decisions regarding an individual's employment or participation in Messiah's community are based on an individual's acceptance to or rejection of such behavior. Such decisions can include those affecting work hours, work assignments, salary, and volunteer assignments or opportunities.

There are two main types of sexual harassment:

- Behaviors that contribute to a harassing **hostile environment** include, but are not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex, gender identity, or gender expression. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements, discriminatory statements which an individual finds offensive or objectionable, statements which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, or which interfere with the recipient's participation in the community.
- Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, conditions of employment, conditions of participation in the church community, or other privileges. This is also called **quid pro quo** harassment.

Sexual harassment is not limited to the physical church premises. It can occur while employees or members are traveling or at sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage can constitute unlawful harassment, even if they occur away from the church premises on personal devices.

Any employee, participant in the church community, or visitor who feels harassed is encouraged to report the behavior so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be discrimination and is covered by this policy.

### **Examples of sexual harassment**

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited. **This list is just a sample of behaviors and should not be considered exhaustive.** Any employee, participant in the church community, or visitor who believes they have experienced sexual harassment, even if it does not appear on this list, should feel encouraged to report it

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
  - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults. Note: these may be considered criminal conduct (contact local law enforcement if you wish to pursue criminal charges).
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
  - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's employment or participation in the church community;
  - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities; or
  - Repeated requests for dates or romantic gestures, including gift-giving.
- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality, sexual experience, or romantic history which create a hostile environment. This is not limited to in-person interactions. Remarks made over social media platforms and messaging apps can create a similarly hostile work environment.
- Sex stereotyping, which occurs when conduct or personality traits are judged based on other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
  - Remarks regarding someone's gender expression, such as wearing a garment typically associated with a different gender identity; or
  - Asking an individual to take on traditionally gendered roles, such as asking a woman to serve refreshments when it is not part of, or appropriate to, her job or volunteer duties
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the community, such as:

- Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the church or elsewhere.
- This extends to virtual or remote meetings and can include having such materials visible in the background of one's home during such a meeting
- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
  - Interfering with the individual's ability to perform their job or participate in the community;
  - Sabotaging an individual's work;
  - Bullying, yelling, name-calling;
  - Intentional misuse of an individual's preferred pronouns, or
  - Creating different expectations for individuals based on their perceived identities, for example:
    - Dress codes that place more emphasis on women's attire
    - Leaving parents/caregivers out of meetings.

### **Who Can be a Target of Sexual Harassment?**

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. Harassment does not have to be between members of the opposite sex or gender. New York Law protects employees and Messiah's policy protects all employees, members of the church community, and visitors. Harassers can be anyone in the church community. A staff member, church leader, fellow church member, or visitor can all be harassers.

Sexual harassment does not happen in a vacuum and discrimination can be impacted by biases and identities beyond an individual's gender. For example:

- Placing different expectations on black women than white women can be both racial and gender discrimination;
- An individual's immigration status may lead to perceptions of vulnerability and increased concerns around illegal retaliation for reporting sexual harassment; or
- Past experiences as a survivor of domestic or sexual violence may lead an individual to feel re-traumatized by someone's behaviors in the church community.

Individuals bring personal history with them to the church community that might impact how they interact with certain behavior. It is especially important for all employees, church members, and visitors to be aware of how words or actions might impact someone with a different experience than their own in the interest of creating a safe and equitable environment.

### **Where Can Sexual Harassment Occur?**

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical church facility itself. It can occur while employees and church members are traveling, attending sponsored events, or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by individuals can constitute unlawful harassment, even if they occur away from the church building, on personal devices, or during non-work hours.

Sexual harassment can occur when employees are working remotely from home as well. Any

behaviors outlined above that leave an individual feeling uncomfortable, humiliated, or unable to meet their job requirements constitute harassment even if the individual is at home when the harassment occurs. Harassment can happen on virtual meeting platforms, in messaging apps, and after working hours between personal cell phones.

- **Retaliation** is any action that punishes an individual upon learning of a harassment claim, that seeks to discourage someone from making or supporting a sexual harassment or discrimination claim, or that punishes those who have come forward. These actions need not be job-related or occur in the church community to constitute unlawful retaliation. For example, threats of physical violence outside of work hours or disparaging someone on social media would be covered as retaliation under this policy. Retaliation is unlawful in the workplace and is a violation of Messiah's policy for employees, members of the church, and visitors.

Examples of retaliation may include, but are not limited to:

- Demotion, termination, denying accommodations, or reduced hours or work responsibilities for employees;
- Publicly releasing personnel files;
- Refusing to provide a reference or providing an unwarranted negative reference;
- Labeling an individual as "difficult" and excluding them from projects to avoid "drama";
- Undermining an individual's immigration status;
- Reducing volunteer opportunities and responsibilities for participants in the church community; or
- Excluding someone from activities in the church community

Such retaliation is unlawful in the workplace under federal, state, and (where applicable) local law and is a violation of Messiah's policies for employees, members of the church, and visitors. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in "protected activity." Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- Made a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination, either internally or with any government agency;
- Testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual harassment or discrimination under the Human Rights Law or any other anti-discrimination law;
- Opposed sexual harassment or discrimination by making a verbal or informal complaint, or by simply informing the Senior Pastor or Congregation President of suspected harassment;
- Reported that another member of the community has been sexually harassed or discriminated against; or
- Encouraged a community member to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

- **Harassment** that is non-sexual in nature may be unlawful and is a violation of Messiah’s policy for employees, members of the church, and visitors. Such harassment includes physical behaviors or verbal comments that are unwanted, offensive, or intimidating. It can include:
  - Behavior intended to annoy, threaten, or create a hostile environment;
  - Repeated actions or communications that cause distress;
  - Physical actions or verbal or written communications (including online); and
  - Stalking behaviors
  
- **Abuse** is any action that causes physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Abuse is unlawful and is a violation of Messiah’s policy for employees, church members and visitors. Abusive behaviors can:
  - Include actions that intimidate or threaten an individual with harm;
  - Intend to control the victim;
  - Occur as a single incident or a pattern of behavior; or
  - Invoke an imbalance of power or position between the abuser and victim.

Abuse is frequently considered more severe and harmful than harassment, and as such, more frequently leads to criminal charges. Abuse victims who wish to press charges are encouraged to contact local law enforcement.

- **Discrimination** occurs when someone is treated differently than others because they possess, or are perceived to possess, certain characteristics. Discrimination is unlawful in the workplace and is a violation of Messiah’s policy for employees, members of the church, and visitors.
 

New York State Human Rights Law prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, race, creed, color, national origin, military status, disability, pre-disposing genetic characteristics, familial status, marital status, criminal history, or status as a victim of domestic abuse. These are termed protected classes.
- **Bullying** is another form of harassment or discrimination, but differs in that the target is not part of a protected class. Bullying is a violation of Messiah’s policy for employees, members of the church, and visitors.

### 3.2.2 Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination and Bullying Prevention Policy

1. Messiah’s policy applies to all employees, participants in the church community, visitors and guests. In the remainder of this document, the term “individuals” refers to this collective group.
  
2. Sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, abuse, discrimination, bullying, and retaliation are a violation of our Christian call to respect and honor our brothers and sisters in Christ and are unacceptable. Any individual covered by this policy who engages in any form of these behaviors will be subject to action, including appropriate discipline for employees. Harassment does not need to be severe or pervasive to be illegal. Individuals should not feel discouraged from reporting harassment because they do not believe it is bad enough, or conversely because they do not want to see a colleague fired over less severe behavior. Just as harassment can happen in different degrees, potential discipline for engaging in sexual harassment will depend

on the degree of harassment and might include education and counseling. It may lead to suspension or termination when appropriate

3. Retaliation is prohibited. Any individual that reports an incident of sexual harassment, other form of harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a complaint is protected from retaliation. No one should fear reporting these behaviors if they believe they have occurred. So long as a person reasonably believes that they have witnessed or experienced such behavior, they are protected from retaliation. Any individual who retaliates against anyone involved in a harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying investigation will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination for employees. Any individual who believes they have been subject to such retaliation should inform the Senior Pastor or Congregation President. Any individual who believes they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief from government agencies, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.
4. Discrimination of any kind, including sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, and bullying, is a violation of our Christian call to respect and honor our brothers and sisters in Christ. Such behavior is a violation of our policies, may be unlawful, and may subject Messiah to liability for harm to targets of discrimination. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability and church leaders who fail to report or act on harassment may be liable for aiding and abetting such behavior. All individuals who engage in harassment or discrimination, including church leaders, will be penalized for such misconduct.
5. Messiah will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that is fair to all parties. An investigation will happen whenever the Senior Pastor or Congregation President receives a complaint about harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying, or when they otherwise know of possible harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying occurring. Messiah will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. If an investigation ends with the finding that harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying occurred, Messiah will act as required. In addition to any required discipline, Messiah will also take steps to ensure a safe environment for the individual(s) involved. All church employees and leaders are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying.
6. All individuals are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. Messiah provides a complaint form to report harassment and file a complaint. Use of this form is not required. For anyone who would rather make a complaint verbally, or by email, these complaints will be treated with equal priority. An individual who prefers not to report harassment to Messiah's Senior Pastor or Congregation President may instead report harassment to the New York State Division of Human Rights and/or the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Complaints may be made to both Messiah and a government agency.
7. The Senior Pastor and Congregation President are required to file a report of any complaint that they receive, or any harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying that they observe or become aware of.

8. This policy must be provided to all employees in person or digitally upon hiring or whenever the policy is updated.

### **3.2.3 Reporting Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, or Bullying**

Everyone must work toward preventing harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying, but church leaders have a special responsibility to make sure employees, church members, and visitors feel safe at Messiah and that the environment is safe. Any employee, staff member, or visitor is encouraged to report harassing or discriminatory behavior to the Senior Pastor or Congregation President. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of such behaviors should report it the Senior Pastor or Congregation President.

Reports of harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying may be made verbally or in writing. A written complaint form is attached to this policy, but the complaint form is not required. Individuals who are reporting harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying on behalf of another individual may use the complaint form and should note that it is on someone else's behalf. A verbal or otherwise written complaint (such as an email) on behalf of oneself or someone else is also acceptable.

Employees and other individuals who believe they have been a target of harassment, abuse, or discrimination may at any time seek assistance in additional available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

Disclosure of abuse involving a child to any individual or any instance in which an individual suspects that a child has been abused must be reported to the Senior Pastor or Congregation President immediately and held in confidence from all others. The Senior Pastor shall report cases of suspected child abuse following procedures described in New York State Law. The New York State Child Abuse Hotline Number is 1-800-342-3720. The NYS Office of Children and Family Services website is a helpful resource: <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cps/faqs.asp#laws>

### **3.2.4 Leadership Responsibilities**

Church leaders have a responsibility to prevent harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying. All church leaders who receive a complaint or information about suspected harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying, observe what may be such behavior, or for any reason suspect that such behavior is occurring, are required to report it to the Senior Pastor or Congregation President. Church leaders should not be passive and wait for someone to file a complaint. If they observe such behavior, they must act.

Church leaders can be disciplined if they engage in harassing, abusive, discriminatory, or bullying behavior themselves. Church leaders can also be disciplined for failing to report such behaviors or allowing them to continue after they know about them. Church leaders can also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

While church leaders have a responsibility to report harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying, they must be mindful of the impact that an investigation has on victims. Being identified as a possible victim can be intimidating, uncomfortable and re-traumatizing for individuals. Church leaders must accommodate the needs of individuals who have experienced harassment, abuse, discrimination, or

bullying to ensure the environment is safe, supportive, and free from retaliation for them during and after any investigation.

### **3.2.5 Bystander Intervention**

Anyone witnessing harassment, abuse, discrimination or bullying as a bystander is encouraged to report it. A church leader that is a bystander to such behavior is required to report it. There are five standard methods of bystander intervention that can be used when anyone witnesses these behaviors and wants to help.

1. A bystander can interrupt by engaging with the victim and distracting them from the harassing behavior;
2. A bystander who feels unsafe interrupting on their own can ask a third party to help intervene in the incident;
3. A bystander can record or take notes on the incident to benefit a future investigation;
4. A bystander might check in with victim after the incident, see how they are feeling and let them know the behavior was not ok; and
5. If a bystander feels safe, they can confront the harassers and name the behavior as inappropriate. When confronting such behavior, physically assaulting an individual is never an appropriate response.

Though not exhaustive, and dependent on the circumstances, the guidelines above can serve as a brief guide of how to react when witnessing harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying.

### **3.2.6 Investigation of Complaints**

All complaints or information about harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. An investigation of any complaint, information, or knowledge of suspected sexual harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying will be prompt, thorough, and started and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All individuals involved, including those making a claim, witnesses, and alleged harassers deserve a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying. Messiah will not tolerate retaliation against anyone who files complaints, supports another's complaint or participates in an investigation.

Messiah recognizes that participating in an investigation can be uncomfortable and has the potential to retraumatize a victim or witness. Those receiving claims and leading investigations will handle complaints and questions with sensitivity toward those participating.

#### **3.2.6.1 Leadership Responsibilities**

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations should be done in accordance with the following steps. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Senior Pastor or Congregation President will:

- Conduct an immediate review of the allegations, assess the appropriate scope of the investigation, and take any interim actions (for example, instructing the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made to refrain from communications with the individual(s) who made the complaint), as appropriate. If the complaint is verbal,

request the individual to complete the Harassment Complaint Form (refer to Section 9) in writing. If the individual prefers not to fill out the form, the Senior Pastor or Congregation President will prepare a Harassment Complaint Form based on the verbal reporting.

- Inform the Upstate New York Synod office of the complaint.
- Take steps to obtain, review, and preserve documents sufficient to assess the allegations, including documents, emails or phone records that may be relevant to the investigation. The Senior Pastor or Congregation President will consider and implement appropriate document request, review, and preservation measures, including all electronic communications.
- Seek to interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses, with care taken during the interviewing process to avoid re-traumatizing any individual(s). The use of specially trained interviewers should be considered.
- Create written documentation of the investigation (such as a letter, memo or email), which contains the following:
  - A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
  - A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
  - A timeline of events;
  - A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported; and
  - The basis for the decision and final resolution of the complaint, together with any corrective action(s).
- Keep the written documentation and associated documents in a secure and confidential location.
- Promptly notify the individual(s) who made the complaint and the individual(s) about whom the complaint was made that the investigation has been completed and implement any corrective actions identified in the written document.
- Inform the individual(s) who reported of the right to file a complaint or charge externally as outlined in the next section.

### **3.2.7 Legal Protections and External Remedies**

Sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are not only prohibited by Messiah but in many cases are also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

The internal process outlined in the policy above is one way for employees, church members, and visitors to report harassment, abuse, discrimination, and bullying. Individuals may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private

attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, individuals may also seek the legal advice of an attorney.

**New York State Division of Human Rights:**

The New York State Human Rights Law (HRL), N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State and protects employees and covered individuals, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the New York State Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints of sexual harassment filed with DHR may be filed any time within three years of the harassment. If an individual does not file a complaint with DHR, they can bring a lawsuit directly in state court under the Human Rights Law within three years of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Complaining internally to Messiah does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases receive a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found at the hearing, DHR has the power to award relief. Relief varies but it may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or repair the damage caused by the harassment, including paying of monetary damages, punitive damages, attorney's fees, and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit [www.dhr.ny.gov](http://www.dhr.ny.gov).

Go to [dhr.ny.gov/complaint](http://dhr.ny.gov/complaint) for more information about filing a complaint with DHR. The website has a digital complaint process that can be completed on your computer or mobile device from start to finish. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, and mailed to DHR as well as a form that can be submitted online. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

Call the DHR sexual harassment hotline at 1(800) HARASS3 for more information about filing a sexual harassment complaint. This hotline can also provide you with a referral to a volunteer attorney experienced in sexual harassment matters who can provide you with limited free assistance and counsel over the phone.

**The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:**

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq. An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the most

recent incident of harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred. If the EEOC determines that the law may have been violated, the EEOC will try to reach a voluntary settlement with the employer. If the EEOC cannot reach a settlement, the EEOC (or the Department of Justice in certain cases) will decide whether to file a lawsuit. The EEOC will issue a Notice of Right to Sue letter permitting the workers to file a lawsuit in federal court if the EEOC closes the charge, is unable to determine if federal employment discrimination laws may have been violated, or believes that unlawful discrimination occurred but does not file a lawsuit.

Individuals may obtain relief in mediation, settlement or conciliation. In addition, federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a "Charge of Discrimination." The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov) or via email at [info@eeoc.gov](mailto:info@eeoc.gov).

If an individual filed an administrative complaint with the New York State Division of Human Rights, DHR will automatically file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

### **Local Protections**

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

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement, or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Those wishing to pursue criminal charges are encouraged to contact their local police department.

## **3.3 Social Media**

Adults should refrain from initiating contact with minors on social media, but may respond to them if contacted.

## **3.4 Staff & Volunteers**

To ensure a safe environment, it is necessary to gather certain information from individuals desiring employment or volunteering with children and youth in our congregation. This information will be kept confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of helping the church provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Potential church staff and volunteers will be asked to complete the Staff/Volunteer Registration Form (see section 9) and participate in a personal interview. References will be checked for all paid staff and volunteers, including clergy, who have contact with minors. In addition, we will conduct criminal background checks, including sexual abuse and child abuse registries, of all paid staff and volunteers who work with minors.

Adults who have been convicted of or pled guilty to either child sexual or physical abuse will not be accepted for any programs involving children or youth. For the benefit of both volunteers and program participants, adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse should discuss their abuse with the Pastor prior to engaging in any volunteer service working with children or youth. All volunteers working with children or youth must have been a member of Messiah Lutheran Church for a minimum of six months.

All workers, paid or volunteer, will receive a copy of the Safe and Healthy Congregational Life policy and will acknowledge in writing their affirmation of it.

### **3.5 Supervision and Environment<sup>3</sup>**

All classrooms and meeting areas will be open and accessible, and easy to exit in an emergency. Children under the age of 12 will be accompanied by an adult or older teenager at all times.

Individuals should not be alone in the building with the doors unlocked or left alone with a stranger.

### **3.6 Dismissal for Children/Youth**

Teachers/Supervisors for children's and youth classes and groups will ensure that each child/youth is released to their parent/guardian after each session. Parents/guardians should clearly indicate on the Child/Youth Program Registration Form (see Section 9) if there are family members to whom the child/youth should not be released.

Children who must leave a group before dismissal time will be released to a parent/guardian or to a person designated in writing by the parent/guardian (prior knowledge of the need for early release is always appreciated by the teacher or person in charge of the group).

It is expected that each youth and his/her parent/guardian will mutually agree to arrangements for returning home safely from a youth event at the church. Following an event or meeting, at least one adult will remain at the church until all youth have left.

### **3.7 Special Considerations for Young Children**

Three and four year old children who must leave the classroom area to use the bathroom will be accompanied by a class assistant or teacher. Older children need not be accompanied by an adult but teachers will be conscious of time and will seek help if a child does not return within a reasonable period

---

<sup>3</sup> Refer also to the Upstate New York Synod Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program at [http://upstatenysynod.org/download/documents/policies/child\\_youth\\_abuse\\_prevention\\_policy.pdf](http://upstatenysynod.org/download/documents/policies/child_youth_abuse_prevention_policy.pdf)

of time. Note: Assistance in toileting will be provided in an emergency or as directed by a child's parent or guardian.

### 3.8 Travel

For events away from the church, parents/guardians will be informed of the location and phone numbers at which their youth may be reached in an emergency.

Before minors may attend a trip, parents/guardians will need to complete a Youth Travel Permission Form (see Section 9) which includes a phone number at which they may be reached in case of an emergency as well as a signed medical treatment form.

Transportation for children/youth to offsite events is usually provided by parents of participants. All drivers must be 21 or older, have a current, unrestricted driver's license, and be driving a legally registered vehicle.

## 4 Worship and Music

### 4.1 Worship Assistants

The participation of laypeople in worship leadership is a visual reminder to all of us of that worship is the work of all of God's people, and not just the Pastor. Worship Assistants are volunteers who assist the Pastors during worship, and are trained in the meaning of the service. All confirmed disciples of Messiah are welcome to become Worship Assistants. The following provides a brief overview of each role.

**Greeters** welcome everyone! They remain near the entry doors and encourage visitors to sign the guest book. Greeters help visitors feel at home in God's house and encourage everyone to take part in coffee hour.

**Ushers** aid in the orderly course of the service. They assist the Greeters as needed, hand out worship bulletins, direct young ones to the children's bulletins and Busy Bags, collect and bring forward the offering, count and record the number of people attending worship, and guide the congregation forward for communion. Ushers also aid in maintaining the safety of the congregation in the event of a medical emergency, fire, or hostile intruder.

**Assisting Minister** assists the presiding Pastor in hosting worship. They invite the congregation to join in the Creed, lead the intercessory prayers, help the Pastor and other assistants distribute Communion, and aid in the overall orderly course of the service.

**Lector** reads the designated Scripture passage(s) from the pulpit and, when part of the service, lead the responsive reading of the Psalm.

**Communion Assistants** assist in the distribution of the body and blood of Jesus Christ for communicants in the various methods we use to distribute the bread and wine.

**Prayer Companions** on designated Sundays offer individual prayers upon request at one of the prayer stations during the distribution of Communion.

**Altar Guild** prepares the worship space with the furnishings, appointments, vessels, elements, linens, and paraments used in the liturgy. The Altar Guild members understand the meaning of these items and their use in worship.

## 4.2 Wedding Policy

A wedding in a liturgical church is a worship service of the church. The wedding service is a time to worship and to celebrate God's love towards us. Therefore, the main reason for having a church wedding rather than a civil ceremony at the courthouse is that the couple to be married wants to acknowledge the importance of the marriage in their lives as Christians.

We believe the Church has much to offer in enabling a strong, growing marriage relationship. It is appropriate that marriage begin in the Church, which is the community of faith gathered around God's Word and Sacraments. When a couple is married in the Church, the community shares in asking God's blessing on this union and thanks God for that blessing.

Following are guidelines set forth by MELC to help couples prepare for an orderly and joyous life together. Questions concerning these policies shall be directed to the Church's Wedding Coordinator or the Pastor.

- Weddings shall not be scheduled during Holy Week and are discouraged during the entire season of Lent. It is highly suggested that weddings not be scheduled on Sundays, or holiday weekends. Other regular church functions shall take precedence over dates chosen for weddings.
- The service may be performed with or without the Sacrament of Holy Communion. If the Administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion is desired as part of the service, all guests will be invited to receive Communion. In all cases the wedding ceremony and its ritual will reflect the theology and practices of the Lutheran Church.

### 4.2.1 The Pastor

- All weddings performed in connection with MELC will be performed by the Pastor of this congregation unless other arrangements are approved by the Pastor and church Council.
- The Pastor meets with every couple prior to the actual marriage.
- Couples who wish to marry at MELC should meet with the Pastor as soon as they know they wish to marry. Couples need to work with the Pastor in setting the wedding date to allow ample time for counseling and preparation.

### 4.2.2 The Facility

- MELC will provide a Wedding Coordinator to assist with the logistics on the day of the wedding. If the Fellowship Hall is used, the arrangements for set up and cleaning must be made with the church's Building Use Coordinator. If an outside wedding consultant is used by the family, the couple shall provide that person with a copy of this policy and the consultant shall be expected to work within its guidelines. If there is a question as to the appropriateness of an activity or event, the Pastor's decision will be final.
- There is a room available for dressing at the church, if desired.
- ***Alcoholic beverages are NOT permitted on the premises, including the parking lot. Smoking is not permitted inside the building.***
- Confetti, birdseed or rice is not to be thrown inside or outside the building. Bubbles may be used

outside the building.

- There is no fee for the use of the church sanctuary for MELC members. If neither party is a member of MELC, the current fees noted on the Messiah Lutheran Church Room Rental Agreement (see section 9) shall apply.
- The church and its facilities are to be treated with respect at all times. A damage deposit is not required, but parties are responsible for the cost of cleaning and/or repairs of any items of church property that are soiled or damaged as a result of their use of the facilities.
- The church cannot be responsible for lost or stolen articles or equipment. Every reasonable effort will be made to assist the wedding party in protecting personal, rental or borrowed property.

#### **4.2.3 Music**

- All music used in the wedding service should evoke the spirit of prayer and praise and any vocal texts should be God-centered rather than human-centered. Secular music is considered inappropriate for a worship service and should be reserved for the reception.
- The couple should contact the Director of Music as soon as possible after the wedding date is selected. The Director of Music plays for all weddings in the church. If the couple would like to have someone other than the Director of Music the Director of Music will assist the couple in planning the music and will arrange for instrumentalists or soloists, if desired. If there is a question as to the appropriateness of the requested musical selections, the Director of Music will consult with the Pastor. Their decision will be final.
- If the Director of Music is unavailable for the date requested, the church will assume responsibility for finding a suitable substitute.
- Outside soloists and instrumentalists are more than welcome.
- If special music is provided, every effort should be made to provide an original copy; unauthorized photocopying of copyrighted material is illegal. Photocopies will not be accepted.
- Use of recorded accompaniments is not permitted.

#### **4.2.4 Worship Space and Decorations**

Decorations appropriate for a Christian wedding are permitted as long as they are not attached to woodwork, walls, candelabra, or flower stands with tape, tacks, staples, nails or putty. Delivery and removal of rented items, flowers, etc. should be discussed with the church's Wedding Coordinator and may be delivered during regular office hours. All items, except flowers left for the church's use, must be removed immediately after the wedding service.

- The worship space must remain as is, including the placement of hymnals, Bibles, altar candles, crosses, etc.
- The altar, pulpit and lectern paraments are always the liturgical color of the church season and cannot be changed to go with a wedding color scheme. When a wedding date is chosen, the Pastor will know what color will be on the altar that day.
- Flowers are not required. If flowers are used, they should maintain the integrity of the worship space. The florist will need to make arrangements through MELC's Wedding Coordinator to schedule time for decoration. Fresh flowers should be used for the altar vases. Flowers may be left for Sunday worship service, if desired. Flowers that are not being left for the Sunday service must be removed immediately following the ceremony.
- The altar candles will be lighted for the wedding service, and are always white.
- If an aisle runner is desired, the couple is welcome to provide one.

#### **4.2.5 Wedding Bulletin**

- A wedding bulletin is recommended. The couple shall be responsible for purchasing the bulletin

and providing the necessary information about the members of the wedding party, musical selections, etc. If the bulletin is prepared by the church office, this information must be provided no less than two weeks prior to the date of the wedding.

- If the wedding bulletin is commercially printed, it must contain certain information about the church, its policies and practices, such as name and full address of the church and that no flash photography is permitted during the service.

#### **4.2.6 Photographs**

- The service begins with the procession and concludes when the wedding party leaves the Nave. At no time during the course of the service or processions is flash photography permitted in the sanctuary other than by a professional photographer hired for this event.
- A video camera may be used from a designated place in the back of the sanctuary or the choir loft. All video and camera equipment must be in place and tested 45 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony. No set up or testing is permitted once the music has begun. Pictures of the wedding service can be taken after the service is concluded and the congregation has left the church.

#### **4.2.7 Clean-up**

- The wedded couple and/or their families must assume responsibility for leaving the church in the same condition as it was found. This is to include, but is not limited to, removal of all boxes, decorations, wrappings and all miscellaneous litter. Details are described in our Facility Use policy.
- Arrangements shall be made with the Facilities Use Coordinator to clean the premises after the wedding and before the Sunday morning service. This can be done through the Wedding Coordinator or the Church Secretary.

#### **4.2.8 Rehearsal and Wedding Schedule**

- The time of the rehearsal will be set in consultation with the Pastor and the Director of Music. It is important that the entire wedding party and ushers be present at the scheduled time. The wedding license and all fees should be brought to the rehearsal and given to the Pastor. The church will be kept open no longer than 2 hours for the rehearsal.
- On the day of the wedding the church will be opened 2 hours prior to the ceremony and 1 hour after the conclusion of the ceremony, unless the reception is held at the church. If there is to be a receiving line it is recommended that it be at the reception.

#### **4.2.9 Fees and Donations**

To reserve a date for the wedding, the Messiah Lutheran Church Room Rental Agreement (see Section 9) must be completed and returned with full payment. For non-members, if a postponement should occur, the fee is refundable upon receipt of a written request. Fees/honoraria for those serving at the wedding may be given to them directly or given to the church's Wedding Coordinator for appropriate distribution.

### **4.3 Funeral Policy**

At times of loss, all may be reminded by the place of worship of what our hope and assurance are in Jesus Christ. Therefore, all members of MELC are encouraged to use the church building for funeral services, and its sanctuary is offered for the funeral services of Christians whose membership in the church is in some other locality as well.

There can be alternative methods for the conducting of services at the time of death. These could include a private graveside service for family members as soon after death as possible and/or a public service of worship (memorial service) conducted at the church later.

The Pastor is available to go with the family to the funeral home to assist in making arrangements if desired. The Pastor will meet with the family to plan any funeral worship arrangements or, if it is the desire of the family, the Pastor will develop the funeral liturgy.

Although funeral services may be held in funeral homes, the most appropriate place for a funeral service upon the death of a church member is in the sanctuary of the church to which he or she belonged.

A funeral service held in the church is a service of worship, celebrating the deceased's life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Consequently, all parts of the service are to be consistent with the present worship practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and MELC.

Services by fraternal orders, lodges, or other organizations are therefore not appropriate at a Lutheran funeral service. If they are held, they should be limited to the funeral home or graveside, and must be coordinated with the Pastor prior to the service. Such services are not to be confused or combined with the burial office and committal.

#### **4.3.1 Dates, Times, and Officiant(s)**

- Dates and times of funerals at MELC are to be arranged in consultation with the Pastor based on availability and the preferences of the deceased's family.
- MELC's Pastor will conduct all funeral services held at MELC, unless by agreement with another Pastor, another Pastor is invited to share in the funeral. Any requests for another Pastor or lay person to officiate or assist in the service must be approved by the MELC Pastor.

#### **4.3.2 Structure of the Service**

- Generally, the outline for the funeral and burial service as found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship will be followed. The family may suggest other items to be included in the service, with the approval of the Pastor.
- The celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, shared in community around the familiar center of the table, is full of healing power for those who grieve. Therefore, it is appropriate to share Holy Communion as part of the funeral service. All those gathered for the service will be invited to the Table.
- Family participants as readers and communion assistants in the liturgy are welcomed.
- As a sign of welcome and comfort, MELC will offer ushers and worship assistants appropriate to the type of service requested.

#### **4.3.3 Pastoral Services to Members of Other Congregations and Non-Members**

- When MELC Pastors are asked to be involved at the funerals of people from other churches, MELC's policy is that the responsibility and authority for Pastoral acts or services rests with the Pastor of the congregation where the deceased held membership.
- If MELC's Pastor is asked to provide Pastoral services for members of other congregations, she/he will contact the clergy of the church in which the person held membership before providing the service. A Pastor who performs a service for a member of another congregation is obligated to provide information regarding that Pastoral act or service performed to the Pastor of the congregation in which the person held membership.

- Conducting funerals for people who have no connection with the church is a normal part of the ministerial obligation. However, not all the parts of the service (i.e. references to baptism) may be appropriate. By certain omissions and choices of alternate selections this service may be adapted for such funerals.

#### 4.3.4 Funeral Music

- Music performed at a service of Christian burial is an act of worship, offered to God in devotion, thanksgiving and praise. Therefore, all music used during the funeral service (including prelude and postlude) must be approved by the Pastor and the Director of Music. The Pastor will consult with the family regarding special requests for music to be used during the service.
- Normally, the organist at MELC will play at all funerals in the church. If the Director of Music is unavailable for the date requested, the church will assume responsibility for finding a suitable substitute. The fee is \$150.00.
- If requested the Director of Music will arrange for the choir to be present and provide special music.
- In cases where an outside organist is desired, permission must be secured from the Pastor and the Director of Music.
- Outside soloists and instrumentalists are welcome and encouraged.
- If special music is provided, an original copy is required; unauthorized photocopying of copyrighted material is illegal and photocopies will not be accepted.
- Use of recorded accompaniments is not permitted.

#### 4.3.5 Decorations and Casket

- Paraments on the altar, lectern and pulpit will remain the color of the day or season.
- Families may display the deceased's cremains, as well as certain mementos or photographs of the deceased and his/her family provided they are appropriate to a worship setting; no nails, tacks, staples, or screws are put in the walls or attached to the pews; all decorations are removed within 2 hours of the conclusion of the service; and no furniture is removed from the church building.
- Fresh cut flowers and planters may be used in the sanctuary. Flowers may be left for use on the flower holders for Sunday worship services. Altar flowers need to be arranged in consultation with the Pastor and should not obscure the altar, pulpit, or other central things in the sanctuary.
- All caskets must be closed for the funeral service, but may be open during the viewing (or preceding the viewing, for the family only), if desired. If a viewing is requested at MELC before the funeral this may be done, after consultation with the Pastor. During worship, the church's funeral pall covers the casket or urn (see below). The casket remains closed throughout the service. When the service is in a funeral parlor or private house, the casket is closed and in place before the liturgy begins. The funeral director shall be instructed concerning such matters as timing, closed caskets, music, flowers, etc.
- The paschal candle, which symbolizes Christ's triumph over the powers of death, is lit during the funeral as a reminder of the deceased's baptism into Christ.
- The congregation will provide a funeral pall to be placed over the casket or urn during the service. The pall recalls the white robe given in Baptism, the robe of Christ's righteousness. The pall further has democratizing value, for it prevents both the display of a costly casket and embarrassment at a simple one. This action of placing the pall over the casket will take place prior to the liturgy. The pall will be the only thing covering the casket during the worship service.

#### **4.3.6 Parking/Traffic Assistance**

Parking assistance is generally provided by the funeral home. The church does not have any resources to assist in traffic control on city streets or highways.

#### **4.3.7 Fellowship Meal**

- The church will accommodate requests for a fellowship meal following a funeral service. The Funeral Hospitality Team and members of MELC will prepare the meal. The Pastor contacts the Funeral Hospitality Team. If the family wishes to provide its own food, the Fellowship Hall may be used with prior approval.
- No fee is charged for preparation and serving. The members of MELC provide this service as a ministry in the spirit of Christian love. Their mission is to serve all people willingly and pleasingly, inspired and led by God.
- Contributions to offset the expense of the fellowship meal are welcome and may be made to the Funeral Hospitality Designated Fund.

#### **4.3.8 Bulletins**

- The church secretary will prepare bulletins if bulletins are to be given out during the service.

#### **4.3.9 Memorial/Tribute Gifts**

- In certain circumstances, the family might request contributions to a charitable organization in lieu of flowers. These arrangements should be made directly with the outside organization. The church will not manage, receive, or distribute memorial/tribute gifts for an outside institution.
- MELC will receive and manage memorial and tribute gifts designated for an established MELC ministry consistent with currently defined Designated Funds. MELC will also receive undesignated memorial and tribute gifts into the Memorial Fund to be used consistent with that Fund's purpose (section 5.6.7). Memorial and tribute gifts designated for a project or ministry that is not currently defined will be designated only with Council approval or returned to the donor.

## **5 Finance**

Management of the congregation's finances is truly stewardship of an important resource, and the following policies are intended to enable effective ministry, model good stewardship, and support discipleship within the congregation. Our intent is to recognize that all our resources belong first and foremost to God, which defines our priorities. Combined with teamwork, process clarity, and prudence, we will make the best use of God's gifts for his glory.

### **5.1 Financial Accountability**

The counting of offerings is to be done by a minimum of two people, preferably unrelated. In addition, persons authorized to sign checks (Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and President) shall not be related to anyone who participates in counting offerings. For the purpose of this policy, the following are considered related persons: spouses, siblings, parent/child/grandchild, and cousins.

## 5.2 Contract Approval

By virtue of their election, Officers of the congregation (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary) are authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the congregation within the authorization limits allowed by the Constitution and By-Laws.

All contracts over \$1000 require at least two competing bids. In addition, contracts that are renewed on an annual or repeating basis shall be competitively bid at least once every three years.

## 5.3 Reimbursement and Bill Payment

### 5.3.1 Background

The reimbursement and bill payment policy ensures that ministry team leads are aware of and approve all expenses related to their ministry area, and that reimbursements can be processed by the finance team in a timely way. For routine expenses (e.g., utility payments), the Ministry Lead and Treasurer may agree to modify this process while maintaining transparency for all parties.

### 5.3.2 Payment Process

All invoices, statements, store receipts, etc. must be approved by the Council Ministry Lead prior to payment. An individual's request for payment or reimbursement should be made to the appropriate Ministry Lead using the Expense Form (refer to Section 9), providing appropriate documentation (receipts, etc.). The Expense Form is not required for ongoing expenses and bills, e.g. mortgage payments, contracts, or utility bills. These items can be approved on an annual basis by the appropriate Ministry Lead.

To avoid misunderstandings or budget overruns, members of the congregation should get prior approval from the Ministry Lead before making purchases that are expected to be reimbursed.

For billings from stores such as Office Max, Staples, etc., where monthly statements are received by the church, it is expected that the receipt received at the time of purchase has been used to get approval (i.e., using the Expense Form) and will be used by the Treasurer to reconcile and pay the line items appearing on the statement.

The Church Treasurer should not and will not make any payment without the prior approval of the Ministry Lead. All requests of payment should be approved within 7 days, and hopefully in a shorter time frame.

Typical Bill Approval Process:

- Bill is received through the mail and Church Administrative Assistant places in either the Ministry Lead or the Treasurer's mailbox.
- If placed in the Treasurer's mailbox, the Treasurer will identify the Ministry Lead and place it in the appropriate mailbox. If the Treasurer cannot determine the appropriate Ministry Lead, the Treasurer will contact the Director of Finance who will make that determination.
- The Ministry Lead will use the Expense Form (either provided or they will complete), ensure it is complete (e.g., "account to be charged" must be completed), approve the document and place in the Treasurer's mailbox. The Ministry Lead should make a copy of the bill for their own records before submitting it to the Treasurer.
- The Treasurer will pay the bill.

### 5.3.3 Reimbursement by Individuals for Items Purchased through Messiah

Individuals are offered the opportunity to purchase certain items through Messiah Lutheran Church for a variety of purposes. The individuals reimburse the church for the expenses incurred. Purchases of this type include flowers for worship services, memorials of a tangible nature, hymnal and other worship materials for personal use, Christmas gift items, church related clothing items, books for study groups, etc.

These items should be prepaid in advance before the items are ordered whenever possible. An exception to this practice occurs when a ministry within the church is conducting a program whereby the items must be purchased in advance, before the participants are registered for the program. For those events, the expenditures will be charged to the budget of the ministry and credited when the reimbursement is received from the participants. Ministry Leads may exercise flexibility in requesting reimbursement for study supplies where financial difficulty might otherwise discourage participation; this may be an opportunity for others in the group to offset costs for fellow participants.

## 5.4 Fundraising

### 5.4.1 Background

As disciples of Christ, we are encouraged to acknowledge the blessings that God bestows and respond with faithfulness, generosity, wisdom and good stewardship. Commercialism in the church, defined as “the selling of goods and services in the name of the church, for the purpose of obtaining funds to finance the programs and operations of the church”<sup>4</sup> has been a concern since Biblical times. In the Gospel, we read the account of Jesus’ outrage at the vendors in the temple. The sale of indulgences to fund the building of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome aroused the ire of Martin Luther.

Commercialism “distorts the clear relationship between the giving of the Christian and the mission of the church. It fails to bear testimony to the mission of the church. Commercialism opens the door to misunderstanding and hurt feelings, weakens the life of the church and a biblical understanding of stewardship for the following reasons:

- It involves the church in other than its true mission: that of giving the Gospel to all people
- Buying from the church suggests supporting the church. This leads to a false sense of security, which satisfies the consciences of people not vitally related to the church.
- The relinquishing of commercialism offers new and deeper opportunities for service, participation and fellowship in the life of the church.”<sup>5</sup>

“In teaching, preaching and practicing stewardship, ELCA materials and leaders focus on a biblical basis. Voluntary giving by church members remains the primary method of financing congregational activities.”<sup>6</sup>

### 5.4.2 Funding of Ministries

This policy establishes a process for approving all fundraising activities that occur in or at MELC, or which use affiliation with or through MELC as part of the fundraising effort. It is intended to allow the

---

<sup>4</sup> “Commercialism in the Church”; A Statement of the American Lutheran Church; October, 1964

<sup>5</sup> Fundraising Policy; King of Kings Lutheran Church; ELCA

<sup>6</sup> ELCA Financial Stewardship Strategy Report and Recommendations adopted by Church-Wide Assembly. August 1993

advantage of fundraising opportunities in a way that preserves congregational relationships, protects our tax-exempt status, and upholds our vision, mission and values.

It is the intention of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church to teach biblical stewardship. It is our policy to prohibit fundraising as a means of supporting the regular operating budget of the congregation. Funding for specific programs may be secured through Messiah's Annual Operating Budget and may also be secured through specific contributions made through the Benevolence/Service Budget (which includes projects reviewed for their alignment with our values and goals by Messiah's Congregational Council).

Raising funds toward a specific special event or program that has strong alignment to our ministry and mission goals, and that could not be considered as within the operating budget for the ministry is acceptable within the constraints outlined below.

- The Council will in its discretion approve or disapprove a request to fundraise after considering, without limitation, the organization's adherence to MELC's principles; the ministry being served; the history of the fundraising organization and any intended recipients of funds to be generated by the effort; the fundraising means and other factors, and the existence of other fundraising efforts aimed at the same issue or issues, as appropriate.
- The fundraising activity itself must be compatible in its content and the way it is conducted to the identity and mission of MELC as a community of faith.
- The group raising funds must be aware of and respectful of the needs, customs and integrity of church ministries and members, and should seek to build partnerships to avoid competition and duplication.
- All fundraising activities must be respectful of all people and their ability to contribute.
- The congregation should be informed, in a timely manner, before, during, and after any fundraiser as to the goals and accomplishments of those fundraisers, including prompt reporting of final totals, and acknowledgment of volunteers and supporters of the fundraiser.

A member or committee that seeks to raise funds for church activities (i.e., music, library acquisitions, etc.); or for causes of primary interest to individual members (i.e., Girl Scout cookie sales, local school activities, walk-a-thons, etc.); or for any other purpose, will submit a fundraising request to the Council. The Council's decision, in its discretion, will be based on these policy guidelines, and on the appropriateness of the activity, the duration of the effort, the complexity of the event, any conflicting, repetitive or overlapping fundraising, and other factors, as appropriate.

### **5.4.3 Payment for Supplies**

Ministry activities which require payment to cover the cost of materials and supplies are permitted. Any excess monetary gain incurred from payments should be donated to a benevolent cause designated in advance.

### **5.4.4 Services**

Services are not to be sold in the name of the church. Services may be rendered at no charge. If service recipients' feel so moved based on the services received, they may donate to a specific group or ministry. For example, the youth may hold a free car wash; if people are pleased about the youth providing such a wonderful service, they may make a donation to Messiah in honor of the youth.

Other groups using the building are not operating in the name of Messiah, so they may charge for services in the name of their group. For example, the Boy Scouts may hold a car wash and charge for it.

#### 5.4.5 Gambling

Gambling and games of chance are specifically prohibited, according to ELCA guidelines. “Games of chance have no place in the life of a congregation. These games send adverse messages regarding the value of giving and financial stewardship. Games are based on the principle of receiving a high return for a low investment.”<sup>7</sup> In addition, all games of chance require a license from the New York State Gaming Commission<sup>8</sup> and, by law, under no circumstances can prizes awarded include alcoholic beverages.

#### 5.4.6 Examples (all in the name of Messiah)

- Can we hold a bazaar/craft sale to support ongoing programs? No.
- Can we host a gambling event for any cause? No.
- Can we sell cookbooks, with profits to an outside ministry? Yes.
- Can youth hold a pasta dinner as a fundraiser to support ongoing programs? No.
- Can people make donations to the youth ministries, as gratitude for the pasta dinner? Yes.
- Can youth hold a pasta dinner to raise funds to support Youth Gathering participation or other specific and extraordinary mission events? Yes.
- Can people make donations to any ministry at any time? Yes.

### 5.5 Solicitation

It is the policy of MELC that individual members may not use the resources of the church (e.g., church directory, announcements, newsletters, etc.) to promote or solicit business opportunities without the express written consent of the Congregation Council, consistent with the trusted relationships we have as brothers and sisters in Christ and the guidelines above.

### 5.6 Designated and Donor Restricted Funds

The Messiah Council and Finance Team use Designated Funds to track income and expenses that have been designated for a specific purpose. The term “Fund” indicates an accounting line item rather than a separate bank or investment account; Designated Fund monies may be deposited in different accounts depending on liquidity and financial return priorities for the Fund. This section provides details about currently defined Designated Funds.

It is very important to note that some Designated Funds contain Donor-Restricted contributions, some contain Unrestricted monies, and some have both Donor-Restricted and Unrestricted monies. Donor-Restricted contributions are donations made and earmarked for a specific purpose by the donor. Messiah tracks Donor-Restricted donations in separate accounting line items to ensure that they are used for the purpose intended by the donor, and Donor-Restricted Funds are clearly noted on our Balance Sheet.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Considerations Regarding Commercialism in the Church”; ELCA; August, 1993

<sup>8</sup> New York State Gaming Commission website, <https://www.gaming.ny.gov/charitablegaming/index.php?ID=1>

Donor-Restricted donations are generally considered Temporarily Restricted according to the New York Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (NYPMIFA). This means that Messiah will use the funds only for the intended purpose so long as that purpose remains an active ministry/project (e.g. past donations made to a now-inactive ministry may be repurposed to a similar ministry after 5 years of inactivity have passed). Donor-Restricted Funds can also be used for other purposes if the original donors are contacted and agree to the change in restriction. To maintain the most financial flexibility for the congregation, it is a best practice to use Donor-Restricted Funds for qualifying expenses before using Unrestricted Funds.

The Endowment Fund and Memorial Fund have more detailed governance as described below.

#### **5.6.1 Carryover Fund (Unrestricted)**

The Carryover Fund may be used to carry over a net surplus of income over expenses in the operating budget from one fiscal year to the next. When used in this fashion, the Congregation Council approves an amount (not to exceed the surplus income) to be transferred into the Carryover Fund at the end of the year, and can then use those funds in the projected income estimate for the following year. At its discretion, the Council may also transfer savings into the Carryover Fund; this type of transfer must be clearly communicated as part of the budget approval process.

#### **5.6.2 Concord Fund (Unrestricted)**

The Concord Fund provides funds to support, enhance, or expand ministries at Messiah as outlined in the Covenant of Merger of Concord and Messiah. It is not intended as a primary source of funds for capital or building expenses. Disbursements are managed by the Congregation Council, subject to the approval limits of the church's constitution and bylaws.

#### **5.6.3 Greater Messiah Fund (Unrestricted + Donor-Restricted)**

The Greater Messiah Fund is used by the Congregation Council to meet the needs of the congregation. It is not the intent that the Greater Messiah Fund be used for on-going operating expenses, but that rather that it generally is used for one-time or unusual expenses (frequently associated with maintenance and repairs to the church property). At its discretion the Congregation Council may transfer unused operating funds at the end of the fiscal year to the Greater Messiah Fund for future use. Disbursements are managed by the Congregation Council, subject to the approval limits of the church's constitution and bylaws. The Greater Messiah Fund has both an Unrestricted component resulting from transfers into the Fund as well as a Donor-Restricted component containing member-designated contributions.

#### **5.6.4 Youth Gathering Fund (Unrestricted + Donor-Restricted)**

The Youth Gathering Fund is used to send our youth to the ELCA Youth Gathering, covering expenses such as registration fees, travel, accommodations, and food. The Youth Gathering Fund has both an Unrestricted component resulting from transfers into the Fund as well as a Donor-Restricted component containing member-designated contributions.

#### **5.6.5 Capital Campaign Fund (Donor Restricted)**

The Capital Campaign Fund is for major capital expenses as outlined at the kickoff of a specific Capital Campaign drive. The selection and implementation of projects is overseen by the Capital Project Planning Team with recommendations made to the Congregation Council. Authorization of projects is subject to the approval limits of the church's constitution and bylaws.

### **5.6.6 Endowment Fund (Donor Restricted)**

The management and use of the Endowment Fund is described in the Endowment Fund Charter. The Endowment Fund is primarily kept in higher-yield investment accounts. A portion of the Endowment Fund may also be kept in a Designated Fund within the church checking account to allow accessibility to Endowment Fund monies before being used for eligible expenses or before contributions are permanently transferred to investment accounts.

### **5.6.7 Memorial Fund (for Memorials and Tributes) (Donor Restricted)**

#### **5.6.7.1 Gift and Memorial Acceptance**

All tangible gifts to the church in memory or in honor of an individual shall be approved by the Congregation Council. All such gifts shall be evaluated as to appropriateness, quality, theology (with the advice of a Pastor), and any additional costs which may occur with the acceptance of the gift. If the gift is deemed inappropriate, the Council may refuse acceptance. Donors shall be advised of this procedure.

If a donor wishes to commission art or other items to be made for the church, detailed plans and a review of the artist or craftsman shall be presented to the Council for review prior to commencing. As above, the proposal shall be reviewed as to appropriateness, quality, theology, and additional costs. The Council shall vote on acceptance of the proposal. After the items(s) are completed, the Council reserves the right to refuse acceptance if the criteria of the proposal are not met. The donor shall be advised of this procedure.

The Council may appoint a task force to provide guidance concerning acceptance of proposed gifts. The task force should contain a cross-section of active members who have been involved in various ministries and it should consider:

- What will maximize harmony/minimize upset? (consider whether a focus group should be convened)
- Is the gift consistent with our mission and Christian theology?
- Does the gift require maintenance or follow-up; if so how will that be managed and paid for?

In the event that a gift is no longer deemed necessary or appropriate in the future, the item may be removed with the approval of the Council with the notification of the donor whenever possible.

#### **5.6.7.2 Memorial Fund Contributions**

Financial contributions to the Memorial Fund in memory or in honor of an individual shall be used for long-term enhancements to the church as described above (section 5.6.7.1) under the direction of the Congregation Council. While such contributions are considered donor-restricted funds for purchasing, commissioning, and/or installing memorials in the church, funds will not be restricted to particular items specified by the donor or the family of the person being honored or remembered.

### **5.6.8 Other Designated Funds**

- Angel Tree Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is for gifts to our community's children at Christmas and any associated event expenses
- Flower Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund supports adding beauty to our worship and facility through the gift of flowers and plants, often donated in loving memory of someone or in honor of a special person or occasion. Contributions for seasonal flowers (e.g., Easter) will also be deposited in and disbursed from the Flower Fund.
- Food Pantry Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used to purchase food, household supplies, distribution supplies, and equipment for Messiah's food ministry.

- Funeral Hospitality Fund (Donor Restricted): This Fund is used for expenses incurred in providing fellowship meals after a funeral as described in our Funeral Policy.
- Habitat for Humanity Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used to support Habitat for Humanity and is typically used to support the Greece coalition of churches' expenses related to building a new house.
- Kitchen Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used to purchase equipment for Messiah's kitchen.
- Library Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used to purchase books, videos, and other media for Messiah's library.
- Music Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used for unfunded musical expenses at the discretion of the Director of Music, including (but not limited to) soloists and ensembles.
- Pastor's Discretionary Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used by the Pastor for short-term individual emergency needs within the congregation or community.
- Stephen Ministry Fund (Donor-restricted): This Fund is used for training, training materials, and publicity materials for Stephen Ministers and Stephen Leaders in our congregation.
- Unemployment Escrow Fund (Unrestricted): This Fund was established as recommended to maintain funds for possible future unemployment claims.
- Youth Ministry Fund (Donor-restricted): This fund is used to support special youth activities, including scholarships to retreats and camps.

## 5.7 Grant Tracking

Messiah may receive grants in the form of credit, vouchers, or debit cards for designated ministries (e.g. Thrivent Action grants, Foodlink grant subsidies, etc.) In order to recognize all resources funding our ministries, the Grant Tracking Form (refer to Section 9) should be used whenever this type of grant is received and used. The Grant Tracking Form should be completed and returned to the Treasurer, who will enter the value of the grant into our accounts as both income and expense for the designated ministry as of the date the grant funds are used.

## 5.8 Gifts of Life Insurance

Messiah welcomes gifts of life insurance policies for which the church is the beneficiary, but we do not accept life insurance policies that require us to pay premiums.

## 5.9 Audits

The financial reports and accounts of the church shall be audited annually by the Audit Committee as described in the Constitution. The audit shall include, at a minimum, the operating fund, designated funds, the Memorial Fund, and the Endowment Fund. The Audit Committee may perform the annual audit with or without external auditors and is encouraged to refer to the ELCA Congregational Audit Guide for suggested best practices.

## 6 Property

The primary purpose of our building, equipment and other facilities is to be a place to support worship, faith formation and fellowship of the congregation. Because we value serving others together – using our gifts to meet others' needs, and generosity –faithful stewards of our God-given time, talents and

resources (see section 1.3), our facilities are also generously shared with the community and our members for the purpose of providing needed resources to the greater community. The following policies are intended to ensure that we maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all users of our property.

## **6.1 Safety/Emergency Procedures**

**For all emergencies, call 911.**

### **6.1.1 Fire/Evacuation**

In the event of a fire, smoke, or any dangerous condition, a fire alarm (located near building exits) should be activated and 911 should be called from a safe location. If the building-wide alarm sounds, all members should exit the building via the nearest available exit. Members should congregate at the edge of the parking lot near the playground, and check to be sure that all members of their group are accounted for.

Emergency exit routes are designated on a map located in each meeting room.

For meetings or classes, the teacher/supervisor should lead the class/group to the safe area of the parking lot, check attendance and remain with the group until each child has been met by a parent/guardian.

### **6.1.2 First aid**

First aid supplies, including latex gloves, are clearly marked and located in following areas:

- Upstairs Coat Room: Near the window
- Conference Room: In the cupboard closest to the window.
- Kitchen: The blue cabinet near the left side of the kitchen.

In addition, an assortment of bandages, etc. will be located in the Narthex podium in a clear bin with a white lid.

### **6.1.3 Sick or Injured Child or Adult**

911 will be called if urgent medical attention seems necessary. The sick or injured person will be isolated as much as possible but will be supervised and made comfortable. If the sick or injured person is in the sanctuary, the ushers may request that the rest of the congregation exit the sanctuary and gather in Fellowship Hall.

In the case of a sick or injured child/youth, a family member will be contacted immediately (located in the building or telephoned) using information provided on the Child/Youth Program Registration Form (see Section 9). If needed, additional adult help should be solicited from available church staff or volunteers. The emergency information provided by parents/guardians is important to the treatment of a sick or injured child. The adult in charge of the group will notify the Pastor of the incident and will record the name of the sick or injured, including any treatment provided.

### **6.1.4 Hostile Intruder**

In the event of hostile intruder, if it is not safe to exit the building, people should shelter in place by locking/barricading doors, closing curtains, and turning off lights. Ushers, safety personnel, and/or law enforcement officers will provide direction based on the specifics of the situation. Calls to 911 to share

information about the intruder's location or actions should only be made if doing so will not place the caller or others at risk of being discovered.

## 6.2 Facility Use

- Priority for facility use is as follows:
  - Groups or functions from within the congregation
  - Not for profit organizations or individuals
  - For profit organizations and non-member private functions (showers, parties, etc.)
- The Facilities Use Coordinator is designated as the official representative of the congregation in dealing with groups or individuals desiring to use church facilities. The Facilities Use Coordinator shall be responsible for scheduling the use of the facilities by internal or external groups, collecting fees and arranging for the opening and securing of the building.
- Church Facilities are to be treated with respect and left in the condition in which they were found. Areas designated for use are to be cleaned with trash taken to the dumpster and tables and furniture returned to its original location.
- All groups not associated with the church are to complete the Messiah Lutheran Church Room Rental Agreement (refer to Section 9). For profit organizations and individuals renting our facilities are expected to pay the required fee noted on the Room Rental Agreement Form. Not for profit groups and members of the church may make a donation to cover expenses if desired. Fees may be paid up to the day of use.
- No alcohol is permitted on the grounds with the exception of wine for services of worship that include Holy Communion.
- Equipment loans for off-premise use may be made to church members only with the consent of the Facilities Use Coordinator and are restricted to tables and chairs only. Equipment shall be returned in good condition and within one week of borrowing.

## 6.3 Building Key Form

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church shall provide to its members or outside groups a building key and/or key fob to access the building and or rooms for their use. Refer to the Building Key Form in Section 9.

## 6.4 Personal Safety and Security

When a staff or congregation member is asked to meet alone with another individual and has safety concerns, they should notify another member prior to the meeting to ask that they remain in the building. **If there is any question of personal safety, 911 should be called immediately.** If a staff or congregation member is in the building alone, they should lock the doors to ensure their own personal safety.

After Messiah worship services, an usher will ensure that they or another member is designated to lock the building.

## 6.5 Parking Lot Use

Primary use of the parking lot is for the members of Messiah and their passenger vehicles or other groups with a function at the church.

No overnight parking is permitted unless approved in advance by the Property Chair and Pastor.

To maintain a safe parking lot surface, the vehicles/equipment not permitted are:

- Large vehicles or equipment that may sink into the asphalt.
- Vehicles leaking substances that could cause damage to the asphalt.
- Any abuse of the parking lot, of its normal intended purpose.

## 7 Outreach Ministry

The Outreach Ministry of MELC fulfills the Church's mission of love, justice, freedom and peace by communally responding in an organized way to societal and human needs. Our goal is to affirm the goodness of God found in all of God's children. The following guidelines have been established:

- Ministries will use our hands, feet, heart and voices to do God's work.
- Ministries will endeavor to work in an interfaith community.
- New ministry engagements shall be aligned with the mission and vision of MELC.
  - Recognizing that there are different interpretations of Scripture and that failing to cooperate with those organizations that do not share our particular interpretation of Scripture would limit our impact fulfilling Christ's mission in the world; therefore, we will evaluate the potential of working with organizations who don't completely align with our mission and vision according to the following standards:
    - They work to alleviate human suffering.
    - They cooperate in the work of feeding, sheltering, visiting God's people who are in need of a word of life.
  - If we feel the Spirit leading the work of these institution/programs we shall:
    - Communicate our values, mission and vision statement to the institution/program.
    - Communicate with our congregation the reason behind supporting the programming/institution.
    - Pray that reconciliation and unity may happen in the Body of Christ.

## 8 Privacy and Social Media

In order to maintain a safe and respectful social media and website presence, we are committed to the following privacy guidelines:

- Authors of social media content, bulletin and newsletter articles are responsible for deciding whether to include personal identifying contact information (e.g. names, telephone numbers and e-mail), or to say "For more information, please call the church office ." Note that content authors should be aware that bulletin announcements and the newsletter are uploaded in full to the church website.
- Photographs of children younger than Confirmation age with identifiable features will not be allowed on the website or on Messiah social media. Pictures of the backs of heads or large

diffuse groups (for example, pictures of the parking lot during the Country Fair celebration) will remain.

- Photos of Confirmation-age youth and adults will be permitted for the web site and social media, but with only first names as the identifier.

Social Media - For the purposes of this policy, “social media” includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any other social media platform that is associated with Messiah Lutheran Church.

- Privacy guidelines above must be followed on any Messiah social media platform by anyone posting to that platform.
- Messiah social media platforms will be administered by one or more approved members of the Messiah Communication Team. Administrators have the right to review or remove any posts.
- Anyone posting to Messiah social media platforms must not post anything offensive to any individual or group and posts must be consistent with our church framing documents.
- No personal or political information may be posted.
- Social media topics should be:
  - Christian or Lutheran topics or
  - Event-related church topics intended for church members or our church community at large.

## 9 Forms

The following forms are to be used for the purpose stated at the top of each form.

<b>Child/Youth Program Registration</b>		
<i>First Name, Last Name</i>		
<i>Parent/Guardian(s) Names</i>		
<i>Address</i>		
<i>Phone (designate home/mobile)</i>	<i>Phone (designate home/mobile)</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
<i>Are there any other individuals (not named as parent/guardian above) who are authorized to pick your child up from Messiah programs? Note that, for your child's safety, these individuals may be asked to provide identification at pick-up:</i>		
<i>Other Emergency Contact (Name, Phone Number, Relationship to Child)</i>		
<i>Does your child have any medical, behavioral, or family issues that program leaders should be aware of (e.g. allergies, medical diagnoses, family members who should be denied contact)?</i>		
<b>Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement</b>		
<i>I confirm that the information above is complete and accurate.</i>		
<i>Print Name:</i> _____		
<i>Signature:</i> _____		<i>Date:</i> _____

<b>Youth Travel Permission Form and Waiver</b>		
<b>Youth Traveler Information</b>		
<i>First Name, Last Name</i>		
<i>Parent (Name, Phone Number)</i>		
<i>Emergency Contact (Name, Phone Number)</i>		
<i>Insurance Carrier</i>	<i>Insurance Policy Subscriber Name</i>	<i>Insurance Policy Subscriber ID</i>
<i>List all relevant dietary restrictions, allergy, medication, and medical history information.</i>		
<b>Trip Information</b>		
<i>Destination</i>	<i>Date of Travel</i>	
<i>Purpose of trip</i>		
<i>Name of adult chaperone</i>	<i>Chaperone's mobile phone number</i>	
<b>Permission / Waiver Statement (read and sign below)</b>		
<p><i>I give permission for my child to travel to and participate in the event described above. I understand that personal injury can and may occur to my child, and I hereby authorize the chaperone listed above, or another appointed youth advisor, to seek and consent to emergency medical attention for my child as needed; and I further agree to be liable for and to pay all costs incurred in connection with such medical attention.</i></p> <p><i>I hereby release Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church, its employees, agents and volunteers, from any and all liability, claims, demands, causes of action and possible causes of action whatsoever arising out of or related to any loss, damage or injury (including death) that may be sustained by my child while participating in or traveling to and from this event.</i></p> <p><i>I give permission for my child to ride in any vehicle designated by Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church, its employees and adult volunteers, while participating in and traveling to and from this event.</i></p> <p><i>I agree to accept full responsibility, financially or otherwise, for any damage my child may do to the property of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church, properties visited on the outing, other's personal property, or vehicles used for transportation.</i></p> <p><i>I agree and consent to all of the above as stated.</i></p> <p><i>Print Parent Name:</i> _____</p> <p><i>Parent Signature:</i> _____ <i>Date:</i> _____</p>		

<b>Staff/Volunteer Registration Form (Page 1 of 2)</b>		
<b>Applicant Information</b>		
<i>First Name, Last Name</i>		
<i>Address</i>		
<i>Phone</i>	<i>Mobile Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
<i>Volunteer Position</i>		
<i>Emergency Contact (Name, Phone Number)</i>		
<b>Volunteer Experience</b>		
<i>Organization</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Start/End Date</i>
<i>Organization</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Start/End Date</i>
<i>Why would you like to volunteer in this role?</i>		
<i>What gifts and qualities will help you serve in this role?</i>		
<i>Special Interests and Hobbies</i>		
<p><i>Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</i></p> <p><i>If yes, please explain fully:</i></p>		
<p><i>If you will be working with children/youth, do you agree that Messiah can run a background check using your social security number? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (Note that your social security number will be kept confidential, and will not be kept on file).</i></p>		
<p><i>Have you ever been exposed to an incident of child abuse or neglect? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</i></p>		
<i>List any education, experience, certifications, or other training relevant to this volunteer position:</i>		

**Staff/Volunteer Registration Form (Page 2 of 2)**

**Criminal History**

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense?  Yes  No

Do you currently have any criminal actions pending in which you are the Defendant?  Yes  No

Are you currently on probation or parole?  Yes  No

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, please describe the nature of the offense or action, as well as the county/state/and date:

**Personal References**

Name	Address	Phone	Occupation	Relationship
------	---------	-------	------------	--------------

Name	Address	Phone	Occupation	Relationship
------	---------	-------	------------	--------------

Name	Address	Phone	Occupation	Relationship
------	---------	-------	------------	--------------

**Applicant Statement (read and sign below)**

*I have reviewed Messiah's Policies and agree to abide by them. I certify that this volunteer application was completed by me and that all of the information on this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any falsification, misrepresentation, or omission of facts called for herein will result in my disqualification from further consideration as a volunteer. I understand that this volunteer application is not valid without my signature.*

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church

**Expense Form**

*Completed forms should be returned to the Treasurer, Mailbox #25.*

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Expense Type:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Paid w/Church Visa Credit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Paid w/Church Wegmans Credit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Paid w/Church Home Depot Credit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Paid from Petty Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Payment requested by check payable to _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Payment requested by direct deposit* to _____
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Amount:</b>	
<b>Detailed Description:</b>	
<b>Ministry Team Lead Approval</b>	
<b>Date approved:</b>	
<b>Budget line item:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Finance Team Use Only</b>	
<b>Date processed:</b>	
<b>Check/Ref #:</b>	
<b>Posted to:</b>	
<b>By:</b>	

*\*Available only if bank details are on file; contact Church Treasurer to set up*

Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church

### Grant Tracking Form

*Please complete this form for all grants received*

*to support Messiah's ministries so that we can understand and celebrate the funding for our work together.*

*Completed forms should be returned to the Treasurer, Mailbox #25.*

<b>Date used:</b>	
<b>Grant Source:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Thrivent Action Grant <input type="checkbox"/> Gift card for _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<b>Grant Applicant's Name:</b>	
<b>Grant amount:</b>	
<b>Amount used:</b>	
<b>Used for:</b> <i>(Please be specific, e.g. Food Pantry Items, Angel Tree Party, Equipment for XYZ Ministry, etc.)</i>	
<b>Finance Team Use Only</b>	
<b>Date processed:</b>	
<b>Check/Ref #:</b>	
<b>Posted to:</b>	
<b>By:</b>	

<b>Messiah Lutheran Church Room Rental Agreement - \$250.00</b> <b>If you want to use the stove/oven the room use fee is \$300.00</b>	
<b>Includes \$50 security deposit to be refunded when facility is returned in same condition it was in prior to rental.</b>	
Name: _____	
Email Address: _____	
Phone: _____	Alternate Phone: _____
Date Requested: _____	
Start Time: _____	End Time (no later than 11:00 PM): _____
Please tell us the kind of event you are planning and the approximate number of attendees:  _____	
Do you want a specific room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No      Which room? _____	
Will you need to use the kitchen? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No      Nobody may use the dishwasher. All dish cleaning must be done in the sink	
Terms of Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any event scheduled during business hours could be preempted by an unexpected Messiah event such as a funeral. Every effort will be made to avoid this, but be advised it could be a possibility.</li> <li>• There will be no alcohol on premises at any time with the exception of worship services including Holy Communion.</li> <li>• The facilities will be cleaned prior to departing, trash will be removed and the room/s will be left in the same condition as they were found. Note that glitter of any type (loose, on toys, on clothing) is not allowed inside the church.</li> <li>• Any damage to the facility caused by the group is the responsibility of the renting party.</li> </ul>	
I have reviewed Messiah's Policies, and agree to abide by the Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church Policies and Terms of Use.	
Print Name: _____	
Signature: _____	Date: _____

<b>Building Key Form</b>		
<i>Organization:</i>		
<i>Purpose for Access:</i>		
<i>Name:</i>		
<i>Address:</i>		
<i>Phone:</i>	<i>Alternate Phone:</i>	<i>Email Address:</i>
<i>Date, Time, and Duration of Meeting:</i>		
<p><i>Terms of Use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This key is not to be duplicated.</b> In the event that the key is lost or misplaced, the person issued the key or key fob will responsible for the replacement cost, which will be determined by the security company. At no time should any person duplicate the issued key or share the alarm security code with others.</li> <li>• This policy shall commence on the date this agreement is executed by all parties, and continue until _____ unless earlier termination is provided by returning the issued key or key fob to Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church.</li> </ul> <p><u>For your safety and the safety of others:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doors should be locked after your meeting has begun to ensure that only those with keys and or key fobs can enter the building.</li> <li>• Always check to be sure all windows and doors are closed/locked in the area after your meeting has concluded. If you are the last group in the building, please check that all doors and windows are locked and reset the alarm before exiting by pressing the "Away" button on the control panel next to the elevators at ground level. The alarm will beep for approx. 30 sec. to give you time to exit. After exiting, confirm that each door is locked by manually pulling on the door handle.</li> <li>• The person issued the key is responsible for his/her group's access and compliance with Messiah's Facility Use Policy. Any infringement will be the responsibility of the person to whom the key was issued.</li> <li>• Any food brought in by your group must be cleaned up and disposed of properly, ensuring that all trash is emptied into the dumpster located in the northeast corner of the parking lot.</li> </ul>		
<i>I agree that I have read, understand, and will abide by the Messiah Lutheran Church Property Policy &amp; the above Terms of Use.</i>		
<i>Print Name:</i> _____		
<i>Signature:</i> _____		<i>Date:</i> _____
<i>Office Use Only:</i>		
Key Type/Key Fob #: _____	Security Code: _____	
Office Manager Signature: _____	Date Key/Fob Returned: _____	

<b>Harassment, Abuse, Discrimination, or Bullying Complaint Form</b>		
<b>Complainant Information</b>		
<i>First Name, Last Name</i>		
<i>Address</i>		
<i>Phone</i>	<i>Mobile Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>
<i>Role / Position at Messiah</i>		
<b>Complaint Information</b>		
<i>Name of person your complaint of harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying is made about</i>		
<i>Relationship to you (e.g., co-worker, vendor, volunteer, member of Messiah, visitor, etc.)</i>		
<i>Please describe what happened and how it is affecting you and your work and/or participation in the church community. Please use additional sheets of paper as needed and attach any relevant documents or evidence.</i>		
<i>Date(s) harassment, abuse, discrimination, or bullying occurred.</i>		
		<i>Is the behavior continuing?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Please list the name and, where possible, contact information of any witnesses or individuals who may have information related to your complaint.</i>		
<i>(Optional) Have you previously complained or provided information (verbal or written) about related incidents? If yes, when and to whom did you complain or provide information</i>		
<i>If you have retained legal counsel and would like us to work with them, please provide their contact information.</i>		
<i>I confirm that the information above is accurate.</i>		
<i>Signature:</i> _____		<i>Date:</i> _____