

Writing Position Descriptions

Each employee, including volunteers, needs a clearly written position description. The personnel committee will work with the staff person when writing a position description, thus providing an opportunity for dialogue about and increased understanding of the mutual ministries of pastor, session, and other staff.

The value of a written position description depends on the quality of study, thought and dialogues which precedes it. Rather than being just a file document, it becomes a working document that has resulted from problem solving and mutual commitment.

When writing the position description, it is helpful for the personnel committee, head of staff, and each staff person to work through the following questions:

1. What activities are most important in the work of the staff person? Clarify what both the staff person and the session considers priorities, then decide what each will do.
2. What is important to know about the congregation and the community? Are their recent congregational and community studies that have been done? If so, study and discuss them thoroughly. If not, look for other places where you might find pertinent information. Check with your presbytery for possible assistance.
3. What do we want to happen through our common ministry and the ministry with the people? With the community? With the wider world?

Thorough discussion of these questions should result in a working position description. This document will then shape the ministry of staff and session and can be used in annual reviews, at which time it should be reviewed as well.

Elements of a Position Description

Each position description should include the following elements (see Appendix C for sample position descriptions.):

1. Title - The title suggests the general area for which the position is responsible. Examples include pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor for congregational nurture, director of Christian education, commissioned lay pastor, administrative assistant (secretary), sexton, weekday schoolteacher and financial secretary.
2. Purpose - A one sentence statement that describes the primary purpose of the position.
3. Accountability – Specify to whom the position is accountable. For example, a pastor is the primarily accountable to the presbytery, but also to the session and congregation. The pastor of a multistaff church is the head of staff and the supervisor of all staff, unless another staff person is specifically named as supervisor. A church business administrator usually supervises all support staff.

4. Responsibilities - These include all duties and activities that pertain to the position. Here are some suggestions for writing position responsibilities.
 - a. Write responsibilities that are clear, concise and number not more than ten. Show the general scope of responsibilities rather than the minute details.
 - b. Use active verbs such as institutes, develops, designs, administers, recruits, proposes, initiates, creates, preaches, teaches, supervises, implements, directs, visits, plans, cooperates and coordinates. Make the statements observable and measurable.
 - c. When developing a group of position descriptions, take care to avoid overlapping responsibilities.
5. Relationships – Describe briefly how the person in this position is expected to relate to the session, other official bodies, and committees within the congregation. Clearly indicate how this person relates to other members of the staff, both employed and volunteer.
6. Evaluation - State the manner of evaluation to be used as well as how compensation will be reviewed.

Position Description (Sample)

Title: Christian Educator (Lay Persons)

Purpose: To work with the session in planning for, developing, and supervising the Christian education of the church in accordance with the policies and directions of the Christian Education Committee.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff.

Responsibilities: Coordinate and unify the education activities of the church into an integrated and effective ministry of Christian education.

Keep abreast of educational needs of all age groups in the church and refer these needs to the proper committee.

Serve as ex-officio member of designated session committees.

Develop and implement curricula for preschool through high school levels.

Serve as consultant to Christian Education Committee.

Serve as advisor to youth fellowship committee, adult education program, and to the church school superintendent.

Set up and carry out teacher training.

Serve as a resource to other staff regarding Christian education.

Order curriculum and Christian education supplies.

Participate in presbytery education ministry programs.

Relationships: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff and the Christian Education Committee in the performance of responsibilities. Relates to the associate presbytery executive for nurture for resourcing coordination and service.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor, the session Personnel Committee, and a representative of the Christian Education Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

NOTE: This is a suggested guide. It should be adapted to the needs of your congregation.

Position Description (Sample)

Title: Church Business Administrator

Purpose: To coordinate the business affairs of the church, including the responsibilities of recruiting, training, and supervising of necessary personnel. The appropriate committee of the session, if any, should be consulted in each case, but the coordinating responsibility is the administrator's.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff.

Responsibilities: Oversee and coordinate the church office operations, computer services, general administrative work, and purchasing of equipment and supplies.

Supervise the church bookkeeping and accounting procedures including payrolls, accounts payable, collection and deposit of receipts, investments, pledge records, special gifts, stock conversions, tax listings, systems and procedures, financial statements, and statistics.

Oversee the preparation of the church budgets, including accumulating requests and preparing working documents for meetings of the Budget Committee, and meeting with the Budget and Finance Committee.

Supervise the maintenance of the building and grounds, assuring that repairs and maintenance, janitorial work, building openings and closings are preformed.

Supervise dining room operations and special functions, overseeing scheduling, purchasing, inventory records, reservations of facilities and collection of fees.

Coordinate public relations efforts, such as radio broadcasts and news releases, and serve as a liaison between the church and the media.

Maintain a stewardship program and provide supplies, record-keeping, progress reports, and solicitation assistance, work with special groups for the purpose of interpretation of mission and stewardship, and other miscellaneous functions as may be required.

Relationships: The administrator reports to and works with the pastor as head of staff. The administrator works directly with various individuals such as the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Joint Budget and Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, Property Committee, treasurer, financial secretary, and pastor to obtain information and such counsel as may be desired by the administrator.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor as head of staff and the session Personnel Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

NOTE: This is a suggested guide. It should be adapted to the needs of your congregation.

Position Description (Sample)

Title: Administrative Assistant or Church Secretary

Purpose: To provide administrative and secretarial services to the pastor and other church staff.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff or church business administrator.

Responsibilities: Perform the function of administrative assistant (or secretary) to the pastor and other staff including all typing, filing, routine correspondence and maintenance of calendar.

Be responsible for production of materials through computers, folding machine, duplicating machine and postage machine, and oversee usage of machines by others.

Maintain permanent church records.

Perform secretarial work for church committees and organizations as directed by the pastor, as the head of staff.

Be responsible for the ordering of office supplies and equipment.

Set deadlines for receipt of information and prepare documents for mailing, including church bulletins, announcements, letters to congregations, and newsletters.

Supervise volunteers as required.

Relationships: The administrative assistant (secretary) is accountable to the pastor as head of staff and, through the pastor, to other staff in the performance of his/her responsibilities.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor as head of staff and the session Personnel Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

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Position Description (Sample)

Title: Director of Music

Purpose: To coordinate and plan the whole music program of the congregation and to supervise the church organist.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff.

Responsibilities: Plan the music program and make appropriate recommendations.

Coordinate/Direct all the choirs.

Respond to other music needs that come through other staff persons.

Coordinate training of young people and children in the music program.

Provide soloists as needed.

Relationships: Relates to the pastor as head of staff, other staff persons, and the Music Committee, and supervises the church organist.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor as head of staff and the session Personnel Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

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Position Description (Sample)

Title: Church Organist

Purpose: To provide appropriate organ music for services of worship.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff, through the Music Director.

Responsibilities: Plan, prepare, and play organ music appropriate to each service of worship including the prelude, the interlude, the postlude and other music as required.

Prepare appropriate music for weddings and special services.

Rehearse sufficiently for optimum performance at the instrument.

Attend choir rehearsals for the purpose of accompaniment.

Accompany the congregation's singing of hymns.

Accompany the choir's singing of scheduled music.

Arrange for a substitute when not able to be present.

Relationships: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff, the Director of Music, and the Music Committee in the performance of his/her responsibilities.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor as head of staff and the session Personnel Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

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Position Description (Sample)

Title: Church Sexton (Custodian)

Purpose: To provide the essential maintenance services for the church building and grounds, and serve as security/watchperson of premises.

Accountability: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff.

Responsibilities: Keep buildings clean and well maintained on the inside and outside.

Maintain all grounds, performing such functions as cutting grass, shoveling snow, and caring for flower beds.

Maintain security of premises, and serve as watchperson to be sure building is in safe condition and locked when premises are vacant.

Perform minor repairs to masonry, electrical system, plumbing, and immediate temporary repairs in an emergency.

Keep the Property Committee (or Trustees) informed of major repairs needed.

Relationships: Accountable to the pastor as head of staff and the Property Committee (or Trustees) in the performance of his/her responsibilities.

Evaluation: Performance reviews will be conducted annually by the pastor as head of staff and the session Personnel Committee. The session Personnel Committee will annually review the adequacy of compensation.

NOTE: This is a suggested guide. It should be adapted to the needs of your congregation.