



Tapestry: A Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Title: Employment Policy		
Initial Board Approval Date:	Date First Issued: June 3, 2003 (Effective Date)	
Date Board Approved Revision:	Revision #: 2	Effective Date of Revision: 07/02/06

BACKGROUND/HISTORY/DISCUSSION:

This Employment Policy (adopted on June 6, 2003 and amended November 4, 2003) was reviewed and reaffirmed by Tapestry's Board of Directors on April 18, 2006.

PURPOSE:

To provide uniform and consistent guidelines for the interview and selection of qualified individuals who apply for staff positions at Tapestry.

POLICY:

Tapestry is committed to giving full and careful consideration to all qualified candidates in order to hire the most qualified individuals for the paid part-time and full-time staff positions that are or may become available at Tapestry. Interviews and final selection of employees will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this policy.

AREAS/COMMITTEES/SUBCOMMITTEES INVOLVED:

Various

MODIFYING CIRCUMSTANCES/EXCEPTIONS:

N/A

DEFINITIONS (AS/IF APPLICABLE):

Employee – an individual whose pay/compensation must be reported under IRS regulations on Form W-2.

PROCEDURE:

Upon full and careful consideration of the need to employ the most qualified candidates for the paid part-time and full-time staff positions that are or may become available at Tapestry, the Tapestry Board of Directors has resolved the following:

- I. The least possible conflict of interests and personnel management concerns will be best served by not allowing church members to be eligible for paid positions.
- II. It is the Board's considered opinion that the potential for conflict of roles and harm to relationships for both the member and the minister outweigh the positive aspects of employing a member of the congregation.
- III. It is the policy of Tapestry not to employ church members for positions classified as employee.
- IV. The Board of Directors' considerations include, but are not limited to, these concerns:
 - A. Those in the congregation who volunteer long hours and are not paid for those efforts.
 - B. The conflict of interest between the Minister as the member's spiritual leader and pastoral care counselor while at the same time being the member's supervisor and the major personnel reviewing manager.
 - C. The difficulty for the member/employee if they were not performing in a satisfactory manner and the effect upon their relationships with other members of the congregation.
 - D. The negative effect of limiting potential employees simply because they are a member of the congregation.
 - E. The possibility that a member may need employment and this opportunity might be a reasonable position for which to apply.

REFERENCES/CITATIONS (e.g., Roberts' Rules, bylaws, or other policies):

N/A

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) AND ANSWERS:

- Q:** Exactly what types of challenges would be faced by a member becoming staff?
- A.** A church member would need to navigate the following transitions in becoming staff:
- A. A member who becomes staff will encounter the challenge of recruiting former friends to tasks without exerting inappropriate pressure, and the challenge of relating warmly and professionally to congregation members with whom he or she may have discomfort or grievances based on interpersonal history. Barring extraordinary matters involving the congregation's vision and mission, an effective professional will relate with equal warmth and respect to all members of the community.
 - B. As employees, staff members are responsible to exercise their role obligations even when doing so will be unpopular with many members in the congregation. *A member who becomes a staff member will likely need to find a new friendship group, as they cannot maintain friendships that will interfere with their staff responsibilities.* Enjoyment of a peer group in the congregation may be part of

what moved a member to apply for a staff job, but staff members must have no undue loyalty to any social group in the congregation. Nor can staff members be casually available to anyone who wants to chat. Staff will find that congregational activities, once experienced as social, spiritual, and communal in nature, come to be experienced primarily as work. Staff members may find that to feel truly relaxed or “off,” they need to find friends who are not part of the congregation they work for. Staff members will be tempted to blur the boundary between members, and service to them. Staff may find their ability to function effectively as staff compromised.

- C. Unlike a member or friend of the congregation, paid employees (such as DREs and administrators) are expected to act with greater loyalty to the vision and mission of the organization, to the direction of the Minister, and to the policies passed by the Board than to their own opinions, or that of any other member or group of members in the congregation. Unlike a committee chair or even the congregation president, a staff member is both a leader and an employee – primarily the latter.
 - D. A paid employee *belongs to the staff team more than any other body of the church*, and is secondarily responsible to the leadership of the congregation, more than to the program area(s) he or she serves. Although loyalty to one’s own congregational program is important, of greater importance is a positive relationship to the whole staff team and congregational leadership. Staff members are expected to promote their own program while retaining greater loyalty to the congregation’s larger mission.
 - E. *A community member who becomes staff must relinquish his/her expectation for ministry from the Minister with whom he or she serves*, with the possible exception of public functions such as weddings and funerals. Whether the Minister is formally the staff person’s supervisor or not, her or his first role is to lead the team. This means articulating the mission and goals of the congregation to staff, seeing that they have the support they need to do their jobs, and giving frank feedback about how they are doing. These roles are incompatible with the pastoral care and counseling staff would rightfully expect from a Minister of a congregation in which they were members (and may have experienced from the Minister up until this point).
 - F. A member of the religious community who is the spouse of an employee must take care not to speak or vote on anything (including programs, policies, or decisions) directly related to their staff member spouse or partner, nor use their significant influence as the spouse or partner of a staff member, to unduly influence other congregational matters.
- Q:** Would there be any challenges to the members of the congregation if a church member became staff? If so, what might those be?
- A.** The congregation would face the following challenges:

Before the hire:

- A. Search Committee members' sense of allegiance to the congregant may influence the amount of energy they expend looking for other candidates, and influence the hiring decision, which should only be influenced by the needs of the program.
- B. The hiring group may find itself engaged in the emotionally taxing work of navigating the opinions of various stakeholders groups in the congregation, whose interest in the hire are based less on the needs of the program than their perceptions of the needs of the individual.
- C. Members maneuvering to become staff may attempt to influence the process by rallying congregants to their cause, leading to pain, divisiveness and wasted energy in the congregation.
- D. Although Tapestry is a membership organization, *allowing members and former members to apply as staff actively encourages members to resign*. Usually, these members are among our best volunteers.
- E. When multiple members of our community apply, a maximum of one will be given the position. At some level, the rest will all experience themselves as unwanted and unrespected. This impacts those members' relationships with the new staff member, with the hiring body, and with the congregation as a whole.

After the hire:

- F. The congregation pursues the policy of paying some community members for their extraordinary gifts of time and energy, but not others (such as a Board president or Committee Chair) who make equivalent gifts of time and energy.
- G. If a community member is hired as staff, other members are more likely to pursue applications the next time a staff position opens.
- H. If a community member is not hired as staff, that person's friends and fans in the congregation will be upset. Some will be significantly hurt and angry. This energy will be directed at the hiring body and at the new staff member, and often lead to factioning within a congregation and a weakened ability for a congregation to pursue its vision and mission.

After the period of employment:

- I. After the time of paid employment is complete, a staff member who attempts to transition back to membership will find that many new and old members still treat him or her as if she is staff, soliciting opinions on the program or asking for help with this and that – where do we keep the glitter crayons again? The staff member will also retain the confidences that they learned while serving as staff, and their experience of the congregation as a workplace, making it more likely that a member who becomes a staff person will leave the community after their time of service has ended.
- J. After the time of service is complete, if the staff member elects to rejoin the congregation, their immediate successor in the staff position finds that they are accountable to their predecessor as one of their employers.

Q: Are there any challenges the Minister might face? What might those be?

A. The Minister would face the following difficulties when considering hiring members or former members as staff:

A. The hiring body must make its decision based on what it knows of the candidate (for the Minister, possibly including privileged information about inappropriate behavior, criminal history, or milder factors rendering the person unsuitable for the position), as well as the probable working relationship between the member and other staff; yet the hiring body must explain a hiring decision to a congregation unaware of these considerations, who may be deeply upset that a favorite, well-qualified candidate was not hired. The decision may appear baffling and undermine confidence in the Minister, as well as undermine the Minister's ability to serve aggrieved members of the congregation, as pastoral confidences or other relational responsibilities could prevent the minister from explaining why the hire was inappropriate.

B If the Minister is the hiring agent and doesn't hire the congregation member, the pastoral relationship with that congregation member and their family and friends is impaired.

Q: Are there any benefits of a member becoming staff?

A: Yes, there are some benefits:

A. Members already have some familiarity with and commitment to Unitarian Universalism and the relevant program

B. Some other congregation members already know the job applicant far better than they know professional applicants.

C. Members are easily informed of job openings.

OTHER RESOURCES:

N/A