

Church Policy Guide Framework

Categories, format, and planning prompts for building a church policy manual

Use of this resource

This framework is intended for church planning and education. It is not legal advice. Churches should adapt these categories to their own governing documents, ministry structure, insurance requirements, and applicable law.

Purpose

A policy guide helps a church identify the written expectations it needs for faithful, consistent, and accountable ministry. This framework does not provide complete policies. Instead, it provides categories, a recommended format, and prompts that church leaders can use to build a policy manual over time.

How Policies Differ from Procedures

Policies	Procedures
Explain what the church expects, requires, or permits.	Explain how a regular task is completed.
Are usually approved by the church, elders, deacons, trustees, finance committee, personnel committee, or another authorized body.	Are usually maintained by staff or ministry leaders under the authority of approved policies.
Should be stable enough to guide decisions over time.	Should be detailed enough to help someone repeat the process consistently.
Example: The church requires two approved adults in children's ministry spaces.	Example: How volunteers check children in and out on Sunday morning.

Recommended Policy Format

Policy Section	What to Include
Policy Title	Use a clear title that identifies the subject.
Purpose	Explain why the policy exists and what problem it helps address.
Scope	Identify who or what the policy applies to.
Policy Statement	State the church's official expectation or requirement.
Guidelines or Requirements	List the specific standards that must be followed.
Responsibility	Name the person, team, committee, or office responsible for oversight.
Approval Authority	Identify who approved the policy and who may amend it.
Related Documents	List related bylaws, forms, procedures, or handbook sections.
Date Adopted and Last Reviewed	Record the approval date and review date.

Policy Categories to Consider

Governance and Leadership Policies

- Conflict of interest
- Committee expectations

- Officer responsibilities
- Decision making authority
- Confidentiality
- Minutes and records
- Leadership covenant or conduct expectations

Financial Policies

- Budget development
- Offering counting
- Purchasing authority
- Reimbursements
- Credit cards
- Designated gifts
- Benevolence
- Financial reporting
- Audits or financial reviews

Personnel Policies

- Hiring
- Compensation
- Evaluations
- Time off
- Staff conduct
- Discipline
- Termination
- Background checks
- Remote work when applicable

Child and Student Protection Policies

- Volunteer screening
- Two adult expectations
- Check in and check out
- Bathroom assistance
- Transportation
- Overnight events
- Abuse reporting
- Incident reports

Facility Use Policies

- Room reservations
- Outside group use
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Kitchen use

- Keys and access
- Security
- Cleaning expectations

Technology and Communication Policies

- Email
- Social media
- Livestream and recorded media
- Photography permissions
- Church management software
- Passwords
- Acceptable technology use

Risk Management and Safety Policies

- Emergency response
- Severe weather
- Medical emergencies
- Security team
- Accident reporting
- Insurance reporting
- Vehicle use

Records and Document Retention Policies

- Membership records
- Contribution records
- Personnel files
- Legal documents
- Meeting minutes
- Financial records
- Background check records

Ministry Policies

- Mission trips
- Small groups
- Volunteers
- Counseling
- Benevolence ministry
- Transportation
- Event approvals

Policy Development Worksheet

Category	Need or Question	Drafting Owner	Approval Authority	Priority
Governance and Leadership Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Financial Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Personnel Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Child and Student Protection Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Facility Use Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Technology and Communication Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Risk Management and Safety Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Records and Document Retention Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low
Ministry Policies	What needs to be clarified?	Who should draft it?	Who should approve it?	Priority: High, Medium, or Low

Suggested Review Rhythm

- Review high-risk policies annually, including child protection, finance, personnel, and safety.
- Review all other policies at least every three years.
- Record the review date even when no changes are made.
- Keep one official policy manual and avoid competing versions in separate locations.