

Creating a Facilities Use
Policy

For

First United Methodist Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

National Institute In Church Finance and Administration
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

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I. INTRODUCTION

History of First United Methodist Church of Baton Rouge, LA.

First United Methodist Church is a downtown church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana that started in 1834 with 47 church members. From the beginning, First Methodist has been recognized for ministry in community outreach, international and local missions, and a strong sense of caring for others. In 1926, First Methodist had grown to 1,804 members and re-located their ministry to a new home. On March 30, 1926 they worshiped in their new sanctuary at the current location of 930 North Blvd. A white neon cross sits on top of the bell tower of First United Methodist Church. During World War II the new church on North Boulevard would play an unforeseen role in defense of the nation. Pilots in fighter training at Harding Field (the city airport) used the neon cross on top of the church to orient themselves on night training missions. Today, FUMC has 4,000 members and continues to be a ministry leader in the community.

In 1952, FUMC opened the Youth Center and Aldrich Chapel due to the growth of ministries which became a huge ministry for Youth in Baton Rouge. As growth at FUMC continued, the need for more space continued and in 1963, the Adult Center new building was completed.

In 1970 FUMC opened the Early Learning Center which cares for children the age of infant through Kindergarten. The ELC used space in the basement of FUMC. What----a basement in Louisiana----what

were they thinking? As this ministry grew, they realized the error of their ways as far as basements go in a heavy rain climate and initiated a building campaign for a new Children's Center. In 1993 the building was complete and today is the Early Learning Center daily Monday through Friday that has 140 children enrolled. On Sundays, this facility is used for Children's Christian education.

In 1985 FUMC started the Television Ministry to reach homebound members and non-members. This ministry reaches hundreds of people that cannot attend church for one reason or another.

In 1998 due to a much needed revitalization of a very old facility, the Sanctuary was renovated and restored its beauty.

In 2006, FUMC responded to its' members needs in a unique way when it constructed a Columbarium, which is a place to hold the ashes of persons who choose cremation over burial.

In 2009 FUMC celebrated their 175th anniversary and Baton Rouge's oldest Methodist Congregation. FUMC celebrated making disciples for Jesus Christ in Three Centuries.

As God blesses us with continued growth, we started a building campaign "*The Future Is Now*" for a new Youth Building and Conference Center. As the ministry growth and blessings continue, the new building was completed in 2011 and there is no debt.

As changes continue in ministry, Rev. Chris Andrews, the Senior Minister at FUMC for 22 years retired suddenly in 2011.

The mission of First United Methodist Church of Baton Rouge is to make disciples for Jesus Christ, to help disciples mature in Christian Living, and to minister love and good works to all.

Autobiographical Statement

In the sixth grade we moved from Charleston, S. C. to Natchitoches, LA. I completed High School and obtained a BS in Accounting from Northwestern State University.

God has helped me in many ways on my career journey. He helped prepare me for my role as a Business Administrator by working in the Corporate Accounting world. I worked as an Accounting Manager in an Insurance company, and an Electric Co-Op. These jobs helped me appreciate working at FUMC in ministry as a Business Administrator and prepared me for many functions in my role at FUMC. It is wonderful to work in ministry for the past 12 years where we help people including church staff. This is a nice change from the corporate world. My previous jobs also helped in the areas of human resources and facility management.

I am married and our youngest daughter, Kasey, attended the Early Learning Center at FUMC. It was a blessing to have her nearby while I was doing ministry work.

It has been a wonderful opportunity to work with all the different ministry areas to coordinate a variety of administrative functions. One of these functions, facility management, has led me to this project. In the past, the facility use policy has been at the verbal discretion of the Senior Minister and the Church Coordinator, which has worked. While deciding what to do a project on, and realizing both of these people could retire at anytime, I was alarmed at the urgent necessity to have a written facility use policy. My feeling was justified while in the process of meeting with the Senior Minister about the project, he retired suddenly, which reaffirmed my decision to complete this project. Another reason for the written policy is the new Youth Building and Conference Center facility use guidelines.

Consultation Committee

In forming the consultation committee, it was obvious that the Senior Minister, Chris Andrews, and Church Coordinator, Sandra Loy, would be crucial members of the committee. Sandra has the responsibility of facility scheduling of all events and the costs associated with the events. This responsibility provides her with all the knowledge about what church groups and affiliated organizations request to meet at FUMC. Chris Andrews who has worked in this community 22 years, knows about all of these groups and community organizations that meet here. Both of these staff are the ones implementing the current verbal policy.

Mitch Smith, the Facility Superintendent, is also someone that is key to have on the consultation committee. He supervises all of the personnel that set-up for all church events, and is responsible for the maintenance and housekeeping of the church. Mitch and Sandra work with groups to coordinate their needs with the facility. Anytime there is a crisis moment that presents a unique challenge, they are the usually the ones that provide the solution. He is also over the kitchen that prepares food for ELC daily and for most church events.

George Ragsdale, the Youth Director, is on the team to provide his vision of what the new Youth Building and Conference Center facility use would look like. George helps with the technology everywhere in the church and supervises the Communications Coordinator. He also is the person that helped design the sound and technology in the new building.

II. OBJECTIVES

Determine Where We Are Now - Review of current Facility Use Procedures

The first step is review what procedures are currently in place, what new procedures we want to encompass, and discuss changes that should be made. Part of this step includes evaluating forms and procedures used and how effective they are.

The second step is to combine all of the current procedures in written form to make it easier to present and discuss the material.

Next, meet with the consultation committee, and enlist their views on the current procedures including my review of them.

Create a Facility Use Policy

Research other use policies from other projects to determine if there are important factors to include in First Church's policy.

Meet with the consultation team to review the research and discuss other ideas to include in the written use policy.

Next, determine any new procedures to include for the new building and conference center. The new space may need more requirements than the current policy entails.

Combine all the current and new procedures into a written facility use policy for the existing space and the new building space.

Approval of the Facilities Use Policy

Submit the written facility use policy to the consultation committee for review. After making changes based on their input, re-submit the policy for approval.

The final step of creating the written facility use policy is obtain approval from the Trustees and Building and Grounds committee.

III. BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The Theological and Biblical Rational for creating a facilities use policy is three fold.

First:

1 Corinthians: 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

The major goal of a church the size of First Church is provide a set of parameters that will allow for the smooth flow of information and work. The building use policy provides a stated list of rules and fees established and approved by the Trustees for the use and care of our facility. The goal of the policy is to allow the facilities to be used in an orderly fashion to make Disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Church Council adopted the following core principles for all ministries of FUMC. In the drafting of the policy those principles were the foundation of the policy. The core values are what the facility use policy is measured against. The groups within the church must fall into one of the principles in order to use the facilities.

Core Values

The Core Principles are as follows:

Worship – “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it Holy” is a commandment. It is given to us by God as a gift. We encourage our members to worship weekly.

Bible Study and Christian Education – Every member should be involved in a Sunday School class, study group, or Bible study.

Stewardship/Giving – “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:21). Make a dedication of gifts, time and talent to the work of Christ’s church.

Heritage – The heritage of the Methodist movement is important and deeply inspiring. Every member should take the Heritage course.

Spiritual Formation – Participation in the ministry of spiritual formation affords a variety of options and settings for the cultivating of the “heart and mind of Christ” and deepens the disciple’s personal relationship with the Lord.

Thinking Theologically – Knowing *how* to think theologically about every aspect of life is as important as knowing *what* you believe. Every member is encouraged to develop a way of thinking theologically through the many educational and experiential options offered at First Church.

Mission and Service – To challenge every disciple to engage in intentional kingdom building in today’s world. FUMC will offer counsel and suggestions as to how its members can put their faith into action as they share in work that advances the mission of Christ and the church.

These foundational values offer a holistic approach to discipleship. It is the church’s belief that when seriously engaged, these opportunities become the building blocks of a dynamic and fulfilling experience as one follows the Lord of Life. This project is formed on the mission statement and core values of First Church.

Case Study:

Our facility is used by several local Elementary Schools for their 5th Grade Graduations. This particular use of the facility would fall under the Core Values heading Mission and Service. This we believe is using the facilities and a mission supporting the local community.

Matthew 28:18-20 – Therefore, go make disciples of all nations.

Second:

Nehemiah 13:14 – Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.

The second rationale is to see that our facility is actually used and not neglected. What good is it if the church constructs these awesome facilities and they sit empty? With use however come the possibility of abuse.

We cannot neglect the House of God. Nehemiah made the changes necessary to ensure that the house of God was treated with fear and respect. The policy created during this project helps protect the House of God by putting precautions in place to keep the facility in good repair. To have the policy plainly stated and agreed upon by both parties takes away the ability for either side to be unhappy in the unfortunate event of damage due to abuse. We should be good stewards of God's money and it is easier to provide proper care to the facility than have to repair it. Sharing our ministry space is a great way to steward the resources God has blessed us with.

Third:

Leviticus 19:30 – Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord.

There is a fundamental difference between the building known as the church and any other facility people use. The difference is that the building of the church has been commissioned and sanctified to be used as a place where people come into a full relationship with God. Because of this difference the people who use the facility must be educated in the sacred purpose of the facilities. This point cannot be overstated. While we do not worship the physical building, reverence to the message that is taught is of the utmost importance. The policy reflects the highest ideals of fairness, compassion, and integrity. The message of Christ is visible in how we care for each other, and it is also seen in how we care for our surroundings.

Case Study:

We host a great number of weddings at First Church. This is a joyous time for families and friends. Sometimes the parties involved are members but not active members at First. The wedding party requests to celebrate the wedding with alcohol. The facility use policy states there is no alcohol allowed in the building. This is done not to be a fun killer, but to maintain the sanctity of the facility.

We are not only to reverence God's house through worship, but we must keep the church clean and protect it with policies that will help ensure no one damages it. Taking care of the church facility is a very important part of my job.

Matthew 16:18 – Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

During the many months of this project, I have received **encouragement** from the ministry and lay staff at FUMC. Without this encouragement, it would have been much more difficult to complete this project. Business Administrators work many long hours as most church staff do and working on the certification project is no exception.

1 Thessalonians 3:7 – Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Philemon 1:7 – Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

IV DESCRIPTION

Combining all the suggestions and oral procedures we currently use in a written form took a lot of patience and praying----like anything else, everyone has an opinion. This major task however was very beneficial to the final facilities use policy. By the time I finished, there were very few changes made when the Trustees and Building and Grounds approved the policy.

The current guidelines regarding the building use are simply verbal rituals that are left to the discretion of the Church Coordinator and the Senior Minister. The current procedures are being followed but they are not in writing and published for everyone to know.

I researched other church facility use policies. I found several examples that helped me evaluate and see how to improve on our procedures. Next, I met with the consultation committee again to discuss other options. Many of the discussions centered around who would be able to use FUMC facility.

Would we let any organization use it, did the group have to prove they are a 501 (c) 3, did they have to be affiliated with the church? Determining who is eligible was a lengthy topic of the team.

Another topic that was discussed often was the cost we would charge for the use of our facility. Our new youth building included a conference center that will hold 200 plus people. This new facility will be very useful for large

meetings and events. I called many hotels and other meeting places to compare costs with size of space. This process was very time consuming. Many of the downtown places near FUMC that I contacted, inquired about using our facility if they had an overflow of people for their capacity. FUMC has always been very community oriented so this added to the discussion. The goal that the team agreed on is for the cost to cover the expense the church incurs for every event.

In reviewing the event forms that we are presently using, I found for the most part that the forms are adequate. I made a few changes and discussed the changes with the team and they agreed with the changes.

I submitted rough draft of the policy to the consultation committee for review. The committee discussed and made changes based on everyone's suggestions. After making changes based on their input, I re-submitted the policy and the consultation committee approved it. I know at this point the project was not finished but, I felt a sense of accomplishment.

During the process of creating a facility use policy with the consultation team, I was faced with a difficult challenge. One of the critical members of the committee was replaced. Rev. Chris Andrews retired suddenly. The staff was told on a Tuesday that his last day would be Sunday. This unfortunate change that was out of our control, pro-longed the timeline of the project. Bishop Robert Fannin became the Interim Senior Minister and joined the consultation committee.

The Trustees met and reviewed the FUMC Facilities Use Policy that the consultation committee approved. Overall, I am very encouraged by their comments. Jim Smith, the Trustees Chair, told me that everyone thought the policy is well written. Drew Sellers who is on the Trustees and a local attorney had some suggestions for changes. The Trustees gave Mr. Sellers the authority to review the policy after the changes were incorporated into the policy. Drew approved the policy on behalf of the Trustees. The only portion of the policy that the Trustees requested that the Building and Grounds review is the fee schedule included in the policy. The Building and Grounds Committee reviewed the fee schedule then approved the policy at their meeting.

V. CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

As I am writing the conclusion, I am pleased with the results of this effort. The facilities use project is not entirely complete. As FUMC adopts this policy, there may be changes to tweak the policy after it begins to be implemented.

In my evaluation of this process, I am positive that the consultation committee was extremely important in providing input, some of it from a different insight. The team helped me make sure that the policy was workable coupled with helping me communicate the important functions in a valuable way.

This project had one significant obstacle that slowed the timeline. The Senior Minister retired suddenly and that increased my workload which decreased my available time to complete the project.

The written facility use policy will be published with all the relevant event set-up form. This written tool will be very beneficial in the future, especially when key employees retire.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VI APPENDIX

FACILITY USE POLICY

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

BATON ROUGE, LA

**FACILITY USE AGREEMENT
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

The mission of First United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Discipleship involves intentional efforts through study, fellowship, worship, and service. Therefore, all activities on church property shall be in keeping with the beliefs and principles of the church.

Eligibility for Use: Preference will be given to functions that are consistent with the mission of First United Methodist Church (FUMC). FUMC reserves the right to decide the conditions as to the time, place, and manner in which such use may take place.

Priority of Use: Scheduling will be arranged on a first come – first served basis and determined by FUMC. In case of a scheduling conflict, the following priority will be followed:

1. FUMC Ministry Areas: education, worship, service, and related programs and members of the church.
2. United Methodist Conference of Louisiana sponsored education, worship, service, and related programs,
3. Other non-profit organization sponsored education, worship, service, and related programs.

General Operating Policies:

- FUMC sponsorship or hosting of a program does not imply endorsement of the views that may be expressed during the program. Approval for use of FUMC means only that the program appears to meet criteria established for its use.
- In absence of a specific written agreement to the contrary, no approval for the use of FUMC or any other word or images associated with FUMC for purposes of direct or indirect endorsement or for any use other than to denote the location of an activity is allowable.

Liability: Client assumes full responsibility for the conduct of its guests, employees, contractors, or other persons on the property in attendance of the scheduled event. Liability for damages to the premises or equipment will be charged accordingly. FUMC shall not be liable for damage to the property of the user group, nor shall FUMC be liable for any loss of property from or on said premises. The user group also agrees to hold FUMC harmless against any claims for damage to person arising out of the use of FUMC by the user group. This contract ensures indemnification against damages arising from or in the course of user group's use of the facilities and premises. FUMC also reserves the right to require a certificate of insurance naming FUMC as an additional insured on their policy.

Regulations: The user group shall comply with all laws of the United States, the State of Louisiana, the City of Baton Rouge, and the regulations of the Fire Department, and the Board of Health.

Decorations: All decorations must be approved by the Church Coordinator prior to the event.

Set-ups: "Last minute" changes, including guaranteed number of participants, must be submitted to FUMC Church Coordinator 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE. Changes after the meeting room has been prepared are subject to additional labor/setup charges. These charges are based on a minimum of \$25 per hour for any set-up changes.

Smoking: FUMC is a non-smoking facility. The user group agrees to make its participants aware of the no smoking policy.

Security: Under certain circumstances, FUMC may require user groups to obtain and pay for security of the function. This service is provided by the EBR Sheriff's office and rates are based upon an hourly wage. There is a three hour minimum.

Parking: Ample parking is available in FUMC parking lots on East Boulevard and America Street. Additional parking is available under the interstate. FUMC is not responsible for any vehicles parked in FUMC parking lots, on city streets, or under the interstate. Parking is not allowed in the Post Office parking lot. Vehicles will be towed from this lot.

Beverage Policy (see section on rates): FUMC is available to provide beverages for user groups as determined by the Church Coordinator. All beverage **selections must be made 48 hours prior to the event.**

With permission, the user group may bring in an outside caterer. The FUMC kitchen is not available for food service or preparation. The caterer brought in must be a professional cook or have had a food sanitation course. Caterers must bring their own dishes, linens, flatware and serving utensils. User groups are required to leave all facilities in the same condition as before being used by the user group.

Alcoholic Beverages: Under no circumstances will alcoholic beverages be allowed on the premises of FUMC. It is the responsibility of the user group to make its participants aware of this policy.

Rental Rates and Related Policies:

- **Deposit:** In the absence of a specific written agreement to the contrary, a deposit equal to the room fee is required. Deposit is refundable if facility is left in good order.
- **Billing:** Payment in full is expected at the scheduled event. If adjustments are made at the event incurring additional costs the balance is due within 30 days of final invoice submitted after the event. A service charge of 1.5% per month will be charged overdue accounts.
- **Cancellation:** All room cancellations must be made 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE or additional set-up fees will be charged on a per hour basis

See attached sheet for prices to cover the cost of the use of the facility.

I therefore understand and agree to all policies and procedures as stated above and by signing this document agree to unconditionally and absolute:

_____ **RESPONSIBLE PARTY (USER GROUP)** _____ **DATE**

_____ **FUMC Representative** _____ **DATE**

Meeting Date(s) _____

Deposit due: \$ _____ Date: _____

Deposit paid: \$ _____ Date: _____

Balance due: \$ _____ Date: _____

Balance paid: \$ _____ Date: _____

General User Room Rates to cover FUMC costs.

<u>Meeting Room</u>	<u>Full Day</u>	<u>½ Day</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Gymnasium	\$350	\$175	_____
Parish Hall	\$250	\$125	_____
Conference Center	\$350	\$175	_____
Small Seminar Room	\$100	\$ 50	_____
Security	\$25 Per Hour (3 hours minimum)		_____
Service charges:			
Set-up changes	\$25/hour		_____
A V Media	\$20/hour		_____
Custodial Staff	\$25/hour		_____
<u>Food/Beverage Rates</u>			
Coffee service:	\$25 per Carafe (regular & decaf available)		_____
	Includes ice water, if requested		
Kitchen personnel:	\$25.00/hour (2 hour minimum)		_____

**ROOM SET-UP REQUEST
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Name of event: _____

Sponsoring organization: _____

Date of event: _____ Time event begin: _____ end: _____

Room Name/Number: _____

Other rooms/areas requested: _____

Number of expected participants: _____ Security needed? _____

Time doors to buildings need to be opened: _____

Time of event set-up: _____ Take down time needed: _____

Audio/visual equipment requested: _____TV _____DVD

_____Power Point _____Microphones - # needed _____Screen

_____ Projector

Other arrangements requested: _____lectern _____ easel w/pad _____piano

_____dry wipe erase board

Other: _____

Room arrangement:

Tables set up? ___yes ___no _____rectangle _____round _____study

Head table needed? ___yes ___no _____rectangle _____round

Coffee service? ___yes ___no _____regular _____decaffeinated

Ice water service? ___yes ___no

Other requests: _____

Use other side to show configuration of tables, chairs, audio/visual equipment and any other set up requirements. This information must be provided; otherwise, we are not responsible for room configuration.