

*Date Issued: November 17, 2005*

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*Approved By: Property Management Team, Leadership Council*

## **HICKORY FLAT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH USE OF CHURCH VEHICLES**

### **Statement of Policy:**

- A. Vehicles owned and operated by Hickory Flat United Methodist Church are for the purpose and support of ministry. They are made available to ministry groups and organizations of Hickory Flat United Methodist Church to provide safe and dependable group transportation for Church-related activities and ministry functions.
- B. Vehicles owned by Hickory Flat United Methodist Church will not be leased, for profit or otherwise to outside groups under any circumstances. These vehicles include trucks, vans, buses and trailers.
- C. This policy applies to all vehicles leased by the Church and its members for the purpose of a church sanctioned ministry or function. In this situation, members are to decline the leased vehicle insurance. Exclusion to this policy is leasing through a contracted and licensed transportation firm that provides its own drivers and insurance.
- D. Church vehicles, except for the Church bus, may be used for events sponsored by organizations outside the church upon approval by the Property Management Team. All approved organizations using the Church vehicles are required to abide by this policy. For this purpose, Serv Ministries is considered a pre-approved mission organization.
- E. This policy applies to the use of any other organizations' vehicle the purpose of transportation for church ministry.

### **Procedures:**

#### **1.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USE**

##### **1.01 General Use**

Use of Church vehicles shall be in compliance with these guidelines, the policies of our insurance carrier, and applicable state and federal laws. Failure to abide by any of these rules shall result in the denial of future use of Church-owned vehicles.

### **1.02 Vehicle Use**

Church vehicles are to be used exclusively for the support of ministries and church programs. Any use apart from this purpose is strictly prohibited.

### **1.03 Vehicle Capacity**

Church vans will be used for no less than five and no more than ten passengers.

*SPECIAL NOTE: Recent studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that the rollover rates for 15-passenger vans loaded with more than 10 occupants were nearly three times the rate of those that were lightly loaded. The report does not claim the vans are defective or poorly constructed but simply warns that, when fully loaded, the vans' "center of gravity shifts rearward and upward, increasing the likelihood of a rollover. The shift in the center of gravity will also increase the potential for loss of control in panic maneuvers."*

### **1.04 Approved Drivers**

Only a Church approved driver may operate the vehicle. A driver must have a valid state of Georgia driver's license. A record of the driver's license must be maintained in the church office. A driver must be capable of operating the assigned vehicle and performing emergency procedures.

*SPECIAL NOTE: To obtain approved driver status; all drivers will have a Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) conducted by the Church's Insurance agent.*

### **1.05 Driver Responsibilities**

The driver will be responsible for making certain that all procedural rules are followed, pre and post inspections are done and recorded, and financial obligations paid. The driver will be responsible for exhibiting proper driving behaviors and following all laws during operation of the Church vehicles. The drivers are responsible for the safety and security of all passengers in the vehicle(s).

### **1.06 Vehicle Scheduling**

Keys are to be checked in and out from the church office. Requests for vehicle use must be completed through the calendaring process and approved by the Facilities Coordinator.

### **1.07 Vehicle Pick-up/Drop-Off**

The driver will have the responsibility of picking up the vehicle from the designated area and returning it to that same area after the trip.

### **1.08 Refueling and Cleaning**

The vehicle must be filled with gasoline at the end of the trip and returned to the storage area with the tank filled. The vehicle must be cleaned at completion of use/trip including removing all trash and other items. The interior and exterior shall be cleaned and washed if needed prior to returning the vehicle to the designated area.

### **1.09 Refueling Direct Charges or Reimbursement Authorization**

Groups with authorization to spend against the Church budget OR with approval from the church office may charge gasoline at Hickory Flat United Methodist Church's BP Station (at East Cherokee and Highway 140) or can be reimbursed for out-of-pocket gasoline purchases. When gasoline is charged to the church account at the station, the driver must submit a receipt with a completed Purchase/Funds Request Form to the Church Accountant within three days of returning the vehicle to the Church.

### **1.10 Refueling Direct Charges or Reimbursement without Authorization**

Groups without authorization to spend from the transportation line item in the annual budget OR prior approval from the church office must pay for gasoline individually.

### **1.11 Seat Belt Use**

Each passenger must have access to and wear a seat belt. It is the drivers' responsibility to ensure all persons in the vehicle are secured with a seat belt at all times.

### **1.12 Age Limitations**

Children under age 8 are not allowed to be transported in the 15-passenger van. Exceptions to this procedure must be approved by the Church leadership. An example of an exception is transporting congregational members of all ages from off-site parking for Easter and Christmas worship services.

### **1.13 Supervision and Safe Sanctuary**

Adequate adult supervision (at least two legal adults) is required on all trips where minors are involved. It is the responsibility of the trip director to secure adequate adult supervision and adhere to the Safe Child Policy adopted by the Church.

**1.14 Financial Obligation due to Violations**

Hickory Flat United Methodist Church will not be responsible for financial obligations due to the actions of drivers operating Church vehicles in violation of local, state and federal ordinances.

**1.15 No Smoking Statement**

Smoking is not permitted in a Church vehicle.

**1.16 Cell Phone Use**

Use of a cell phone, by the driver, is only permitted either while the vehicle is parked or when used by a passenger who is not driving.

**1.17 Insurance Coverage**

Insurance coverage on Church vehicles will meet or exceed all state and federal requirements and will be reviewed annually. The Church will carry liability insurance to cover collision on the vehicle.

