

# Nashville Methodist Church – Bus Policy

The Bus Ministry of Nashville Methodist Church shall be operated under the general supervision of the Board of Trustees. A sub-committee, formed by the Trustees, is responsible to the Trustees for developing a written policy that clearly establishes standards for all drivers and vehicles. This policy, approved by the Church Council and the Board of Trustees meets this requirement.

These standards are critically important because accidents are typically the result of basic driver safety violation, lack of safety precautions, and /or poor vehicle maintenance. The administrator of this Bus Policy shall be appointed by the Trustees in conjunction with the input of the sub-committee (may be a member of the sub-committee).

## **Purpose**

The Bus Ministry will provide safe, dependable group transportation for the Church Family to enhance the programs and ministries of the Church.

## **Operating Policy**

### **Use of the Bus**

1. **ELIGIBILITY:** Any NMC group has approval and authority to use the bus. Groups sponsored by or connected to NUMC shall be allowed to use the bus upon special request made to the approval of the Trustees or the Trustees appointed Bus Administrator. Trips outside of the state of North Carolina must be cleared in advance through the Administrator, in consultation with the Trustees.
2. **NUMBER OF PASSENGERS REQUIREMENT:** The maximum number of passengers MAY NOT exceed the capacity of the bus design, including the driver. The minimum number of passengers for an out of county (NASH) trip is to be 15 (including the driver) for the 25 capacity bus and 5 (including the driver) for the 15 capacity bus. No minimum number is required for pick-up for Church services and After School pick-up. Cargo MAY NOT be hauled.
3. **SCHEDULING PROCEDURE:** Reservations should be made through the church website. Availability is a first come, first serve basis. Priority is given to Church services pick-up. The organization or group using the bus is responsible for securing an approved driver and completing the online reservation form. A list of approved drivers is available through the church office.
4. **POINT OF ORIGIN:** The bus will leave from and return to the Church parking lot. The bus will be parked in the designated parking area. Approved Reservation Form, Keys, Bus Log, and Trip Report will be obtained from the Church Office. Be sure to get these items by Friday at noon for weekend trips.
5. **TRIP SUPERVISION:** It is the responsibility of the group or trip sponsor using the bus to provide proper adult supervision. An adult assistant will be assigned on every trip so the driver has access to immediately help with any distraction or other adverse situation. Adult/Child ratios will be kept according to the Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy guidelines. **THE BUS DRIVER CANNOT BE COUNTED AS AN ADULT SUPERVISOR.**

6. **PASSENGER CONDUCT:** All users of the Church bus are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that exemplifies Christian principles and represents NMC values. The Trustees reserve the right to deny use of the bus to passengers whose conduct becomes detrimental to the general safety of the group. Vandalism or willful property damage shall be paid for by the person/group responsible for the damage and constitutes due reason to deny use of the bus for future trips. The sponsors and adult supervisors shall have the sole responsibility for passenger conduct.
7. **BUS CLEANLINESS:** Each group is responsible for cleaning the bus, including picking up any trash, cleaning/ sweeping all debris from the seats, floor, corners, and ledges. Seats should be returned to upright position with arm rests upright and seat belts to stowage position on top of seats. All windows should be closed. A fee of \$50.00 will be assessed any group that does not adequately clean the bus per standards set forth in this policy.
8. **TRIP RECORDS:** The driver is responsible for completing the Bus Passenger Log, and Trip Report. Reports should be turned into the office along with keys following the trip. Forms will be filed in the BUS BOOK for at least one year. Maintenance needs will be specifically communicated and recorded in writing.
9. **ILLEGAL DRUGS, ALCOHOL, or SMOKING:** NONE are allowed on the bus by passengers or driver.
10. **SAFETY EQUIPMENT:** The Trustees shall ensure that a first-aid kit, jumper cables, fire extinguisher, reflective triangles, and any other necessary items are maintained in the bus. A secured box will be placed on the bus for cables and reflective triangles. Each driver is responsible for the equipment and supplies appropriate for the trip, such as maps, GPS and cell phone. Drivers MUST complete their own pre-trip inspection checklists to ensure that all items are available before departure from the Church parking lot. Any first-aid items, flares, or fire extinguisher used on any bus trip must be recorded on the trip report by the driver before the form is returned to the Church Office.
11. **CHURCH SPOKESPERSON:** In the event of an accident or emergency situation involving the Church bus, NMC should be represented at the scene by one individual in any ensuing discussion with authorities, insurance representatives, etc. The driver will be the spokesperson on the scene for the Church in any such situation. The alternate will be the selected Adult Assistant in the event the driver is unable to perform this responsibility.

## **Drivers**

1. The Church Office shall maintain a binder of driver applications (which includes orientation signoff by a trustee approved bus coordinator) and copies of information listed in B, below. All information will be locked in a secured location.
  - A. Driver approval requirements:
    - 1) Be 25 years of age or older.
    - 2) Provide proof of insurance.
    - 3) CLASS C License (for 15 passenger bus) or Class C Commercial Driver's License with a passenger endorsement (for 25 passenger bus).
    - 4) Attend the Trustees sponsored Bus Driver Vehicle Orientation training session and must drive the bus for a supervised familiarization road test.
    - 5) Outside organizations must have an approved driver.
  - B. All drivers must provide a copy of their current NC License, a copy of the MVR History Report, date of birth, and attest that they have had:
    - 1) NO DUI's (Driving Under the Influence) within the past 5 years.
    - 2) NO reckless driving charge in the last 5 years
    - 3) NO more than two moving violations in the previous 2 years.

2. **TRIP RESPONSIBILITY:** The driver of the Church bus will have sole responsibility and authority in matters pertaining to the bus operation, maintenance, and safety. The driver is responsible for complying with this policy, obeying all traffic laws, completing post-trip requirements (returning the key, Passenger Log and Trip Report to the Church Office). Proper maintenance of the vehicle's safety equipment is especially important for the life of the driver and passengers. NMC has a fuel charge account established at Taylor Exxon in Nashville. At the completion of each trip the Driver is responsible for refueling the bus to ensure it is ready for the next group.

3. **TRAINING AND RESPONSIBILITY:** The Trustees shall insure that all drivers are properly trained in the operations of the bus and that they are supplied with all pertinent information and instruction. Prospective drivers will receive instruction on areas listed below and he/she will have a familiarization road test with a trustees approved bus coordinator.

- A. Driving buses and towing trailers present significantly different driving challenges than normal passenger car operations. Also, adverse weather and road conditions, caravanning, and transporting passengers all present hazards the untrained driver may not be prepared to handle.
- B. When transporting passengers, extreme care must be taken during passenger loading and unloading. Pick up and drop off passengers on the same side of the street as their destination. If a child must cross the street, provide an adult escort. Plan transportation routes in advance to ensure this is done properly.
- C. Mechanical Breakdown: Make sure hazard lights are flashing and reflective triangles are available. When using reflective triangles, place them 100 and 200 feet to the rear of the vehicle. Keep passengers in the vehicle at all times unless there is a fire or fumes pose added danger to them. Call for help and notify 911 for assistance as soon as possible and be prepared to make alternative transportation available to passengers.
- D. Accidents: Written accident instructions from the Church's Insurance Agent should be available and carried on the bus at all times. Information should include when to call police; how to report an accident; obtaining witness contacts; notification of group and families; and notification of NMC's insurance company. Reference the CHURCH SPOKESPERSON, above.
- E. Since driver error is the major factor in motor vehicle accidents, the driver becomes the greatest area of influence in a safe motoring experience. Consequently, there are some important, defensive driver skills to use in avoiding the terrible results of a highway accident. The National Highway Traffic Safety Agency (NHTSA) supports throughout the country on defensive driving the following techniques it feels are very important for a driver to observe:
  - Expect the unexpected, and always have a way out.
  - Never tailgate. Stay two full seconds behind the driver in front of you.
  - Look out ahead. Be aware of what's going on several vehicles in front of you.
  - Keep your eyes moving to the front, side and rear.
  - Anticipate potential accidents and situations, and prepare for a way out.
  - Before entering an open intersection, look left, right and left again.
  - Don't insist on the right-of-way. Be willing to yield always on the side of safety.
  - Do not use a cell phone while driving. Pass calls to an assistant.
  - Never drive under the influence of medication, alcohol, or drugs.
  - Make a complete stop at all Railroad Crossing and verify crossing is clear prior to proceeding.
  - Do not make right hand turns on Red Traffic lights.
  - While fueling the bus it shall be free of all occupants to ensure safety.

**Operations and Maintenance**

1. BUDGET: An amount shall be allocated in the Church budget to cover annual operating and maintenance expenses.

1. MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY: The Trustees are responsible for major items of upkeep such as insurance coverage, tires and repairs. The Trustees will provide operational maintenance such as registration, fuel, oil and filter/lube, exterior wash, tune-ups, and preventative/routine maintenance, etc...

**Insurance**

The Church shall insure the bus. Minimum coverage shall include bodily injury and property damage, liability, medical payments, uninsured motorist, fire, theft, comprehensive, and collision. The cost of insurance shall be provided for in the annual Church budget.

**Review of Policies**

As authorized by the Church Council and Board of Trustees, this may be reviewed at any time by the Trustees. The Trustees reserve the right to approve exceptions to this policy on an individual basis.

**Policy Acceptance**

1. A signed copy is one of the qualifications required for a driver to be included on the Approved Drivers List.
2. Group Leader is required to confirm their understanding and acceptance.
3. Signing the below is to attest that the individual has read and will abide by the NMC Bus Policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_