

Pittsburgh Presbytery Parental, Family, and Personal Leave Policy

Adopted 6/2016, Revised 11/2023

This policy details how the Book of Order section G-2.0804 shall be applied within Pittsburgh Presbytery and in no way should be understood as superseding the Book of Order.

Parental Leave

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of the family take place in many ways and on many levels in the life of a church. During times of joy and times of sadness, the congregation has the opportunity and the responsibility of extending care for the *pastor* and *their family*.

- Parental leave is extended to all pastors who are welcoming a new child into their family, whether by birth or adoption. The policy applies to the terms of call of all pastors serving congregations in the presbytery, including those serving in temporary/transitional or part-time positions and installed positions.
- When a pastor or their spouse becomes pregnant, the Session/Council and the appropriate Presbytery Staff and/or COM representative should ordinarily be consulted within 12 weeks of a physician's confirmation of the pregnancy. Maternal leave would ordinarily begin with the physician's certification that the female pastor can no longer perform her duties. Paternal leave may begin at a time agreed upon by the pastor and his Session/Council. The time of leave for pastor(s) who are adopting a child begins when the child arrives for permanent placement in the pastor's home or when the pastor begins their travel in order to complete an adoption.
- Congregations are required to provide, as a minimum, the pastor's full salary and benefits for twelve (12) weeks. This leave does not require the pastor to exhaust other types of paid leave including vacation and continuing education time.

Other arrangements may be negotiated by the *pastor* and Session/Council to extend the leave beyond the initial period of three months (12 weeks). A *pastor* may extend the period of parental leave at his/her discretion by using accrued vacation time. Upon completion of the parental leave, the *pastor* will be entitled to return to his/her position. The position will not be filled during the leave except on a temporary basis.

Family Leave

- Family leave is appropriate in life-altering circumstances when the pastor is called upon by reason of major life trauma or serious illness to be the primary caregiver for a spouse, child, parent, sibling, or other family member for whom the pastor bears primary responsibility.
- Congregations are required to provide, as a minimum, the pastor's full salary and benefits for up to twelve (12) weeks for those in installed or covenant pastoral relationships and up to eight (8) weeks for those in other temporary pastoral relationships. This leave does not require the pastor to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.
- Other arrangements may be negotiated by the pastor and Session/Council to extend the leave beyond the initial period. Upon completion of the leave, the pastor will be entitled to return to his/her position. The position will not be filled during the leave except on a temporary basis.

Loss and Tragedy (Personal) Leave

- In consultation with the Commission on Ministry and the approval of the Session, Loss and Tragedy leave is appropriate in the wake of a significant life-altering event when the pastor discerns a need for time away from their regular responsibilities. The pastor should provide, as part of the request, a plan toward healing that includes intentional practices and action steps.
- Congregations are required to provide, as a minimum, the pastor's full salary and benefits for up to twelve (12) for those in installed or covenant pastoral relationships and up to eight (8) weeks for those in other temporary pastoral relationships. This leave does not require the pastor to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.
- Other arrangements may be negotiated by the pastor and Session/Council to extend the leave beyond the initial period. Upon completion of the leave, the pastor will be entitled to return to his/her position. The position will not be filled during the leave except on a temporary basis.

In General

- Churches are encouraged to be supportive in every way when such a situation arises that necessitates a pastor to step away from the daily life of a congregation and tend to the needs of his or her family. Family and parental leave is in addition to vacation and other periods of extended time away, already set forth in the pastor's call.
- The Commission on Ministry (COM) and appropriate Presbytery staff member should be informed when a Parental or Family Leave option is exercised by a pastor so that the COM and Branch Minister may be of assistance in securing appropriate pulpit supply, pastoral care, and administrative assistance during the pastor's absence. Additionally, the COM and Presbytery staff member may be helpful, if needed, in advising the Session/Council in how they may continue the mission of the congregation while the pastor is absent.
- The expectation is that the pastor will return to service and remain in his or her current position for at least 12 months after the leave has ended.
- A Session/Council ought not to feel over-burdened by financial considerations that may be present in the pastor's time of leave. The COM, working with Presbytery staff member will seek to assist the congregation as necessary to provide appropriate pulpit supply and pastoral services. Sessions are encouraged to apply for a Parental, Family, and Personal Leave Grant from the Presbytery.
- A pastor may elect to request less than 12 weeks if they so desire.
- Specifically in the case of personal leave, but potentially regarding all three forms of leave, the pastor may elect to delay taking their period of leave and choose to take their leave in blocks rather than all at one. However, they must take their period(s) leave within one year of making their request. The schedule for leave should align with the goals of that specific type of leave.
- Congregations are encouraged to respect the boundaries and privacy of the pastor while he or she is away on Parental or Family Leave.