

## **Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley Parental and Family Leave Recommendations for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders, Certified Christian Educators**

These recommendations are meant to help churches develop and implement policies for Parental Leave and Family Leave for Ministers, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Certified Christian Educators. These recommendations are meant to open up conversations between Sessions, personnel committees, and professional staff members so as to decide upon appropriate policies. This may also be a stepping stone for policies for an entire church staff. The negotiated leave should be incorporated into the terms of call.

### **Theological Grounding**

God created us to be in relationship with one another, to care for one another, and to participate in families.

We are required to honor our father and mother, and to care for our children. As congregational leaders, we are to encourage healthy families and healthy priorities. Parental leave gives the mother or father a chance to establish a healthy connection with her or his child and model good family life for the congregation.

As part of the minimum compensation recommendations of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, every call to a Presbyterian Minister, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or a Certified Christian Educator in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley may consider following Parental and Family Leave provisions as a minimum.

### **Purpose**

- A. To provide Sessions and other employing agencies a guide for minimum standards for a Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and Certified Christian Educator's parental and family leave to be included in all call packages. It is anticipated that individual churches and employers will not feel limited by these guidelines, and will respond to the need for family leave responsibly and generously.
- B. To ensure that Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and Certified Christian Educator receive fair and equitable leave when required. It is anticipated that a Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and Certified Christian Educator will use this policy only when needed, and will not abuse the generosity of the church.

### **Recommendations for Parental Leave**

1. **Maternity leave:** At least 12 weeks leave with full pay and benefits, excluding travel expenses or allowances, shall be included in the terms of each call.
2. **Paternity leave:** At least 12 weeks of paternity leave with full pay and benefits, excluding travel expenses or allowances, shall be included in the terms of each call.
3. **Adoption Leave:** Recognizing that the adoption of a child requires as much of a transition as the birth of a child, a Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator who is adopting shall be granted leave commensurate with maternity or paternity

leave. If additional leave is necessary, the Session or employing agency shall be consulted and it shall be arranged under the terms of the Family Leave paragraph of his section.

4. A Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator, desiring parental leave, will submit a written request to their Session, ordinarily thirty (30) days prior to the start of the leave.
5. Parental leave ordinarily begins at the time of delivery or when appropriate in the adoption procedure. Complications related to a pregnancy will be considered medical leave.
6. In the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth, the pastor shall be granted the same parental leave she/he would have received had the pregnancy been carried to term with no complications.
7. The Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and Certified Christian Educator should be relieved of all ministry responsibilities for the duration of the parental leave. The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during this time. Session should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, a Session moderator, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation and continuation of teaching and programming for which the pastor was responsible.
8. Vacation time may be added to Maternity or Paternity Leave Time with full pay and benefits. Requests for additional Parental Leave Time due to the individual circumstances of each birth or adoption may be negotiated with the Session and with the assistance of the Commission on Ministry. This leave does not require the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.

### **Recommendations for Family Leave**

Family Leave is appropriate in life-altering circumstances when a Minister, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or a Certified Christian Educator 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 teaching elder bears primary responsibility.

Churches are encouraged to be supportive in every way when such a situation arises that necessitates a Minister, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or a Certified Christian Educator to step away from the daily life of a congregation and tend to the needs of his or her family.

**Family Leave:** Congregations are recommended to provide, as a minimum, the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator full salary and benefits for up to **twelve (12)** weeks. This leave does not require the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator to exhaust other types of paid leave, including vacation and continuing education time.

Other arrangements may be negotiated by the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and/or Certified Christian Educator and Session/Council to extend the leave beyond the initial period.

Upon completion of the leave, the teaching elder 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**

The Commission on Ministry (COM) should be informed when a Parental or Family Leave option is exercised by a Minister, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or a Certified Christian Educator so that the COM may be of assistance in securing appropriate pulpit supply, pastoral care, and administrative assistance during the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator absence. Additionally, the COM may be helpful, if needed, in advising the Session in how they may continue the mission of the congregation while the Minister, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Certified Christian Educator is absent. The COM will seek to assist the congregation as necessary to provide appropriate pulpit supply and pastoral services.

Congregations are encouraged to respect the boundaries and privacy of a Minister, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or a Certified Christian Educator while he or she is away on Parental or Family Leave.