

Presbytery of Detroit Family Leave Policy (Approved by COM 07/06/2023, Synod AC 09/21/2023)

I. Theological Grounding

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of the family takes place in many ways and on many levels in the life of a church. Through Jesus' earthly life, teaching and love, we come to see God in our own lives, in the everyday circumstances of human interaction, relationship, challenge, heartbreak, conflict and joy. Family leave, at the time of birth, adoption, sickness or death gives the opportunity for congregations to extend care for the pastor and pastor's family by offering appropriate time for them to step away from their professional occupation to minister the needs of loved ones without loss of income or security.

II. Individuals Covered by this Policy

This policy applies to the following members of the Presbytery of Detroit: Teaching Elders serving in installed and temporary pastoral relationships, Validated Ministers serving in PCUSA congregational settings, and Commissioned Ruling Elders currently serving churches in the Presbytery. Those covered will be identified throughout this policy as "pastor."

III. Policy

The terms of call for each pastor serving in a congregation shall include the following language per the Book of Order.

All Pastors' compensation (full-time and part-time; temporary or installed; and Commissioned Pastors) shall include twelve weeks paid family leave. "Family leave" includes, but is not limited to: leave following the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child, and provision for an ill or disabled family members, to heal following a loss or tragic event.

The twelve weeks need not be taken consecutively. Pastors may not request more than one paid leave within a twelve-month span and three within a five-year period of time.

The calendar year begins on the first day of leave. Unpaid or partially paid time may be negotiated if more time is needed. Congregations and sessions are encouraged to deal with their pastors with the greatest compassion befitting followers of Christ.

A. Notification to Session: When a pastor or a pastor's spouse becomes pregnant, or plans to adopt or foster a child they shall inform the session of the request for family leave at least 30 days but a recommended 60 days prior to the start of the leave, recognizing that the more time the session has to prepare for the pastor's absence, the better the session will be able to ensure provision for necessary pastoral services during the leave. When a pastor's family member is in need of care, the pastor will inform the session and request family leave as early as is reasonable. When tragic event or bereavement leave is needed, the pastor will notify session as soon as reasonable.

B. Birth/Adoption/Foster Placement: The pastor shall be granted Family Leave for 12 weeks. During the time of family leave, the pastor shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues, including medical benefits.

C. Serious Health Condition: The pastor of a church may request family medical leave when they experience an abrupt change in health or mental-health, if they receive a new diagnosis, or if they need time to acquire a diagnosis or undergo treatment. This gives pastors the time necessary to discern how their health might affect their current call, learn what adaptations may be needed to continue, or arrange for alternative care.

D. Family Member Care: The pastor of a church may require leave to help transition a family member into appropriate care, or provide intensive caregiving for another close family member. Often these transitions in caregiving require significant time and energy from family members. Examples of direct family members may include, but are not limited to, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, in-laws, or a spouse.

E. Loss or Tragic Event: We recognize that pastors are not immune to this. Tragic events cannot always be comprehensively defined. Examples of a "tragic event" may include, but are not limited to pregnancy loss, natural disasters, community violence, or sexual assault. To protect the privacy of the pastor, it may be necessary for the pastor to consult with the Committee on Ministry and/ or Executive/General Presbyter to request for leave on their behalf. Such matters shall be handled with prayer and care. In the event of the death of a direct family member (may include, but are not limited to, parents, grandparents, siblings, children, in-laws, or a spouse) up to 12 weeks of leave shall be granted.

F. Session Responsibilities during the Pastor's Leave: The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during the pastor's leave. Session should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation, and whatever teaching and programming for which the pastor was responsible. The Committee on Ministry will appoint a Session moderator. Compensation for the moderator will be paid for by the church. Should this become a hardship for congregation, they may apply for assistance from the Committee on Ministry as per section G below.

G. Assistance for Churches: The Committee on Ministry and/or the General/Executive Presbyter will seek to provide assistance to help churches unable to meet the financial obligations outlined above in the event their pastor requires leave. This assistance is to assure that the pastor does not feel pressured to return to work prematurely and the church is able to secure sufficient pastoral care during the pastor's absence. Financial support for the church would be extended for the same time period granted for the leave, up to, but not to exceed, additional time granted by the Session or appropriate calling body for leave. Individual sessions will apply to the Committee on Ministry and/or the General/Executive Presbyter when such cases arise, and each case will be judged on its own merits.

I. Other Church Staff: The Presbytery invites churches to extend this or a similar policy to all church staff.