

Proposed Family Leave Policy Presbytery of Geneva

Approved by the Committee on Ministry (January 9, 2024)

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of the family takes 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 responsibility of extending care to the pastor and the pastor's family. The Presbytery of Geneva is committed to a culture that helps our pastors meet the demands of family and ministry responsibilities and honoring the life that Christ has given to us. Offering the option of taking paid time off when they or a family member is sick is not just good for them and their families, but it is also healthy for the whole of the Church. This policy has been developed by the Presbytery of Geneva and shall be considered the minimum standards for installed pastors serving congregations in the Presbytery of Geneva. The Presbytery strongly recommends that congregations and pastors who have annual covenants (transition/interim pastors, temporary pastors, and commissioned ruling elders commissioned to serve a specific congregation) work out an equitable arrangement when the pastor needs family leave time during the term of the covenant.

Parental Leave

Parental leave is meant to give parents the opportunity to spend concentrated time on building up a new relationship with a child in their household. Terms of call for all installed pastoral positions must supply up to 12 weeks of paid family leave [G-2.0804]. This is not vacation or study leave. All parents who receive a new child into their home due to birth, adoption, placement of long-term foster children, or other legal guardianships of children shall be granted the option of up to 12 weeks of paid leave with benefits. A session and pastor may negotiate an extension of parental leave, as needed, with terms agreed upon by the session and pastor.

The timing of parental leave is up to the pastor. People planning to welcome a child into their home shall ordinarily give their session at least a three month notice of the intent to take parental leave. In cases where it is not possible to give a three-month notice, the pastor should give as much notice time as possible.

A pastor may take up to 12 weeks paid leave (with benefits) during the calendar year for parental or family leave. The weeks need not be consecutive, but must be used within 1 year of the first day when the family leave is taken. A pastor is expected to be in close communication with their session regarding the weeks needed. Should a pastor find themselves in an extraordinary situation in which more than 12 weeks of family leave are needed within a calendar year, the pastor and session of their church should enter into a dialogue with the Committee on Ministry to work out the appropriate arrangements.

Family Leave

In addition to parental leave, other situations may arise for which a pastor needs to take time. Qualifying events for which a pastor may take family leave include, but need not be limited to,

the death of a family member, the serious illness of an immediate family member, or moving an immediate family member into a care facility. An immediate family member is defined as a spouse, a partner, or a child. A session should give due consideration to the fact that some other family relationships are as close to a person as these relationships and they are encouraged to act with grace and generosity in such situations. These other family relationships could also be a sibling; a step-parent; a parent or a parent-in-law; a grandparent; a grandchild; or other relatives living in the same household.

General issues Pertaining to Parental and Family Leave

- Parental and family leave time cannot accrue, and any unused leave time will not be compensated when a pastor leaves.
- Vacation time shall not be used as a substitute for any of these forms of leave, but can be used to supplement the leave if approved by session.
- Upon a pastor's completion of their parental or family leave, the pastor shall return to their position.
- The pastor's position will not be filled during the leave, except on a temporary basis.
- If a session moderator is needed and not secured in advance by the pastor, the COM will provide a session moderator during the pastor's leave.
- It is the responsibility of the congregation to provide the pastor with full pay and benefits during the 12 weeks of parental and/or family leave.
- The pastor and the session should, as far as possible, work together to plan for pulpit supply, pastoral care coverage, and other necessities for the duration of the leave.
- Preaching honoraria, mileage reimbursements, and other ministry expenses needed to fill pastoral responsibilities shall be the responsibility of the session on behalf of the congregation.
- In the event that more than 12 weeks needs to be taken within a calendar year, a pastor and their session shall involve the COM to discuss the needs of the pastor and the congregation and to work out an agreeable arrangement between all parties.
- If providing 12 weeks of leave in a given year proves to be a financial hardship for a congregation, this will be discussed with the COM, and the presbytery may provide assistance to congregations with demonstrated need.
- Any instances of parental or family leaves shall be documented by the session and reported to COM.

This policy is based on the Family Leave Policy of the Presbytery of Baltimore and New Harmony Presbytery.