

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTAL LEAVE

PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

Introduction

Parental Leave is to be considered for ordained clergy and staff who intend to return to their position. It is intended that this form of leave be the same as any other temporary disability. Provided there are no medical complications, pregnancy, along with childbirth, is a condition of health. There are nonetheless parallels that can be made between the way congregations deal with a sick or disabled minister or staff and how they might handle the situation of a minister who plans to give birth to a child. At present, most congregations would take a supportive stance toward a minister who is ill or disabled for a time. A minister would not be penalized by the congregation for being ill or disabled by a reduction or withholding of salary or benefits, nor be deprived of the assurance of keeping his or her job. Rather, arrangements would be made which would allow for a time of recuperation and freedom from financial pressures and the demands of work. What this amounts to, in short, is short term leave with pay.

Parental Leave is intended for congregations as a grant of paid leave to any full time ordained or fulltime staff member who is the sole caretaker of his or her newborn or newly adopted child requiring their attention and care at least 20 hours per week, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. When requesting the leave, a parent asserts that he or she will be the "sole caregiver" for the requisite period.

Background

In recognition of changing demographics and dual income family professional responsibilities outside the home environment, along with the increasing number of women entering the ranks of ordained ministry, guidelines for Parental Leave should be provided for consideration by congregations under these circumstances.

Definition

Parental Leave is a planned time away from work for giving birth, and/or for providing early child care during adoptions. It is not considered a vacation. During this short term absence, changes in family responsibilities and assisting for the early care of the newborn or recent adoption are recognized as integral to the normal support and nurturing of the family nucleus. It is for full time ministers or full time staff who assume or intend to assume full responsibility for the care of a newborn, or within a year following the initial placement of a child 16 years of age or under for the purpose of adoption.

Suggestions

Churches and their professional staff (ordained clergy and fulltime staff) are encouraged to dialogue together to come up with suitable leave terms that will benefit all involved, and not place too much of a burden on the church, nor ignore the full need of the staff member.

1. Eligibility: Parental Leave is a benefit offered at the discretion of the church. Full time staff working an average of 30 hours per week should be eligible for Parental Leave who have completed at least six (6) months of continuous service.
2. Duration: Parental Leave is granted for a reasonable short period immediately following the birth of a child, or the initial placement or the legal adoption of a child of age 16 or under. As there is no legal limit for such Leave, similar to sick or disability leave, discretion is requested of all parties concerned. It should be determined by mutual agreement. Parental Leave of approximately two weeks is not uncommon, for example, whereas common absence for pregnancy and delivery without complications may be for periods up to three months.
3. Procedure: The staff member should bring a proposal to the Personnel Committee and/or the Session within a reasonable period prior to the beginning of the proposed leave. The proposal should include details on how the time will be used, and proposed arrangements for covering the staff member's congregational duties.
4. Approval and Communication: Parental Leave is for Session approval. Upon approval it is recommended that such action be communicated to the congregation.
5. Combination with other benefits: An ordained or staff member may choose to use sick leave, or vacation leave, or any other accrued paid leave time during the leave, up to six weeks. The church may wish separate these and not require that this Leave be combined with other usable benefits. Use of paid leave does not extend the overall leave time to which the employee is entitled.
6. Continuity of Benefits: During this Leave, continuity of benefits provided by the church is encouraged.
7. Resignations: In the event the ordained clergy or staff member chooses to resign before or at the expiration of the Leave period, the church may request that it be reimbursed for the monetary compensation provided during the Leave.

Flexibility will be the most important means of arriving at a mutually satisfactory arrangement for Parental Leave. Though not required, documenting and putting the agreement in writing is recommended.

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