

Presbytery of Chicago - Parental Leave Guidelines

[Approved by the Commission on Ministry on June 14, 2022]

[Approved by POC Assembly on September 20, 2022]

[Update per Book of Order change – June 26, 2023]

The Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of Chicago recommends the following guidelines for the compassionate care of ministers / teaching elders serving in pastoral relationships in congregations who are covered by the Benefits Plan with the Board of Pensions when children are added to the family. Sessions may adapt these guidelines to fit the needs of other church staff.

All employees may receive parental leave in the period immediately preceding and following the arrival by birth or adoption of a child.

Parental Leave Time

- Up to 12 weeks leave at full salary and housing allowance; **Or**
- A negotiated agreement between the Session and the minister / teaching elder which follows the general guidelines stated above.

Additional Parental Leave Provisions:

1. Vacation and sick leave may be used to supplement the leave as negotiated between the Session and the minister / teaching elder.
2. All other benefits (health, pension) remain in effect.
3. If the minister / teaching elder is unable to return to work at the end of the leave agreed upon, the Session, in consultation with the Commission on Ministry, would act appropriate to the particular situation.
4. Parental leave should ordinarily be negotiated with the Session prior to the anticipated birth or adoption. Unforeseen complications in the pregnancy and/or delivery or adoption procedures may necessitate an adjustment in these provisions.

Summary

These guidelines are offered in the judgment of the Commission on Ministry as fair, reasonable, and compassionate suggestions that ministers / teaching elders and sessions may consider in negotiating family needs when a new child becomes a part of the family. It is not the intent of the Commission on Ministry that these guidelines should be limiting. Sessions are free to exercise their support in more generous ways if they deem it appropriate. The presbytery urges congregations to follow these guidelines. If needed, Commission on Ministry may be called upon to assist with the negotiations in unusual circumstances.

The minister / teaching elder may elect, with the approval of the session, to use vacation time in conjunction with the parental leave. The Commission on Ministry encourages Sessions and ministers / teaching elders to be aware of the difference between parental leave and vacation time. The Commission on Ministry stands ready to assist teaching elders and sessions in the process of negotiation when children are added to the family of a teaching elder.

End Note: The federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), enacted in 1993, does not apply to churches.

Suggestions for meeting this requirement – see next page.

The PC(USA)'s Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice has ideas for covering worship leadership for 12 weeks of family leave

Youth June 6, 2023

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With 12 weeks of family leave now part of a minister's terms of call, congregations can get creative filling the pulpit

by the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice / Special to Presbyterian News Service

Last year, commissioners to the 225th General Assembly [approved a recommendation by the Family Leave Policy Task Force](#) —later ratified by the presbyteries —to provide ministers a minimum of 12 weeks of paid family medical leave. The [Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice](#) has published the resource below to help congregations —especially smaller congregations —with ideas for seeking out worship leadership during each of those 12 weeks.

Yes, covering 12 weeks can be hard on a congregation, especially a small congregation. Yet within your community, committee members said, you have resources to tap into. It involves reaching outside your walls and being open to the Spirit.

Here is a sample of what those 12 weeks might look like:

Sunday 1 —Aruling elder proclaims the Word. We encourage presbyteries to provide training to their ruling elders to be able to proclaim the Word. Ruling elders are the spiritual leaders of the congregation, and we encourage them to step up during this time.

Sunday 2 —Invite a community partner to come in and share the mission of their organization.

Sunday 3 —Music Sunday. Select a scripture and have music that reflects that scripture.

Sunday 4 —Youth Sunday.

Week 5 —Invite a mission co-worker to share their work. This takes advance planning, and it can happen in person or online. This could involve paying an honorarium.

Week 6 —Aruling elder proclaims the Word.

Week 7 —Men’s Sunday.

Week 8 —Do you have a retired minister or retired educator in your congregation? Ask them for one Sunday as a gift to the church.

Week 9 —Women’s Sunday.

Week 10 —Invite another community partner to come in and share the mission of their organization.

Week 11 —Is there someone in your congregation who has a story of faith to share? Or several people? Give them a prompt to help shape their comments.

Week 12 —You made it! Celebrate with a hymn sing and prepare to welcome your pastor back.

The Presbyterian Outlook [publishes liturgy for each Sunday of the year](#). Be sure to credit Presbyterian Outlook.

Holy Humor Sunday is also called Bright Sunday. Learn more [here](#). [You can celebrate it any Sunday](#).

Other suggestions include:

- Invite a candidate under care of your presbytery to fill the pulpit one Sunday. Your presbytery can help you with this.
- Is there a PC(USA) seminary or one of our full-communion partners less than an hour away? They often have students who are approved to fill the pulpit. Reach out.
- Is there someone within your presbytery who serves on a PC(USA) national committee? Invite them to share about their work.
- We suggested the retired educator, but an educator from another congregation may be willing to come share a message or new ideas around Christian formation.

Worship doesn't have to happen just in the sanctuary. Worship around the tables in the social hall, with food and hands-on activities as prayers are prayed, scriptures are shared, and hymns are sung. The Word is proclaimed via your hands-on activities.

We encourage the presbytery's committee on ministry to assist congregations in planning for the 12 weeks.

We encourage sessions to be proactive in preparing for these 12 weeks by setting aside the current honorarium for a pulpit supply into a separate line item in their budget monthly. We acknowledge that some presbyteries require congregations to set aside for sabbatical leave. But with creative worship ideas, congregations are not covering the cost of pulpit supply for the whole 12 weeks. They thus can set aside half of the rate monthly instead of the whole amount.

We encourage sessions to be creative if they feel they can't include the funds into their budget to pay an honorarium. We also encourage sessions to reach out to their presbytery. Does the presbytery have funds that could help offset the expense of honoraria?

Don't forget your synod. Do they have funds that could help you? Or, since we are a connectional church, maybe the synod has resources that can help you.



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