

Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy Family Leave Policy

I. Theological Grounding

God created us to be in a 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 and kin. Thus, provision is made when a minister needs to be absent from work in order to care for both self and family.

II. Purpose

- A. To provide Sessions and other employing agencies minimum standards for a pastor's 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 ministers receive fair and equitable leave when required. It is anticipated that ministers will use this policy only when needed, and will not abuse the generosity of the church.

III. Individuals Covered by this Policy.

This policy applies to the following minister members of the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy (herein referred to as "pastor"):

- **Installed Pastors, Co-Pastors, and Associate Pastors** in a congregational setting meeting the Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
- **Interim Pastors and Interim Associate Pastors** in a congregational setting meeting the Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
- **Designated Pastors and Designated Associate Pastors** meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
- **Stated Supply Pastors** meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
- **Pastors serving in other called ministries** of the Presbytery meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

IV. Policy

A. Medically Certified Disability

Pastors who are, according to certification of a licensed physician, temporarily disabled shall refer to the Commission on Ministry and the Board of Pensions for direction.

B. Family Leave

When a pastor needs to take extended leave due to the needs of a family member, the Session or appropriate employment agency shall be consulted as soon as possible. Situations that may fall under this heading include, but are not limited to, an extended hospitalization/rehabilitation, the need to place a family member in long-term care, and the need to take care of family matters in the event of death. Family leave shall be up to

six weeks in length, during which time the pastor shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues. If additional leave is required, the pastor shall negotiate for such leave with the Session or appropriate employing agency with the concurrence of the Commission on Ministry. A pastor may lengthen the period of family leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.

C. Maternity Leave

When a pastor becomes pregnant, the Session or appropriate employing agency shall be consulted within 12 weeks of a physician's confirmation of the pregnancy. Maternity leave should ordinarily begin with the physician's certification that the pastor can no longer perform her duties and end when she is medically released by her physician to return to her professional duties. This is ordinarily an eight-week period, during which the pastor shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues.

In the event of medical complications, the Session or employing agency shall be consulted and the pastor shall make arrangements for additional leave with the Session or employing agency, under the terms of the Medically Certified Disability paragraph of this section. A pastor may lengthen the period of maternity leave at her discretion by using accrued vacation.

D. Paternity Leave

If a pastor's spouse becomes pregnant, the pastor shall notify the Session or employing agency within 12 weeks of a physician's confirmation of the pregnancy. A request for paternity leave shall be made no later than a month before the requested leave is to begin. Paternity leave may be up to three weeks in length, during which time the pastor shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues. 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 this section. A pastor may lengthen the period of paternity leave at his discretion by using accrued vacation.

E. Adoption Leave

Recognizing that the adoption of a child requires as much of a transition as the birth of a child, a pastor who is adopting shall be granted leave commensurate with maternity or paternity leave. The time of the leave begins when the child is placed in the pastor's parent's hand. 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. A pastor may lengthen the period of adoption leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.

F. Additional Considerations

These guidelines should be considered in negotiating appropriate family leave:

1. Study leave shall not be used for family, maternity, paternity, or adoptive leave;
2. "Re-entry" may be scheduled on a full-time or part-time basis as agreed upon by the pastor and session, with medical approval;
3. If a pastor initiates dissolution within one year following family, maternity, paternity, or adoption leave, any unused vacation time shall be credited against the leave;

4. Should a pastor experience a miscarriage or stillbirth, she/he shall be given the maternity/paternity leave she/he would have received had the pregnancy been carried to term with no complications.
5. The time periods listed are intended to be an annual benefit, not to be accrued.

G. Session Responsibilities during the Pastor's Leave

The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during the pastor's leave. The Session should be ready to arrange and pay for pulpit supply, a Session moderator, coverage for hospital and emergency visitation, and whatever teaching and programming for which the pastor was responsible. Should this become a hardship for a congregation, they may apply for assistance from the Commission on Ministry as per section V below.

H. Military Leave

Pastors who serve in the Military Reserves shall ordinarily settle on all details regarding their military requirements in a Mobilization Agreement as part of their terms of call. These details should include the annual two-week training period and what compensation the church will provide during that time. It is recommended that the pastor not take a cut in salary for those two weeks so that if the military reimbursement is less than the pastor's salary, the church makes up the difference. Further information is available from the Board of Pensions.

V. Assistance for Churches

The Commission on Ministry 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. Financial assistance will not be given during a pastor's use of accrued vacation. Individual sessions will apply to the Commission on Ministry when such cases arise, and each case will be judged on its own merits.