

**PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY**  
**The Presbytery of Ohio Valley**  
**Approved by the Committee on Ministry on February 17, 2015**  
**And approved by the Presbytery of Ohio Valley on March 7, 2015**

**I. Theological Grounding**

God created us to be in relationship with one another. Human beings are nurtured in families where we care and are cared for at the most basic level, which equips us for life in the larger community. The Church recognizes the significance of family in the lives of its church personnel and seeks to be fair, reasonable and compassionate in all its dealings related to family. Scripture instructs us to honor those we call "father" or "mother" (Exodus 20:12), and to care for children, for as such is "the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-16). Therefore, it is the policy of the Presbytery of Ohio Valley and its member congregations to meet or exceed the following terms regarding Pastors and Certified Christian Educators when children are added to their family through birth, adoption, or guardianship.

**II. Purpose**

To provide Sessions and other employing agencies minimum standards for a church professional's parental leave to be included in all call packages. It is anticipated that individual churches and employers will not feel limited by these requirements, and will respond to the need for parental leave responsibly and generously.

**III. Individuals Covered by this Policy**

**A. Installed Pastors**

1. Pastors, Co-Pastors, and Associate Pastors serving a congregation of the presbytery.
2. Designated Pastors and Designated Associate Pastors serving a congregation of the presbytery.

**B. Temporary Pastors**

1. Transitional Pastors and Transitional Associate Pastors in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
2. Stated Supply Pastors meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.
3. Ruling Elders Commissioned to Pastoral Service in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

**C. Certified Christian Educators**, in a congregational setting, meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

**D. Persons serving the Presbytery of Ohio Valley**, meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

**E. Exclusions**

1. All Temporary Pastors not covered by Board of Pensions minimum requirements.

## **IV. Guidelines**

### **A. Maternity Leave**

1. When a church professional becomes pregnant, the Session or appropriate employing agency shall be informed within 12 weeks of a physician's confirmation of the pregnancy.
2. A request for maternity leave shall be made ordinarily no later than a month before the requested leave is to begin. A physician's certification that the church professional can no longer perform her duties may alter this timeline and may dictate when she is medically released to return to her professional duties.
3. A maternity leave of at least eight weeks shall be granted for a birth or adoption/guardianship; an additional two weeks shall be granted for a birth by Caesarean section.
4. The church professional shall receive full salary, housing, and benefits included within the terms of her call or contract.
5. A church professional may lengthen the period of maternity leave at her discretion using accrued vacation, providing this information as soon as possible to the congregation or employing organization.
6. In the event of medical complications, the Session or employing agency shall be consulted and the church professional shall make arrangements for additional leave with the Session or employing agency, under the terms of the Medically Certified Disability established by the Board of Pensions health policies.

### **B. Paternity Leave**

1. If a church professional's spouse becomes pregnant, the church professional shall notify the Session or employing agency within 12 weeks of a physician's confirmation of the pregnancy.
2. A request for paternity leave shall be made ordinarily no later than a month before the requested leave is to begin.
3. Paternity leave of at least two weeks, preferably four weeks, during which time the church professional shall receive full salary, housing, and benefits is to be included within the terms of their calls and contracts.
4. A church professional may lengthen the period of paternity leave at his discretion by using accrued vacation.

### **C. Adoption and Guardianship**

1. Recognizing that the adoption of a child requires as much transition as the birth of a child, a church professional who is adopting shall be granted leave commensurate with maternity or paternity leave.
2. The time of the leave ordinarily begins when the child is placed in the church professional parent's hands.
3. A church professional may lengthen the period of adoption leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.
4. Becoming the guardian of a child whether by death or incapacity of its parents can occur at any time and as suddenly as adoption placement. Therefore, leaves are warranted but may have little forewarning. Leaves should be negotiated with sensitivity to the challenging circumstances involved.

**D. Additional Considerations**

1. Study leave shall not be used for parental leave.
2. Re-entry after maternity or paternity leave may be scheduled on a full-time or part-time basis as agreed upon by the church professional and session.
3. If a church professional initiates dissolution within one year following parental leave, any unused vacation time shall be credited against the leave.
4. Additional leave after the arrival of a child may be negotiated between each church professional and his/her employing organization.
5. In the event of a late term miscarriage or stillbirth, a church professional should be granted at least half the parental leave she/he would have received.
6. Parents who are serving the same congregation are both entitled to parental leave, which may be taken either simultaneously or sequentially.
7. Vocational commitment to foster care of children is beyond the scope of this policy, but some foster care situations may benefit from these guidelines.

**E. Session Responsibilities During the Church Professional's Leave**

1. The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during the church professional'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 church professional was responsible.
2. The presbytery, in consultation with the church professional, will secure a moderator. The Session shall pay the honorarium and mileage reimbursement for moderating session meetings and congregational meetings.
3. If parental leave for the church professional is a hardship for a congregation, the session should be in touch with the Moderator of the Committee on Ministry and the Executive Presbyter.