

Policy on Family and Medical Leave¹

Presbytery of Carlisle

Purpose and Content

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 the responsibility of extending care for the pastor and the pastor's family. Carlisle Presbytery 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. The following policy was developed by the Presbytery of Carlisle and shall be considered minimum standards for installed pastors. It is anticipated and hoped that individual congregations will not feel limited by these guidelines and will respond to the need for family and medical leave responsibly and generously. While it is not a requirement for pastoral relationships that are not installed, it is hoped that it would guide actions by sessions in all pastoral relationships.

Family and medical leave is meant to give the parent the opportunity to spend concentrated time on building up a new relationship with a child in their household. It 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 12 weeks paid leave with benefits. A session and pastor may negotiate an extension of leave, as needed, with terms agreed upon by the session and pastor.

The timing of this leave should be in consultation between the pastor and session. The weeks do not need to be taken concurrently but must be used within one year of the first day of leave. 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 leave. In cases where it is not possible to give a three-month notice, the person should give as much notice time as possible.

Other situations may arise for which a pastor needs to take time for family and medical leave. Qualifying events include, but need not be limited by the session to, the death of an immediate family member, serious illness of self or an immediate family member, or moving an immediate family member into a care facility. An immediate family member is defined as: spouse, partner, or child. A session should give 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.

A pastor may take up to 12 weeks paid leave with benefits during a calendar year for family and medical leave. The weeks need not be consecutive. 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 leave are needed within a calendar year, the pastor and the session of their church should enter into dialogue with the Committee on Ministry (COM) to work out appropriate arrangements.

A pastor shall give as much notice to the session as possible when taking family and medical leave.

General Issues Pertaining to Family and Medical Leave

Family and medical leave time cannot accrue, and any unused leave time will not be compensated when a pastor leaves their call. If a pastoral call is dissolved within 12 months of taking a period of leave, the pastor's unused vacation time shall be credited against the leave.

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 the session.

Upon a pastor's completion of their family and medical leave, the pastor shall return to their position. The 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 to the session during the pastor's leave.

It is the responsibility of the congregation to provide the pastor with full pay and benefits during 12 weeks of family and medical 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 the need exceeds more than 12 weeks total leave, a pastor and their session shall involve the COM to discuss the needs of the pastor and congregation and to work out an agreeable arrangement. If providing more than 12 weeks of leave in a given year provides a financial hardship to a congregation, this, too, will be discussed with COM, and the presbytery may provide assistance to congregations in demonstrated need.

These leaves shall be documented by the session in its minutes and reported to COM.

Approved by COM - November 2023

¹ The creation of this policy draws from the family and medical leave policies in effect in the following presbyteries: Cherokee, Chicago, Grace, the Highlands of New Jersey, Hudson River, Los Ranchos, Mid-Kentucky, Milwaukee, and New Harmony.