

FAMILY LEAVE POLICY for Blackhawk Presbytery

I. Theological Grounding

God created us to be in 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 teaching elder 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 teaching elder'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 teaching elders receive fair and equitable leave when required. It is anticipated that teaching elders 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 teaching elder members of the Blackhawk Presbytery :

- Teaching elders installed as pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors whether for an indefinite period or for a designated term in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation;
- Teaching elders serving in temporary pastoral relationships (such as transitional, interim pastors, interim associate pastors, and stated supplies) in a congregational setting meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation;
- Teaching elders serving in other called ministries of the Presbytery meeting Board of Pensions minimum requirements for participation.

IV. Guidelines

A. Medically Certified Disability

Teaching elders 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 teaching elder needs to take extended leave due to the needs of a family member, the Session or appropriate employing 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 teaching elder shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues. If additional leave is required, the teaching elder shall negotiate for such leave with the Session or appropriate employing agency with concurrence of the Commission on Ministry. A teaching elder may lengthen the period of family leave at his or her discretion by using accrued vacation.

C. Maternity Leave

When a teaching elder 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 teaching elder 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 teaching elder 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 teaching elder 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 teaching elder may lengthen the period of maternity leave at her discretion by using accrued vacation.

D. Paternity Leave

If a teaching elder's spouse becomes pregnant, the teaching elder 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 four weeks in length, during which time the teaching elder shall receive full effective salary and full Pension dues. If additional leave is necessary, it shall be arranged under the terms of the Family Leave paragraph of this section. A teaching elder 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 teaching elder 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 teaching elder 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 this section. A teaching elder 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 teaching elder and session, with medical approval;
3. If a teaching elder 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 teaching elder experience a miscarriage or still birth, 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 Teaching elder's Leave

The Session is responsible for the ongoing work of the congregation during the teaching elder'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 teaching elder was responsible. Session moderators are appointed by the Presbytery, with payment from the church.

H. Military Leave

Teaching elders 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 teaching elder not take a cut in salary for those two weeks, so that if the military reimbursement is less than the teaching elder's salary, the church makes up the difference. Further information is available from the Board of Pensions.

V. Cost Considerations

Costs likely to be incurred during these leaves are filling the pulpit and moderation of session. Costs for pastoral care and administrative work are likely to be small. Suggestions for filling the costs are:

1. An escrow account established at the time of call.
2. An annual "set-aside" amount following initial call until an adequate balance is reached.
3. Monthly "set-aside" amount following initial call until an adequate balance is reached.
4. Non-reimbursed worship leadership from lay leaders within the congregation.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED EXPANSION OF BLACKHAWK FAMILY LEAVE POLICY

FAMILY LEAVE: 6 weeks (i.e. extended hospitalization of a family member, moving a family member to long-term care, etc.)

MATERNITY LEAVE: 8 weeks

PATERNITY LEAVE: 4 weeks

ADOPTIVE LEAVE: Commensurate with maternity or paternity, beginning at the time when the child is placed in the teaching elder-parent's hands.

MISCARRIAGE OR STILLBIRTH: Commensurate with the leave given if a pregnancy had progressed without complications.

MILITARY LEAVE: Details regarding mobilization for teaching elders serving in the military reserves should be negotiated at the time of the call, with negotiations ensuring that during the annual two week training period, the church supplies the difference in salary if the military reimbursement for that time is less than the teaching elder's salary.

Approved April 8, 2014

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