

# Guidelines for Family Leave Savannah Presbytery

*(Previously approved by the Savannah Presbytery as the Parental Leave Policy)*

## I. Theological Introduction

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. Scriptures instructs us to honor those we call “father” or “mother” (Exodus 20:12), and to care for children, for such is “the Kingdom of God” (Mark 10:13-16). Therefore, it is the policy of the Savannah Presbytery and its member congregations to meet or exceed the following minimum compensation terms regarding family and or bereavement leave that shall be included in the calls and covenants of Teaching Elders, Certified Christian Educators, and Commissioned Ruling Elders (hereafter referred to as “church professionals”) serving within the bounds when a child(ren) are added to their family through birth or adoption of a child, or upon the death of an immediate family member (immediate family member is defined for the purposes of this guideline as a spouse, child, sibling, or parent – including guardian or foster parent).

## II. Parental Leave

Parental Leave shall be provided by Sessions and/or congregations based on the minimum standard for a church professional’s parental leave being thirteen weeks (91 consecutive days) and this shall be included in all terms of call packages.

## III. Parental Leave Guidelines

A. When a church professional or professional’s spouse or partner becomes pregnant, s/he/they shall customarily inform the Session and/or congregation by the 24th week of the pregnancy. In the event of adoption, the church professional desiring to adopt shall customarily notify the Session and/or congregation at least three months prior to the placement of the child.

B. Parental leave of thirteen weeks (91 consecutive days) shall be granted to a church professional for a birth or adoption. The church professional shall receive full compensation and benefits during the parental leave. It is anticipated that individual churches will not feel limited by these requirements but will respond to the need for parental leave responsibly and generously.

C. A church professional may use accrued vacation and/or sick leave to lengthen the parental leave, providing this information is conveyed as soon as possible to the Session and/or congregation.

#### **IV. Bereavement Leave Guidelines**

To provide Sessions and/or congregations minimum standards for a church professional's bereavement leave of six weeks (42 consecutive days) is to be included in all terms of call packages.

#### **V. Bereavement Leave Guidelines**

A. When a church professional's spouse or immediate family member dies, s/he/they shall inform the Session and/or congregation immediately.

B. Bereavement leave of six weeks (42 consecutive days) shall be granted to a church professional in the event of the death of a spouse or immediate family member. The church professional shall receive full compensation and benefits during the bereavement leave. It is anticipated that individual churches will not feel limited by these minimum requirements but will prayerfully respond to the need for bereavement leave responsibly and generously.

C. A church professional may use accrued vacation and/or sick leave to lengthen the bereavement leave, providing this information is given to the Session and/or congregation as soon as is possible and practical.

#### **VI. Additional Considerations:**

A. Study leave shall not be used in lieu of parental or bereavement leave by the church professional, the Session, or Congregation.

B. Re-entry after parental or bereavement leave may be negotiated on a full-time or part-time basis, with commensurate adjustments of compensation as agreed upon by the church professional, Session, congregation and in consultation with the Commission on Ministry.

C. If a church professional initiates dissolution of a call, or non-renewal of a contract within one year following parental leave any unused vacation time shall be credited against the leave.

D. In the event of a miscarriage or stillbirth, a church professional should be granted at least half the parental leave allotted in the terms of call / employment agreement.

E. Church professionals who are serving the same congregation are both entitled to parental leave, and bereavement leave, which may be taken either simultaneously or sequentially.

F. If the financial considerations surrounding parental or bereavement leave of a church professional prove to be a hardship for the Session and/or congregation, they should be in touch with the Church companion and or moderator of the Committee on Ministry, who will seek ways to assist the Session and/or congregation to make the parental or bereavement leave possible.