

NEW JERSEY SYNOD GUIDELINES FAMILY LEAVE FOR PASTORS AND LAY ROSTERED PERSONS

I. PURPOSE

In any family, situations may arise that require one's full attention to care for a family member. When this situation arises in the life of a pastor or lay rostered person, he or she is advised to consult with the council and congregation to enlist their support and prayers. The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to pastors, lay rostered persons, mutual ministry or staff support committees and congregation councils who are faced with a situation in which a pastor or lay rostered person requests leave time to care for a family member. This type of leave is what is referred to as FAMILY LEAVE in this document.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the congregation council to negotiate with the pastor or lay rostered person the amount of paid or unsalaried leave time that will be available in a given year. Advice and support should be solicited from the Office of the Bishop. Medical coverage and certain other benefits as specified by the ELCA Pension Benefits plan, as well as other benefits that have previously been negotiated, should be continued during both the paid and unsalaried time. Pastors and lay rostered persons are to be reinstated to their positions with the same pay, benefits and working conditions at the end of the unsalaried leave time. These recommendations include both full-time and part-time pastors and lay rostered persons.

III. DEFINITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the situations which might necessitate Family Leave are the following:

- Care of a newborn/newly adopted child: A paid maternity leave of up to eight (8) weeks is expected for the pastor or lay rostered leader giving birth. A paid paternity leave of up to two (2) weeks is expected. A minimum of two (2) and up to eight (8) weeks of paid parenting leave is expected when welcoming a newly-adopted or foster child. This leave should be available for a period of twelve (12) months following the birth or adoption of a child. This time may be taken as either Block or Intermittent Leave. In some situations, additional time (salaried or unsalaried) may be arranged.
- Care for a family member with a serious health condition: A serious health condition includes any illness, injury or condition that involves inpatient hospital care or requires continuing at-home treatment by a physician or other health care provider. A paid leave of up to eight (8) weeks in any given twelve-month period is recommended. The time may be taken as either Block or Intermittent Leave. In some situations, additional unsalaried leave time may be arranged.
- There may be other family situations to which the pastor or lay rostered person must attend and for which Family Leave is requested. The responsible parties should give prayerful consideration to these and use the above guidelines in their deliberations.

IV. TYPES OF LEAVES

- Block Leave: Leaves taken in one or more continuous periods of time. For example, leaves of two to eight weeks fall within this category.
- Intermittent Leave: Leaves taken on an intermittent basis, or where the pastor or lay rostered person works a reduced work week according to a prearranged schedule. The reduced work schedule can include full or partial days of leave. For example, a pastor may arrange Monday and Wednesday afternoons off to take a spouse to dialysis treatments.

V. PROCEDURE

Whenever possible, the pastor or lay rostered person should request leave under this policy in written form to the congregation council at least thirty days prior to the date the leave is anticipated to begin. In an emergency, requests should be made as soon as possible to the council president.

VI. COVERAGE OF DUTIES

It is the responsibility of the congregation council in consultation with the pastor or lay rostered person and the Office of the Bishop to see that the duties normally covered by the person on leave be adequately filled.

NEW JERSEY SYNOD GUIDELINES FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

The Synod recommends that congregations and agencies consider sabbatical leaves as a privilege to be granted. These guidelines are provided to assist pastors and congregations in the contemplation and negotiation of a sabbatical leave. Additional information is available by contacting the Office of the Bishop.

1. A pastor and congregation considering a sabbatical leave should consult with the Bishop early in the process.
2. A sabbatical leave is intended for in-depth study on one or two topics directly related to the call of the pastor and should include time for reflection, rest, and recreation.
3. A sabbatical leave will normally be for a period of not less than one month and not more than three months.
4. A pastor who has a minimum of seven years in the active ordained ministry and who has served in the current call for five or more years may present a proposal for sabbatical leave. A proposal for sabbatical leave shall include:
 - X A rationale for sabbatical, including personal goals and potential value to the congregation.
 - X A detailed outline of the intended course of study and use of time.
 - X An outline of the financial costs of the sabbatical to the congregation.
 - X An indication of the use of vacation time during the sabbatical. At least one-half of the period normally granted as annual vacation leave shall be incorporated into a sabbatical leave of more than one month.
5. A proposal for sabbatical leave shall be presented to the congregation council by the Mutual Ministry Committee not less than six months prior to the beginning of the leave.
6. The pastor and the congregation council shall give careful consideration to all aspects of the proposal and its effect on the congregation and the pastor.
7. During the time of the sabbatical, the congregational support of the pastor shall continue at its normal level and include salary, housing, benefits, and professional expense reimbursements.
8. Any additional financial support for the sabbatical shall be negotiated between the pastor and the congregation council.
9. Usually, when a sabbatical leave is granted, a pastor shall be expected to serve the congregation for a minimum of two years following the completion of the sabbatical.
10. The pastor and the congregation council shall seek the counsel and consent of the Bishop before finalizing the agreement.
11. Within three months of the completion of the sabbatical, the pastor shall present to the congregation and the Bishop a detailed report reflecting upon the experiences and insights gained during the sabbatical.