

NEW JERSEY SYNOD GUIDELINES FAMILY LEAVE FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

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 rostered minister, they are advised to consult with the congregation council and enlist the support and prayers of the congregation. The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to rostered persons, mutual ministry or staff support committees and congregation councils who are faced with a situation in which a 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.

The responsible parties should give prayerful consideration to these guidelines and use them in their conversations and mutual discernment in order that we might better live into the baptismal call to care for one another as God's children.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

In consultation between the rostered minister, the congregation council and the Office of the Bishop, the amount of paid or unsalaried leave time will be negotiated and determined, based on what is beneficial to the rostered minister's and the congregation's needs. Medical coverage and certain other benefits as specified by the Portico Benefits plan, as well as other benefits that have previously been negotiated, should be continued during both the paid and unsalaried time. 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 rostered ministers.

III. DEFINITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

A. Care of a newborn/newly-adopted child:

A paid parental leave of up to twelve (12) weeks is recommended for the rostered minister following the addition of a child to their family through birth and adoption. This leave should be available for a period of twelve months following the addition of a child. If necessary, a portion of this leave may be taken before the birth/adoption of a child. This time may be taken as either Block or Intermittent Leave (see below, "IV. Types of Leaves," for more information). In some situations, additional time (salaried or unsalaried) may be arranged, and in those cases it is good practice for the minister and congregation to be in communication on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly) about the situation.

B. Foster Care:

Fostering children presents a unique set of challenges and every child and family's needs are different. When a rostered minister is or becomes a foster parent, conversation and mutual discernment between minister and congregational leadership is necessary to determine how appropriate leave will be given so that the different time and logistical needs can be met in

foster care situations. A paid leave of up to twelve weeks total in any given twelve-month period is recommended. The leave is not offered per foster placement, but per twelve month period. The time may be taken as either Block or Intermittent Leave (see below, “IV. Types of Leaves,” for more information).

C. 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 twelve weeks in any given twelve-month period is recommended. The time may be taken as either Block or Intermittent Leave (see below, “IV. Types of Leaves,” for more information). In some situations, additional time (salaried or unsalaried) may be arranged, and in those cases it is good practice for the minister and congregation to be in communication on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly) about the situation.

D. Other situations:

There may be other family situations to which the rostered minister must attend and for which Family Leave is requested.

IV. TYPES OF LEAVES

A. Block Leave:

Leaves taken in a continuous period of time away from work of at least one week, up to the total number of weeks of leave negotiated. The total number of weeks may be broken into one or more blocks.

B. Intermittent Leave:

Leaves taken on an intermittent basis, or where the rostered minister, in conversation with congregational leadership, works a reduced schedule. The reduced work schedule can include full or partial days of leave, including blocks of time as small as two hours. For example, a minister may arrange Monday and Wednesday afternoons off to take a spouse to dialysis treatments or two hours one morning to take a child to an appointment.

V. PROCEDURE

Whenever possible, the rostered minister 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 congregation council president.

VI. COVERAGE OF DUTIES

It is the responsibility of the congregation council in consultation with the rostered minister and the Office of the Bishop to see that the duties normally covered by the person on leave are adequately filled. Congregations may refer to the resources available through the synod’s website (www.njsynod.org) and office (609-586-6800).