

## Resolution 2025 #

### Pertaining to the establishment of an Eastern Pennsylvania Parental Leave Policy

WHEREAS, Scripture calls us to provide care for each other as members of Christ's family ("But if someone doesn't provide for their own family, and especially for a member of their household, they have denied the faith." 1 Timothy 5:8, CEB); and

WHEREAS, The World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization advocate for at least 18 weeks of paid maternity leave<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, The 2016 United Methodist *Book of Discipline* states, "Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one-fourth of a year, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption."<sup>2</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the current EPA Human Resources Manual states, "Eligible employees may take up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act for those reasons permitted under the Act. The EPA will pay the employee's wages or salary during the first four weeks of leave taken under FMLA for the birth or adoption of a child, and employees may substitute any accrued vacation time or other paid leave for the remainder of such leave. All other employees taking leave under the FMLA must substitute any accrued vacation or other paid leave. Any paid leave substituted for FMLA leave will run concurrently with and does not extend the total duration of leave permitted under the FMLA. Employees should consult the Director of Human Resources for further details and for a copy of the EPA's FMLA policy."

WHEREAS, the parental leave policy as written in the 2016 United Methodist *Book of Discipline* only guarantees paid leave for eight weeks, has been considered open to interpretation, and has not always applied equitably across the connection, since "one-fourth of year"<sup>2</sup> is thirteen weeks; and

WHEREAS, the East Ohio, Western North Carolina, Western Pennsylvania, Illinois Great Rivers, Western Pennsylvania, New York, Peninsula Delaware, Upper New York, Missouri, and Florida

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<sup>1</sup> Maternity Protection, Compliance with International Labor Standards.

<https://www.who.int/data/nutrition/nlis/info/maternity-protection-compliance-with-international-labour-standards> <sup>2</sup> The 2020/24 United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 356.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020/24 United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 356.

Annual Conferences have adopted policies maintaining compensation for thirteen weeks and assisting local congregations in paying for coverage during the leave.

WHEREAS, supporting clergy families lives up to our calling to welcome all generations as Christ welcomes children (Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:15. Luke 18:16); and

WHEREAS, the failure to ensure just and equitable parental leave for all our clergy families is a manifestation of the spiritual forces of wickedness we are called to renounce, the evil powers of this world we are called to reject, and the sin of which we are called to repent by virtue of our baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania do lament that, in requiring parental leave last no longer than 13 weeks, our United Methodist denomination fails to live up to the conventions and recommendations established by the World Health Organization and International Labour Standards, which calls for parental leave to not be less than 18 weeks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania do hereby publicly repent of and confess our collective sin of failing to ensure equitable parental leave policies for clergy families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania support work being done by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women to advocate for legislative change in future General Conferences to bring our denominational requirements in line with the conventions and recommendations provided by the World Health Organization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania adopt the Parental Leave Policy and Procedure, included as an appendix to this resolution, effective following the adjournment of the 2025 Session of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania direct the Conference communications team to publish this Parental Leave Policy on the Annual Conference website; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Cabinet of the EPA shall share this Parental Leave Policy, in its totality, with every chair of Staff/Parish Relations Committees in the Annual Conference no later than July 1, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Cabinet of United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania shall communicate this change in policy as they preside over Charge Conference sessions in 2025 or

ensure that the Presiding Elder communicates this change in policy as they preside over Charge Conference sessions in 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the cost of this program shall be funded from as part of the funds administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry; and.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania support work being done by our Annual Conference boards, teams and agencies; local churches and extension ministries; and General Church Boards and Agencies to advocate for and establish just universal paid parental leave policies in all sectors of our society.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Nina Patton-Semerod (Board of Ordained Ministry) and Rev. Mandy Stanley Miller (Board of Benefits)

Endorsed by: Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Benefits, Connectional Table and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women

# APPENDIX

## United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania Parental Leave Policy

### Statement of Purpose

The United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania supports families, and advocates for parental leave for clergy welcoming a child into their home. Therefore, we encourage all parents who are welcoming a child into their home—whether by birth, adoption, or foster placement—to make full use of parental leave policies. The United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania have developed this policy in order to assist clergy families, local churches, District Superintendents, and the Annual Conference in caring for family and advocating for parental leave in the church and beyond the church.

The World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization advocate for *at least* 18 weeks of paid maternity leave,<sup>3</sup> and The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* allows for *up to* 13 weeks of maternity and paternity leave for clergy families<sup>4</sup>. The necessity for robust access to paid parental leave transcends bodily recovery from a birth. It allows for invaluable time for parents to bond and form integral relationships with the new child. In many cases, a birthing parent will be granted a period of short-term disability by their medical provider after a birth. Parental leave given through this policy shall not be construed as overlapping with any short term disability status given to a birthing parent after a birth. Likewise, this policy shall not impact other uses of Paid Family Leave, such as an employee experiencing any qualifying exigency related to a spouse, domestic partner, child or parent on active military duty.

This policy applies to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who is appointed to 25% time or more to a local congregation or annual conference-funded extension ministry, including, but not limited to, campus ministries, Wesley Foundations, camp and retreat ministries, and conference staff, hereinafter referred to as “clergy” or “clergy person.”

While the policy uses language of church appointments, this policy also applies to clergy appointed to conference-funded extension ministries, including but not limited to conference and district positions, and camping ministries. Clergy appointed to non-conference-funded extension ministries are encouraged to adapt similar policies for their settings.

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<sup>3</sup> Maternity Protection, Compliance with International Labor Standards.

<https://www.who.int/data/nutrition/nlis/info/maternity-protection-compliance-with-international-labour-standards><sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The United Methodist Book of Discipline 2020/2024* ¶ 356.

## Book of Discipline Foundations

**¶ 356. *Maternity or Paternity Leave***—Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one-fourth of a year, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption.

1. Persons desiring maternity or paternity leave should file their request with the committee on pastor-parish relations after consulting with the district superintendent at least ninety days prior to its beginning to allow adequate pastoral care for the churches involved to be developed.
2. During the leave, the clergy member's annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and welfare benefit plans will remain in force.
3. A maternity or paternity leave of up to one-quarter of a year will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for pension purposes.
4. Compensation will be maintained for no less than the first eight weeks of leave.
5. During the leave time, pastoral responsibility for the church or churches involved will be handled through consultation with the committee on pastor-parish relations of the local church(es) and the district superintendent.
6. Special arrangements shall be made for district superintendents, bishops, and those under special appointment.

### Policy for Births, Adoptions, and Foster Placement for Clergy

1. All clergy in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference who are expecting the birth or adoption of a child are eligible for Parental Leave (maternity or paternity leave in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2020/24*, ¶ 356). This policy applies to all clergy, regardless of their part-time or full-time status. Parental leave is guaranteed to all clergy who request it within the guidelines of this policy.
2. Clergy are encouraged to begin communication with their DS as soon as they are able to publicly share the anticipation of a child's arrival. Families giving birth are encouraged to begin planning as soon as they are public about their pregnancy. Adoptive parents are encouraged to make a plan as soon as they are approved for adoption/foster parenting. Parental leave must be requested at least 90 days in advance of the anticipated beginning of the leave, in accordance with the *2016 Book of Discipline*.
3. Parental leave shall be encouraged and permitted for 13 weeks with full pay and will not affect the clergy person's pension, health benefits, and appointment status.

4. Churches will maintain their regular compensation for clergy on leave for the duration of the leave.
5. The DS will consult with the clergy person to arrange coverage for the duration of leave.
6. The Annual Conference will provide local churches with funding for compensation related to pastoral coverage and pulpit supply, in consultation with the clergyperson(s)' and the SPPRC. Parental leave may be taken consecutively or nonconsecutively, full or part time, according to the needs of the family. Clergy may take intermittent paid family leave in full-day increments. The number of Sundays off will correspond at least one-to-one with the number of weeks of paid parental leave. All parental leave must be taken within 12 months of the placement or birth of the child(ren).
7. Parental leave is not vacation. The use of parental leave does not affect the clergy person's use of their annual vacation granted in the Annual Conference Rules.
8. Churches will make reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding and pumping parents, as well as for the feeding of infants. This should include private space, access to an outlet, and time/space to feed according to the infant's needs.
9. Clergy in the Annual Conference will support and promote parental leave, including by providing pastoral care coverage if asked and needed, in accordance with their schedule.
10. The Annual Conference will support clergy, including any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection, on parental leave by excusing or making alternate arrangements for their district and conference duties. This includes the annual conference session, charge conference, district and conference committees, and residency requirements.
11. Foster care providers and adoptive parents may be able to take some of their Paid Family Leave *before the actual placement* of a foster child or arrival of the adoptive child if an absence from work is required for the placement or arrival to proceed.

## Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference Parental Leave Procedures

### **Clergyperson(s)' Responsibilities & Action Steps:**

1. Clergy are encouraged to begin planning for Parental Leave as soon as possible. If part of a clergy couple, each spouse is eligible to take full leave. Think through the logistics and needs of your family, ensuring that you consider what will best serve your family. Parental Leave may be taken for up to 13 weeks for birth or adoption, consecutively or nonconsecutively, full or part time, in full days, and must be taken within 12 months of the birth/arrival of a child. Clergy are able to take Parental Leave up to twice a year (one time for each birth, adoption or fostering in the family).
2. Talk with your District Superintendent and share your plans for parental leave.
3. Share your plans with your SPRC and make a plan to share with the local congregation.
4. Submit a formal Parental Leave request at least 90 days in advance when possible of the projected start date of leave to the District Superintendent, Episcopal Office, and the Board of Ordained Ministry.
5. Submit a budget request to the Board of Ordained Ministry as soon as possible.
6. If needed or desired, the District Superintendent will meet with the SPPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation.
7. Work with the SPPRC to determine the local church resources and needs during the leave. Request funding by using the form included within this resolution. Form to be submitted to the Board of Ordained Ministry.
8. Arrange pastoral coverage, including pulpit supply, for the duration of your leave. The District Superintendent is available to assist you if desired.
9. As the child's arrival date nears, ensure all notes and pastoral coverage plans are in place and have been communicated to all involved.
10. Set appropriate boundaries with Local Church leadership as to your needs during leave. Think about if you wish to be contacted during your leave, and under what circumstances. Communicate your boundaries clearly, and ensure that the Local Church/ministry setting understands your availability during leave. (Think about how or if you will respond when a parishioner calls you. What about if there is a funeral? What will happen to emails that are sent during your leave?) Ensure that communication is kind and clear so that all know what to expect.
11. As the child's arrival date nears, it may be helpful to have back up pastoral coverage and worship services ready, in case of unanticipated circumstances. Consider developing a lay-led service or two and equipping members to be prepared in the event they need to lead without you.
12. Take full advantage of the Parental Leave benefits offered to you, for the benefit of your family.

## **District Superintendent and Conference Responsibilities & Action Steps:**

1. District Superintendents will support clergy and encourage the full use of the Parental Leave Policy.
2. If desired, District Superintendents will meet with the SPPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, Foster Care Placement Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation, for birth, adoption, or foster care placement.
3. District Superintendents will remain in consultation with the clergy as pastoral coverage is arranged. If desired, the District Superintendent will assist the clergyperson in finding appropriate coverage.
4. District Superintendents will encourage good boundaries during Parental Leave. District Superintendents will not require clergy to attend charge conference, district conference, or related duties during their parental leave.
5. District Superintendents will help interpret and support the need for space and time for grieving for clergy families experiencing pregnancy or infancy loss or at the end of a foster placement. District Superintendents will be in consultation with clergy and the SPPRC to arrange this time. This time will not affect a clergy person's annual vacation.
6. The Annual Conference will support and promote Parental Leave and will advocate for paid Parental Leave in all aspects of society.
7. The BOOM, Cabinet, Board of Benefits, and COSROW will review and update the Parental Leave policy at least quadrennially.
8. During the appointment process, no assumptions should be made about the desires of future parents. The clergyperson(s)' District Superintendent should be in conversation with them about potential appointment changes. These conversations should affirm the professional dignity and sacred worth of clergy parents/families.
9. Policies regarding parental leave will be part of every clergy covenant at time of appointment.



### **Paid Parental Leave Request Form**

Clergy Name:	Phone Number:
Email Address:	

Name of Ministry Location:
Mailing Address of Ministry Location:

*(This is where the check will be addressed and mailed)*

Reason for Paid Parental Leave (check one):

- Birth of a Child
- Placement for Adoption
- Foster Care Placement

Method of Paid Parental Leave: (check one)

Continuous

Intermittent

What is your anticipated date that parental leave will begin and end? If you are taking intermittent leave, you may list multiple start and stop dates.

#### **Clergyperson Certifications:**

I attest that PPL is being taken because of the birth of my child or because of placement of a child with me for adoption or foster care and that the PPL will be used in connection with my fulfillment of my parental role to care for and bond with the child. I have attached an itemized budget for expenses related to pastoral/ pulpit coverage. (Items may vary on ministry location but may include pulpit supply and pastoral care coverage for the entirety of your parental leave.)

I hereby certify that I will ensure the appropriate dissemination of any funds approved to cover my parental leave coverage expenses. I will provide my church/ ministry placement's Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and SPRC with names and addresses of the intended recipient(s) of the funds and the amount each will receive.

I hereby certify that all statements made in this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Clergy Signature:	Date:
SPRC Representative Signature:	

