

Great Plains Parental Leave Procedures

Clergyperson's Responsibilities & Action Steps:

1. Clergy are encouraged to begin planning for Parental Leave as soon as possible. Think through the logistics and needs of your family, ensuring that you consider what will best serve your family.
2. Talk with your District Superintendent before sharing the news with your Local Church.
3. Share your plans for Parental Leave with your SPRC.
4. Submit a formal Parental Leave request to the District Superintendent, Episcopal Office, and the Board of Ministry Conference Relations Registrar. When possible, this should occur at least 90 days in advance of the projected start date of leave.
5. If needed or desired, the District Superintendent will meet with the SPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation.
6. Work with the SPRC to determine the local church resources and needs during the leave. Request funding by submitting a budget for the expenses of pastoral coverage during leave to the District Superintendent.
7. Arrange pastoral coverage for the duration of your leave. The District Superintendent is available to assist you if desired.
8. Communicate your Parental Leave plans to the SPRC, District Superintendent, and Local Church/ministry setting.
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. When your child arrives and leave begins, inform your District Superintendent and SPRC.
13. 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, including the Policy for Births and Adoptions and the Policy for Foster/Resource Families and Kinship Care Placements.
2. When needed, District Superintendents will meet with the SPRC to discuss the Parental Leave Policy, benefits, and needs of the congregation, for birth, adoption, kinship care, or foster care placement.
3. District Superintendents will receive Parental Leave coverage budgets from Local Churches/ministry settings and will ensure that funding is provided in accordance with the Parental Leave policy.
4. District Superintendents will remain in consultation with the clergy as pastoral coverage is arranged. When needed, the District Superintendent will assist the clergyperson in finding appropriate coverage.
5. 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.
6. During the appointment process, no assumptions should be made about the desires of future parents. The District Superintendent should be in conversation with clergy about potential appointment changes. These conversations should affirm the professional dignity and sacred worth of clergy parents and families.
7. 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 placement. District Superintendents will be in consultation with clergy and the SPRC to arrange this time. This time will not affect a clergy person's annual vacation.
8. The Annual Conference will support and promote Parental Leave and will advocate for paid Parental Leave in all aspects of society.
9. Cabinet will review and update the Parental Leave policy at least quadrennially.