

Support for Congregations with Clergy Granted Parental Leave in the Western North Carolina Conference

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Whereas, the *Book of Discipline* ¶355 allows for parental leave of up to one quarter of a year for all appointed clergy, but only requires compensation be maintained for the first eight weeks of leave; and,

Whereas, generous parental leave policies contribute to the wellbeing of families and serve as a helpful incentive for the recruitment and retention of clergy because young clergy discuss how support varies among the various annual conferences and across denominations; and,

Whereas, clergy serving churches with limited resources often feel pressure from their congregation to not take all of their available leave because of the additional expenses it places on their appointment; and,

Whereas, across the connection, congregations have disproportionate access to resources and opportunities for support; and,

Whereas, within the connectional system we have a responsibility to support each other across district boundaries, however an uneven distribution of financial resources across our districts leads to differing levels of support for clergy leave based solely on geography; and, *Whereas*, paid parental leave builds necessary bonds between parents and children for healthy thriving relationships,

Whereas, our conference has consistently made decisions based on the welfare of children, and the children of our clergy are part of our baptismal covenant where we promise to “nurture these children in Christ’s holy Church” and “surround these persons with a community of love;” and,

Whereas, supporting our clergy families across the connection enables us to live up to our calling to welcome all generations as Christ welcomes children (Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:15, Luke 18:16); therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Conference

1. expand the clergy parental leave policy to allow all clergy under appointment who apply for parental leave to have their compensation maintained for the full one quarter of year of leave.
2. establish a fund that provides at least \$1000 for each clergy member granted parental leave to assist with the arrangement of pastoral responsibilities of the church or churches involved (pulpit supply, leadership, and pastoral care coverage) per leave request.
3. refer this petition to the Conference Council on Finance and Administration to determine the most appropriate source of funding.
4. encourage local churches to offer a corresponding parental leave policy for their lay

employees.

5. encourage each district to maintain an easily accessible list of lay and clergy who are available and willing to offer pastoral care and pulpit supply.