

Maternity or Paternity Leave (§ 355, 2016 Book of Discipline)

Clergy families grow from time to time, and the church is glad to support parents welcoming children into their lives. Parental leave is guaranteed in the *Book of Discipline* for births and adoptions for no less than eight weeks of paid, full time leave, maintaining all compensation, benefits and conference relationships. Clergy may also arrange for an additional four weeks of unpaid (or paid, as may be granted by the church) leave. The District Superintendent and S/PPRC, along with the clergy, will make arrangements for pastoral coverage during the anticipated leave time, and those plans must be approved by the Bishop and Appointive Cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry's Executive Committee. Those requests should be submitted in writing to the DS and Board of Ordained Ministry (care of Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director of ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org) at least 90 days prior to the start of the leave whenever possible.

Weeks of full time leave may be arranged to be taken as additional weeks of part time leave (for instance, resuming worship responsibilities and emergency pastoral care coverage, but not full duties), or they may be broken into non-sequential weeks of leave (for instance, to complement a spouse's parental leave time). These weeks of parental leave are in addition to the clergy's paid annual vacation time and should not replace those vacation weeks. Mothers and fathers are equally eligible for parental leave.

Clergy who need to take extended full time leave to care for a new child or other immediate family member should consult with their District Superintendent and the Center for Clergy Excellence to discuss Family Leave of Absence or other options.

If you are anticipating an addition to your family, or you serve as a S/PPRC Chairperson and have additional questions, please contact Rev. Jessie Colwell in the Center for ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org or your District Superintendent for more information.