

## **Ministry Together**

Minimum Requirements for Ministerial Relationships in the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley

### **Introduction**

The relationship of a church and the ministerial staff of the church is unique. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) there is a three-way covenant between the clergy, the congregation and the presbytery. Clergy remain members of presbytery and through this relationship they are accountable to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The relationship is also religious in nature and it is grounded in the beliefs of the Christian community. The relationships, and the policies which govern these relationships, arise from our mutual call to caring and concern for one another and God's requirement that we set by our example relationships of justice and grace for all the world. The church's employment practice "is rooted in our common call to glorify God, to make God more visible and more central in the processes of human community." (*A Theology of Compensation — A Study Paper*, 195th General Assembly) Thus, the way a church relates to its employees is a question of justice and a facet of the Great Ends of the Church wherein we are called to "the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world."

### **Foundations of the Employment Relationship**

(*Employment Guidance for PC(USA) Session and Session Personnel Committees*, Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 2021)

Congregations need healthy, thriving staff in order to be healthy and thriving themselves. Staff, in order to be healthy and thriving, need:

- Equitable and fair compensation and benefits
- Clear, honest, and up-to-date descriptions of their work
- Fair, regular, and consistent evaluation
- Employment policies that define the congregation's expectations and obligations
- Support for professional growth
- Recognition of achievements
- Safe and comfortable work environment

Congregations can make better decisions about budgets and staffing needs if they have a mission statement, vision, and/or set of goals to which they have agreed God is

calling them. Ideally, it will specify their gifts and skills and the way in which these currently intersect with their community.

Everyone, including clergy, needs a clear and specific job description that helps them understand how they are expected to spend their time and what they are expected to accomplish. It is not fair for someone to be given a poor performance evaluation if the congregation has not been clear about what it expects, nor is it fair, especially in the context of part-time agreements with pastors and other employees, to include responsibilities in the job description that exceed what can be accomplished within the position's prescribed total hours.

Job descriptions change over time and should be evaluated, modified and communicated on an annual basis.

Annual evaluations are necessary. They give both staff and the congregation the opportunity to affirm positive performance, correct problems, and recalibrate job expectations. These evaluations must be mutual in nature and their ultimate goal is to promote health and well-being within the covenant relationship.

The most important element in any employment decision is the shared understanding of mission — what God is calling to be done at this time and in this place.

### **The Role of the Presbytery**

The Presbytery is an active participant in all calls and installations for installed pastors and provides approval and oversight in the creation of temporary pastoral relationships. The presbytery is the entity that dissolves an installed pastoral relationship after consultation with the pastor and congregation through a called congregational meeting. It also sets minimum standards to pastoral compensation, provides for transfer of pastors from other denominations, and oversees the process when they wish to be released from or no longer be engaged in pastoral ministry or when they wish to renounce jurisdiction. It prepares candidates for ministry, trains and commissions ruling elders to pastoral service, and provides for certified church service. Presbytery staff are always available to interpret *Book of Order* provisions related to employment and can make referrals to the appropriate denominational resources or staff when a congregation has a particularly challenging employment issue.

### **The Role of the Congregation**

As the basic form of the church within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) the congregation is the community through which God's people carry out the ministries of proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, and living in the covenant life with God and

each other. The members of a Presbyterian congregation put themselves voluntarily under the leadership of the session, which is responsible for guiding and governing the life of the congregation. However, they do retain some fundamental employment decisions, all with the counsel and approval of presbytery — calling an installed pastor, approving terms of call, installing a pastor, modifying terms of call as proposed by the session, and consenting or not consenting to a presbytery dissolving a pastoral relationship.

### **The Role of the Session**

The session is a council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is the primary decision-making body in a Presbyterian congregation. The Book of Order organizes the duties and responsibilities of the session according to the tenets of the Reformed Church in our time with the responsibility to:

- Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard,
- Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received and,
- Nurture the covenant community of the disciples of Christ.

As a council of the church the session is required to develop and implement a manual of administrative operations and a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy.

The *Book of Order* includes a specific session responsibility for employment within the congregation. This includes the responsibilities for consultation and approval of the presbytery in matters concerning ministerial staff.

In all employment relationships the session must consider the following as employment responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the congregation has a shared mission that can be used to determine staff needs and create reasonable job descriptions.
- Adopting personnel policies that are aligned with Presbyterian polity and comply with applicable law.
- Overseeing and approving an annual evaluation of all church staff.
- Nourishing an environment in which the congregation, the session, the pastor, and all staff work with each other in a fellowship that promotes respect, safety, trust and love.

**Minimum Requirements in the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley**

**Presbytery of Whitewater Valley  
COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**

**2025 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS**

*G-2.0804 Terms of Call*

*The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirement of the Presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall review annually the minister’s terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the Presbytery’s minimum requirements. The call shall include **provision for a period of twelve weeks family leave and participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.***

As a congregation calls a pastor to installed service, one of the covenant questions they answer in the affirmative is that in W-4.0404 which says in part, *“Do we promise to pay [her/ him] fairly and provide for [her/his] welfare as [she/he] works among us; to stand by [her/him] in trouble and share [her/his] joys?”* These minimum requirements are intended to assist the congregation in this covenant relationship by creating the minimum compensation package which shall be included in all terms of call.

	2023	2024	2025
Minimum Salary and Housing	53,644	56,686	58,968
Minimum if Manse & Utilities Provided	41,306	43,762	45,523
Prior Period Increase/ Decrease	2,308	3,042	2,282

**The Presbytery of Whitewater Valley requires:**

**Cash Salary**

1. A minimum salary plus housing allowance for pastors in the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley of \$58,968 for 2025 (an increase of \$2,282 or 4%)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA) annually tabulates the median and average effective salary information reported to it for minister members of the Benefits Plan who are serving U.S. congregations. The median salary is generally considered more representative than the average salary, since it is less influenced by very high or very low salaries. The Pastor Support Subcommittee applies an increase or decrease to the full-time median salary minimum using data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) Consumer Price Index (CPI) – Midwest Urban Report. A 3-year rolling average is applied to the CPD reporting period to offset unusual spikes in the reported average. The data reflects an increase of 5.6% for the subject period.

2. If manse and utilities are provided for pastor, the minimum cash salary is set at 77.2% of Minimum Cash Salary, so for 2025 that amount is \$45,523.

**Accountable Reimbursement Plans**

1. Full Mileage Reimbursement at IRS established rate. Estimated amount for budgeting purposes is \$2,800.
2. Minimum Professional Development Reimbursement of \$1,500 which is cumulative for up to four (4) years (non-portable).

**Vacation and Paid Leave**

1. Four (4) weeks paid vacation including four (4) Sundays — five (5) weeks paid vacation including five (5) Sundays for 15+ years of ordained experience.
2. Two (2) weeks paid professional development leave including two (2) Sundays if necessary and cumulative four (4) years and a maximum of eight (8) weeks and eight (8) Sundays if needed.
3. Twelve (12) weeks including twelve (12) Sundays of Family Leave in accordance with guidelines included in Ministry Together.

**Pension and Medical Insurance**

The Presbytery of Whitewater Valley believes that care for a pastor and family includes adequate health insurance along with a pension plan provided through the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA). We see 2025 as a transitional year to the new plan instituted by the Board of Pensions and encourage congregations to use this time to educate themselves on the new plan. As such, these minimum requirements are taking pro-active steps to address some of the changes that will be required as we transition to the new plan in 2026.<sup>2</sup>

For 2025:

1. If pastors received full family coverage in 2024 congregations shall enroll in the Transitional Package which continues the 2024 pension and medical coverage. The 2025 dues structure of the Transitional Package shall be paid in full by the congregation based on the following percentages of effective salary.

	Other Benefits Dues	Medical Dues	Minimum Dues	Maximum Dues
2025	10%	33%	15,000	43,000

OPTION:

In some circumstances a congregation may have thoroughly reviewed the new plan provided by the Board of Pensions and determined, in consultation with the clergy members

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<sup>2</sup> The Board of Pensions has created an entirely new Medical Dues structure with a variety of options. The Pastoral Support Committee of the Commission on Ministry has reviewed the options and provided choices based on (a) the new plan structure offered by the Board of Pensions, (b) the requirement of the Book of Order for participation in the Board of Pensions benefits plan and, (c) the long standing and enduring covenantal relationship between the pastor and congregation wherein the congregation pledges to faithfully provide for the pastor's welfare.

affected, that a 2025 transition to the new Congregational Pastors Package is in the best interest of the congregation and their staff. (EX: Clergy staff without need of family coverage and/or clergy couples serving different congregations.) in such cases the congregation(s) shall submit for Commission on Ministry (COM) review a request for exemption to enrollment in the Transitional Plan. Such exemption must be submitted in writing to the COM and contain the full outline of the medical and pension plan being proposed.

### **HRA Coverage**

Congregations shall enroll all positions scheduled to work at least 30 hours per week and who are also an active participant in the Board of Pensions in the Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) managed by the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley and the congregation shall fund the HRA in the amount of \$2,000.<sup>3</sup>

#### **OPTION:**

A congregation which already has an HRA in place or has an existing relationship with a qualified benefits manager who can provide an HRA or has established a medical supplement based on prior COM policy may work with their own administrator of continue the medical supplement provided that it meets or exceeds the Presbytery minimum participation of two thousand dollars. Evidence of such a program shall be reported annually in the terms of call report.

### **Moving Expenses**

1. Moving expenses shall be paid by the congregation (if applicable). This is a taxable benefit.

### **Minimum Compensation for Other Pastoral Services**

1. Pulpit Supply shall receive compensation of \$150 for one service and an additional \$50 for each additional service and/or a requirement to pre-tape a sermon for online use plus IRS mileage rate<sup>4</sup> reimbursement if the round trip exceeds 10 miles.
2. Contract Pastoral Services (when not preaching) shall be \$25 per hour plus IRS mileage rate reimbursement if the round-trip exceeds 10 miles. (Ex: teaching, pastoral care)
3. Presiding at Communion (when not preaching) shall be \$50 for each service plus IRS mileage rate reimbursement if the round trip exceeds 10 miles.
4. Moderating Session or Congregational Meeting shall be \$25 per hour with a minimum payment of \$50 plus IRS mileage rate reimbursement if the round-trip exceeds 10 miles.

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<sup>3</sup> An HRA is an employer-funded plan from which employees are reimbursed tax-free for qualified medical expenses up to a fixed dollar amount per year. Unused amounts may be rolled over to be used in subsequent years. By utilizing the established presbytery plan the congregation saves management fees for the plan (which are already being paid through per capita). In anticipation of the future changes as we transition to the new Board of Pensions plan, establishing this HRA program will allow us to address some major changes in the new plan.

<sup>4</sup> IRS mileage rate for the current year may be found at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov)

5. In all cases mileage for reimbursement shall be determined by utilizing Google Maps or an equivalent program to calculate round-trip mileage from starting point (usually the clergy person's home) to the congregation's address.

### **Minimums for Other Forms of Pastoral Leadership**

1. **Temporary Supply (Stated Supply, Covenant, Bridge, Interim, etc.)** The minimum salary and housing terms are the same as the minimums for installed pastors.
2. **Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE)** The minimum salary and housing for a full-time CRE is 80% of the minimums for installed pastors.
3. **Certified Church Educators (CCE)** The minimum salary and housing for a full-time CCE is the same as the minimums for installed pastors.
4. **Part-time positions** are prorated based on the minimums for installed pastors. Proration shall utilize a 40 hour work week as basis for proration. (EX: A 20 hour part-time position shall be prorated to 50% of minimum.)
5. **Interim Ministers.** The minimum salary and housing terms for Interim Pastors shall be at least 85% of the amount most recently budgeted for the position and shall never be less than the Presbytery minimum.

### **FAMILY LEAVE POLICY**

The covenant relationship between a congregation and its clergy is one that goes beyond the limits of secular employment. Just as a congregation looks to a pastor for spiritual and emotional support, so should a pastor be able to expect understanding, support, and generosity from his or her congregation in encountering personal responsibilities. The same sort of relationship should exist between the congregation and all of its employees. Therefore, in the spirit of love and service, it is important that a formal Family Leave policy be established for all church employees. The session may choose to extend this policy to all employees to accomplish this goal.

All pastors and other staff members, whether salary or hourly, who have been employed by the church at least six months and have accumulated at least 480 hours of service during those six months, may request family leave. Because family circumstances differ wildly, the church session (and personnel committee if so established) should be flexible and creative in meeting the needs of families involved. All family leave provides full compensation and benefits as applicable. In all cases, a person taking family leave must be able to return to his or her former position without penalty in seniority or compensation. The session may approve family leave for persons who do not meet the specific eligibility requirements as expressed in this policy.

The need for leave from church duties to care for family members may arise in many different circumstances. The birth or adoption of a child is one such circumstance.

There also may be a time when leave is necessary to care for an older child, spouse or partner, aging or disabled parent, grandparent, or other relative for which they have responsibility. Family leave may also be needed to mourn a death in the family and to deal with circumstances arising from that death.



Total family leave combining the elements below may be taken for a maximum of twelve weeks (including Sundays) in any calendar year. As appropriate, it may be taken consecutively or in shorter segments. Family leave is not meant to replace or supplement personal or medical leave, vacation, or professional development leave. In other than emergency situations, family leave timing should be worked out in advance to allow for church planning. Pastoral leave must be approved by the session (or in communication to the Clerk of Session in an emergency situation with later session concurrence) or by a person designated by the session for non-pastoral staff.

### **Definition of Family**

For the general purposes of this policy, family is defined as spouse/partner, child, parent, sibling, parent, stepparent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew whether related by blood, adoption, or marriage.

### **Parental Leave**

In recognition and support of the church's commitment to family life and to the importance of early bonding with a child by the parents, pastors and other church employees who welcome a new child through birth or adoption may request family leave within the first calendar year of that child joining the family. Parents who adopt an older child are entitled to the same leave. When special circumstances make extended leave appropriate beyond twelve weeks, the session may approve such leave allowing the use of unused vacation to extend pay and benefits or, in the case of vacation time not being available, may grant leave beyond the required twelve weeks without pay or benefits for up to four consecutive weeks..

### **Family Care Leave**

When a pastor or other church employee has a family member who needs assistance for reasons of physical or mental health or disability, the staff member may request family leave which may be approved consecutively or in shorter segments not to exceed a maximum of twelve weeks (including Sundays) in a calendar year. If additional leave is required by circumstances, the session may approve such leave allowing the use of unused vacation to extend pay and benefits or, in the case of vacation time not being available, may grant leave beyond the required twelve weeks without pay or benefits for up to four consecutive weeks.

## **Grief Leave**

When a pastor or other church employee has a family member who dies, the staff member may request family leave. Family leave may also be requested to deal with circumstances arising from that death. The leave may be taken consecutively or in shorter periods in an amount not to exceed twelve weeks (including Sundays) in any calendar year. If additional leave is required by circumstances, the session may approve such leave allowing the use of unused vacation to extend pay and benefits or, in the case of vacation time not being available, may grant leave beyond the required twelve weeks without pay or benefits for up to four consecutive weeks.

## **Note**

In all circumstances, family leave is per calendar year and not per incident.

## **The Congregation and Presbytery Roles**

For staff other than the pastoral staff, the provision of family leave is the sole responsibility of the congregation through the governing authority and responsibility for care of the session. For pastoral staff, the provision of family leave is the primary responsibility of the congregation through the governing authority and responsibility for care of the session with the secondary assistance of the presbytery as necessary. As circumstances allow the presbytery may:

- assist the congregation in recruiting pulpit supply by any or all of the following:  
Maintaining an accurate list of potential pulpit supply candidates and their current contact information,
- assist the congregation in contacting candidates and scheduling pulpit supply
- provide funding, if available, to reimburse the congregation for up to 50% of the cost of providing pulpit supply, including mileage reimbursement.
- create and maintain of a library of video sermons which may be utilized by congregations.

Pastoral care needs that arise during the time of family leave are the primary responsibility of the ruling elders in accord with their ministry of care for the congregation. In the event pastoral care needs arise that are beyond the capability of the ruling elders of a particular congregation, the presbytery staff is available to advise and assist.

### **Other Leave**

The Presbyterian Church has always believed that a church staff member should also be an active and faithful citizen. Therefore, church staff members are eligible for paid leave in order to fulfill civic duties.

### **Jury Duty or Court Leave**

A pastor or church staff member is eligible for up to two weeks of paid leave when summoned for jury duty. In unusual circumstances, that time may be extended by the session. Employees subpoenaed as witnesses or for cases related to work are also eligible for court leave. Court leave may not be used for personal business or because of alleged violation of the law by the employee. Employees who are compensated by a party to court action to serve as “expert” witnesses are not eligible for court leave. Employees are required to submit appropriate documentation concerning jury duty or court leave.

### **Time Off to Vote**

A pastor or church staff member is eligible to up to three hours off with pay to vote as required in the state in which they are employed.

**Sexual Misconduct Policy**  
**for the Prevention of and Response to Instances of Sexual Misconduct**

**Article I. PREMISES OF THIS POLICY**

**Section 1.01 Theological Premises and Rationale. The theological principles that underlie this Policy include the following:**

- a) To those called to exercise special functions in the church, special gifts are given. “[T]hose who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.” (See Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) BOOK OF ORDER, G-2.0104.)<sup>1</sup>
- b) God intends for the church to be a safe place for all to encounter God and grow into lives of service and fulfillment. We are called to be a holy community. “As the one who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.” (I Peter 1:15) “Holiness is God’s gift to the church in Jesus Christ ... because in Christ the Church is holy, the Church, its members, and those in its ordered ministries strive to lead lives worthy of the Gospel we proclaim.” F.1.0302b
- c) God creates all persons in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27) The gospels tell of Jesus ministering to women, men, and children, teaching and healing all who came to him, treating them with dignity and respect. Throughout the scriptures, God calls us to honor the integrity of our neighbors and their personhood.
- d) God intends all persons to have worth and dignity in their relationships. We are one connected body, and when one part of the body is injured physically, emotionally, or spiritually, the entire body is rendered less than God intended. We are called together to responsible conduct in all aspects of life including human sexuality and to avoid conduct that violates another person’s wholeness and well-being. The scriptures witness to a God whose love brings about justice, mercy, and grace. The Church is called to express God’s love in concrete actions of compassion and healing for all God’s people.

**Section 1.02 Responsible Use of Position and Power. Believing the witness of Scripture, Christ our Lord calls us to standards of responsible use of position and power. The intent of this Policy is to promote healthy relationships, create a safe environment for all God’s children, and provide protections for all, especially the most vulnerable in our midst. The basic principles of conduct guiding this policy are:**

- a) Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students. The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter references to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are “PC(USA).”

vital importance to the Church, for through them, an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed.

- b) Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.
- c) Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare, including children. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

**Section 1.03 Breach of Christian Ethics and Violation of Trust. In all ministerial, pastoral, teaching, and other professional relationships within the church (such as but not limited to counselors and therapists), Sexual Misconduct is a breach of Christian ethics and a violation of a trust relationship. Engaging in Sexual Misconduct while called to ordered ministry or serving in a pastoral or professional relationship is an abuse of one's power and position.**

## **Article II. PURPOSES AND APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY**

**Section 2.01 Purposes of this Policy. The purposes of this Policy are to:**

- a) Safeguard and protect the members and staff of the Presbytery, the churches, congregants, members, and staff of member churches within the Presbytery, and the people served by the Presbytery and its missions, especially those who are vulnerable, against any form of Sexual Misconduct within the church.
- b) Express the Presbytery's commitment to prevent Sexual Misconduct by creating an atmosphere in our Presbytery where acts of silence, ignorance, and minimization regarding Sexual Misconduct are overcome by acts of understanding, respect, care, and justice.
- c) Promote justice, compassion, and healing for all persons and congregations affected by instances of Sexual Misconduct.
- d) Ensure the effectiveness of our Presbytery's processes for addressing instances of Sexual Misconduct so that the truth may be determined, the due process rights of those involved shall be honored, those involved may be restored within the community of faith, and wrongdoing will cease.
- e) Teach this Presbytery's standards of ministry, for those called to particular service within the life of the church, both ordained and not ordained, in relation to Sexual Misconduct to fulfill our individual and collective responsibility to preserve the integrity of those standards and our ministry.
- f) Work toward justice and compassion for all those involved or affected by Disciplinary proceedings that involve accusations of Sexual Abuse within our Presbytery.
- g) Provide definitions and resource materials useful in the identification and prevention of

Sexual Misconduct. Definitions are included in Article VIII of this policy.

**Section 2.02 Application.** This Sexual Misconduct Policy for the Prevention of and Response to Instances of Sexual Misconduct (hereafter this “Policy”) applies to all Minister members of the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley (the “Presbytery”), any Minister laboring within the bounds of the Presbytery, as well as any person employed by the Presbytery or serving as a paid or volunteer, full, part-time or contract staff to the Presbytery regardless of their church membership, ordination status, or other professional licensure or status.

**Section 2.03 Activity Prohibited.** Minister members and all persons subject to this Policy as described in Section 1.02 above shall not engage in any form of Sexual Misconduct (defined below at Section 8.01), including Sexual Abuse (defined in Book of Order D-7.0901 while called to or serving this Presbytery. This Policy applies to all forms of Sexual Misconduct. “Sexual Abuse” is a particular form of Sexual Misconduct which is a Constitutional offense defined in BOOK OF ORDER D-7.0901. Sexual Abuse is a form of, but not the only form of, Sexual Misconduct. To be clear, all forms of Sexual Misconduct are prohibited by his Policy and may result in adverse employment consequences or discipline, even if the conduct is not a Constitutional offense (i.e., Sexual Abuse).

### **Article III. RESPONSE TO PERSONS INVOLVED**

**Section 3.01 Treatment of Victims and Accusers.** To meet the needs of those persons most directly involved in instances of Sexual Misconduct, the Presbytery intends for the Victim and the Accuser (if not also the Victim) that it will:

- a) Listen and take seriously their stories.
- b) Provide an advocate (see BOOK OF ORDER D-7.01001b), pastoral support, and where appropriate provide or refer them to therapeutic support.
- c) Inform them about church process, this Policy, and progress regarding the allegations or proceedings to the extent possible, while respecting confidentiality and other Book of Order requirements.
- d) Support and advocate for the Victim’s family, and provide or refer family members to pastoral, therapeutic, and economic support to as desired and appropriate.

**Section 3.02 Treatment of the Accused.** To meet the needs of those persons most directly involved in instances of Sexual Misconduct, the Presbytery intends for the Accused person that it will:

- a) Treat them with fairness and respect.
- b) Respect the Accused person’s right to remain silent throughout a Disciplinary process (see Book of Order D-7.1003a), but also to listen and take seriously their stories if the Accused person chooses to speak
- c) Provide an advocate (see Book of Order D-7.01003c), pastoral support, and where appropriate provide or refer the Accused person to therapeutic support.
- d) Provide counsel or assist in providing counsel if disciplinary charges are filed against the Accused person (see Book of Order D-7.01003d).

e) Inform the Accused person about church process and this Policy, and progress regarding proceedings that are not part of a disciplinary case to the extent possible, while respecting confidentiality and other Book of Order requirements.

f) Support and advocate for the accused person's family, and provide or refer family members to pastoral, therapeutic, and economic support to as desired and appropriate, recognizing that the Accused person's family members may also be victims in the situation.

**Section 3.02 Treatment of Congregations. To meet the needs of those persons most directly involved in instances of Sexual Misconduct, the Presbytery intends when a Minister, member of its staff, or congregant of a church within the Presbytery is involved in an instance of Sexual Misconduct that:**

a) The Stated Clerk will share with the senior Minister/head of staff (unless that person is the Accused) and the Session this Policy and the flow chart for the disciplinary process.

b) The Executive Presbyter (or their designee) will meet with the senior Minister/head of staff (unless that person is the Accused) and the Session at the earliest practical opportunity to discuss the situation and explain the role and response of the Presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Response Team (SMRT) and other Presbytery personnel or entities such as the Committee on Ministry or other liaisons from the Presbytery to the church, which may include in some instances special task groups or an administrative commission.

c) In an instance where a Minister or member of the ministerial staff of a church is the Accused person and has been placed on administrative leave (see Book of Order D-7.0902) the Executive Presbyter (or their designee) will be in contact with the senior Minister/head of staff (unless that person is the Accused) and the Session within 24 hours of the administrative leave decision by the Permanent Judicial Commission ("PJC") of the Presbytery to arrange for any necessary pastoral and other support, and in any instance where the PJC did not impose administrative leave on the Accused person, to address any restrictions that should be imposed on the Accused person. These discussions will include consideration of arrangements for paid administrative leave when it has been imposed.

d) Recognizing that the effects of an instance of Sexual Misconduct may affect many people and persist for an extended time within a congregation, throughout any situation involving instances of Sexual Misconduct, where a Minister, member of its staff, or congregant is involved, the Presbytery, acting through its Stated Clerk, Executive Presbyter, Committee on Ministry, other liaisons, and SMRT will delegate persons or teams to

e) In all instances, listen to the congregation, church leaders and staff and take their concerns seriously.

f) Offer pastoral care and support.

g) Provide information about sexual misconduct in general, PC(USA) Discipline, and related topics.

h) Provide access to or referrals to resource persons knowledgeable about PC(USA) polity and the effects of sexual misconduct in the church, consultants or therapists with knowledge and experience in dealing with sexual misconduct, or legal counsel knowledgeable about PC(USA) polity, secular (civil and criminal) law pertaining to Sexual Misconduct, Child Sexual Abuse, reporting of child abuse, or similar topics.

- i) Assist the church staff or leaders in notifying and working with the church's insurers when appropriate.

#### **Article IV. DISTRIBUTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THIS POLICY**

**Section 4.01 Distribution to Presbytery Personnel. This Policy applies to everyone within the Presbytery regardless of ordination status. This Policy shall be provided to each person listed below initially upon their entry of service within the Presbytery and annually thereafter:**

- All Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving within the bounds the Presbytery
- All Ruling Elders commissioned to service within the Presbytery,
- All persons in the ordination process (Inquirers and Candidates).
- All employees on the staff of the Presbytery.
- All who serve in any capacity as Presbytery leaders, members of Presbytery Committees, task forces, or commissions.

**Section 4.02 Written Acknowledgment. Each of these persons shall sign a written acknowledgement of receipt of this Policy and deliver the signed receipt to the Presbytery office no later than January 31 each calendar year. Signed acknowledgments shall be kept on file by the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.**

**Section 4.03 Distribution to Congregations. To help congregations understand the Presbytery's role when Ministers and Commissioned Ruling Elders are accused of Sexual Misconduct, the Stated Clerk shall distribute this Policy annually to every Clerk of Session in the Presbytery, who shall share it with each congregation's officers and make it available to members when requested. The Stated Clerk shall also make this Policy available to all persons who report or present allegations of Sexual Misconduct and to all persons against whom allegations of Sexual Misconduct are received by the Stated Clerk.**

**Section 4.04 Available Online. This Policy shall also be available to the public through the Presbytery website to assist congregations in forming their own Book OF ORDER mandated policies.**

#### **Article V. PREVENTION and EDUCATION**

##### **Section 5.01 Screening.**

**a) Reference Checks.** All persons governed by this policy shall have reference checks. Pre-employment screening shall include specific questions to ascertain any history of sexual abuse or misconduct.

**b) Background Checks.** Criminal records background checks and sex offender reviews shall be performed on all persons covered by this Policy. Other background checks, such as motor vehicle record reports, and credit reports, may be performed as needed and appropriate to the person's responsibilities within the Presbytery.

**c) Responsibility for reference and background checks.** The Presbytery shall be responsible to conduct reference and background checks for the persons covered by this Policy, and the Stated Clerk shall maintain appropriate records. All records shall be



strictly confidential and may be shared only on a need-to-know basis as authorized by the Executive Presbyter and/or Committee on Ministry.

### **Section 5.02 Education and Training**

- a) The Presbytery shall provide boundary training opportunities annually on subjects such as the recognition and prevention of Sexual Misconduct, ethical misconduct, the appropriate use of social media, financial boundaries, and other boundary related topics.
- b) Persons covered by this Policy are required to complete approved boundary training at least once every three years or more often as appropriate to the person's responsibilities, position, or circumstances or as appropriate based on changes in applicable laws, rules, standards, or the BOOK OF ORDER. Approved boundary training may include in-person, virtual, or video recorded training events offered by the Presbytery or offered by other councils or organizations and approved by the Presbytery.
- c) New minister members and newly Commissioned Elders of the Presbytery are required to attend boundary training within the first year of their arrival/commissioning.
- d) Anyone governed by this Policy who fails to comply with the training requirements will be subject to administrative and/or disciplinary action consistent with the personnel policies of the Presbytery, the authority of the Committee on Ministry and the BOOK OF ORDER.

## **Article VI. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**Section 6.01 Reporting.** Allegations of all Sexual Misconduct accusing Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elders), Commissioned Ruling Elders, Inquirers and Candidates, Presbytery employees, or others working for or on behalf of Presbytery shall be made in writing and delivered to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery in person, by mail, courier service or electronic means. In all instances of allegations of Sexual Misconduct, the Stated Clerk (working with others such as the Executive Presbyter, Committee in Ministry, members of the SMRT, or others) shall immediately provide for the safety of those directly involved in the incident.

- a) Allegations of Sexual Misconduct against a person covered by this Policy who is not a Minister of Word and Sacrament shall be reported to the Executive Presbyter and Committee on Ministry or Presbytery's Personnel Committee, as appropriate to the Accused person's position or role. The presbytery shall respond by using the personnel policies of the Presbytery and appropriate procedures from the BOOK OF ORDER Church Discipline.
- b) Once the State Clerk receives an allegation of Sexual Abuse against a Minister of Word and Sacrament, BOOK OF ORDER D-7.0902 et seq. procedures take effect. The Presbytery may impose paid administrative leave or other restrictions on any person covered by this Policy against whom an allegation of Sexual Misconduct has been made.

### **Section 6.02 Mandated Reporting**

- (a) The State of Indiana requires that an individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect shall make an immediate report to local law enforcement or the Indiana Department of Child Services. See Indiana Code § 31-33-5-1.

- (b) Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders, and Ruling Elders shall follow the requirements of BOOK OF ORDER G-4.03 and should consult with the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk for assistance in complying with G-4.03.
- (c) In any instance when there is reason to believe there is an ongoing or imminent risk of physical harm to a child the Executive Presbyter and or Stated Clerk shall be immediately notified of the situation.

**Section 6.03 Documentation.** BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1004 describes the responsibilities of all persons in an investigation of Constitutional offense to work cooperatively and preserve records.

## **Article VII. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT RESPONSE TEAM**

**Section 7.01 Stated Clerk.** In instances of a written allegation of Sexual Abuse, the Stated Clerk shall proceed immediately in accordance with this Policy and the procedures outlined in the BOOK OF ORDER Church Discipline.

**Section 7.02 Executive Presbyter.** The Executive Presbyter shall direct those involved (Accused, Accuser, Victim) to the appropriate resources and when appropriate coordinates with Committee on Ministry and to initiate action with the Moderator of the SMRT.

### **Section 7.03 Sexual Misconduct Response Team (SMRT).**

**a) Purpose and Role.** The SMRT is charged with providing pastoral care, support, and advocacy where needed in cases involving accusations of Sexual Misconduct within the Presbytery or a member congregation. The purpose of the SMRT is to assure that an expeditious, professional, objective, effective, and caring response is made by the Presbytery to charges of Sexual Misconduct. The SMRT shall not investigate allegations or in any way function as an investigating committee for disciplining members but shall confine itself to coordinating a process to meet the specific needs of the Accuser, the Victim and their family (if any), the Accused Person and their family (if any), employing entities, congregations, and others in the Presbytery affected by the situation. See Article III of this Policy. The SMRT shall be in contact with the Session of the church and in contact with the congregation, as needed.

**b) Members.** To ensure that the Presbytery is ready to meet the needs of those involved in instances of Sexual Misconduct, the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry shall (according to its process for naming committee members) name six members of the SMRT, each appointed for a three-year term and one member shall be designated as the Moderator. The SMRT shall be composed, as nearly as possible, of an equal number of clergy and ruling elders, and women and men. Members may serve no more than six consecutive years. Any SMRT member with any connection to the Accused person, Accuser, Victim, or congregation involved shall recuse themselves.

**c) Confidentiality.** Members of the SMRT and any individual participating in the work of the SMRT shall sign a pledge of confidentiality, copies of which shall be maintained at the Presbytery office and distributed as deemed necessary.

**d) Training.** All members of the SMRT shall be trained to serve on this team. Training shall be held at least annually, and as new SMRT members are appointed. Training shall

be provided by professionals who shall focus on such things as compassion, communication, listening, sensitivity to pain, feelings of guilt and anger, etc., and offering resources as needed. Records shall be kept for each SMRT members' training and maintained at the Presbytery office.

**e) Activation.** The SMART shall be activated whenever an allegation of Sexual Misconduct is received by the Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter in consultation with the Committee on Ministry deems it appropriate. In instances involving Sexual Misconduct within a congregation, the SMRT may be activated to assist administrative commissions and others working with the congregation to assist the congregation to respond to the situation in healthy ways. Others who have particular skills or experience (who are not members of the SMRT) may be co-opted to assist as needed.

**f) Supportive Role and Listening Sessions.** All involved parties deserve listening sessions that are separate from one another. The impact on a congregation is different from the impact on the Accuser or the person Accused. Each will have their own perspective and differing spiritual and other needs. The SMRT is not intended to be a part of alternative forms of resolution, mediation, or restorative justice processes, although it may suggest such processes to congregations and others.

**g) Parallel to Disciplinary Process.** Disciplinary Process and SMRT activities often will run parallel to one another. The SMRT shall not be a part of Disciplinary Process and because of confidentiality requirements, it would be inappropriate for any SMRT member to offer to, be asked to, or to provide testimony in any related Disciplinary Process. A flow chart of these processes is attached as an Appendix to this Policy.

## Article VIII. DEFINITIONS

**Definitions for this Policy. As used in this Policy, the following terms have the meanings set forth below:**

- **Accused or Accused person** — mean the individual against whom a claim of Sexual Misconduct is made.
- **Accuser** – means the person claiming to have knowledge of Sexual Misconduct by a person covered by this Policy and who has made an allegation against another person. The Accuser may or may not be the Victim of the alleged Sexual Misconduct.
- **Advocate** – is a person who provides support and pastoral care for an Accuser, Victim, or Accused Person or a family member of one of them. The role of the Advocate is to listen and provide support, accompany the person to meetings during the process, and inform the person of procedural rights or steps, but an Advocate is not legal counsel and does not give legal advice. Legal counsel may speak for a person if asked to do by the person being represented; Advocates generally do not speak for the person.
- **Allegation** – means a written statement alleging an offense or wrongdoing that is submitted to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery or the Stated Clerk of the congregation having jurisdiction over the individual being accused. Allegations shall include (1) a written statement of the alleged offense or offenses; and (2) facts which, if proved to be true, would likely result in adverse action under the

personnel policy of the Presbytery or this Policy, or in the case of a Constitutional offense, censure within the PC(USA). The process for filing an allegation of a Constitutional offense is outlined in Book of Order D-7.02. An allegation may pertain to a violation of this Policy and may not be a Constitutional offense as defined in the BOOK OF ORDER.

- **Child Sexual Abuse** — includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation or gratification of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching and may involve Misuse of Technology. A child may never consent to sexual behavior or sexual contact with an adult. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the definition of Sexual Abuse includes sexual conduct with anyone under age eighteen. Civil laws generally define a child as someone under the age of eighteen but states like Indiana recognize differences with respect to consent for sexual activity when both persons are over sixteen.
- **Civil Authorities** — are the governmental bodies, whether city, county, state, or federal, that are given the responsibility to investigate, criminally prosecute, and/or bring civil charges against individuals accused of sexual crimes or offenses against adults, adults who lack mental capacity, and children. Civil laws are the laws, regulations, codes, and statutes enacted by Civil Authorities.
- **Misuse of Technology** — use of technology (computers, phones and other personal computers or smart devices, the internet) that results in sexual harassment or abuse of another person, including texting, emailing, or sending messages or images with sexual content to another person who has not consented to receive them. When this conduct includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property or using church owned technology or the church's internet connection. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technology or an internet connection supplied, owned, or maintained by a church or a church entity.
- **Sexual Abuse** — is defined in D. 7-0901 as: "Sexual abuse is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position. Sexual abuse is contrary to the Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is therefore always an offense for the purpose of discipline."
- **Sexual Harassment** — means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or their continued status in the Presbytery. It is a violation of this Policy to make employment decisions based on whether a person agreed to or rejected the sexual advances or requests of a person covered by this Policy. Sexual harassment also includes unwelcome sexual jokes or comments, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, behavior or display of materials with sexual content that insults, degrades and/or exploits

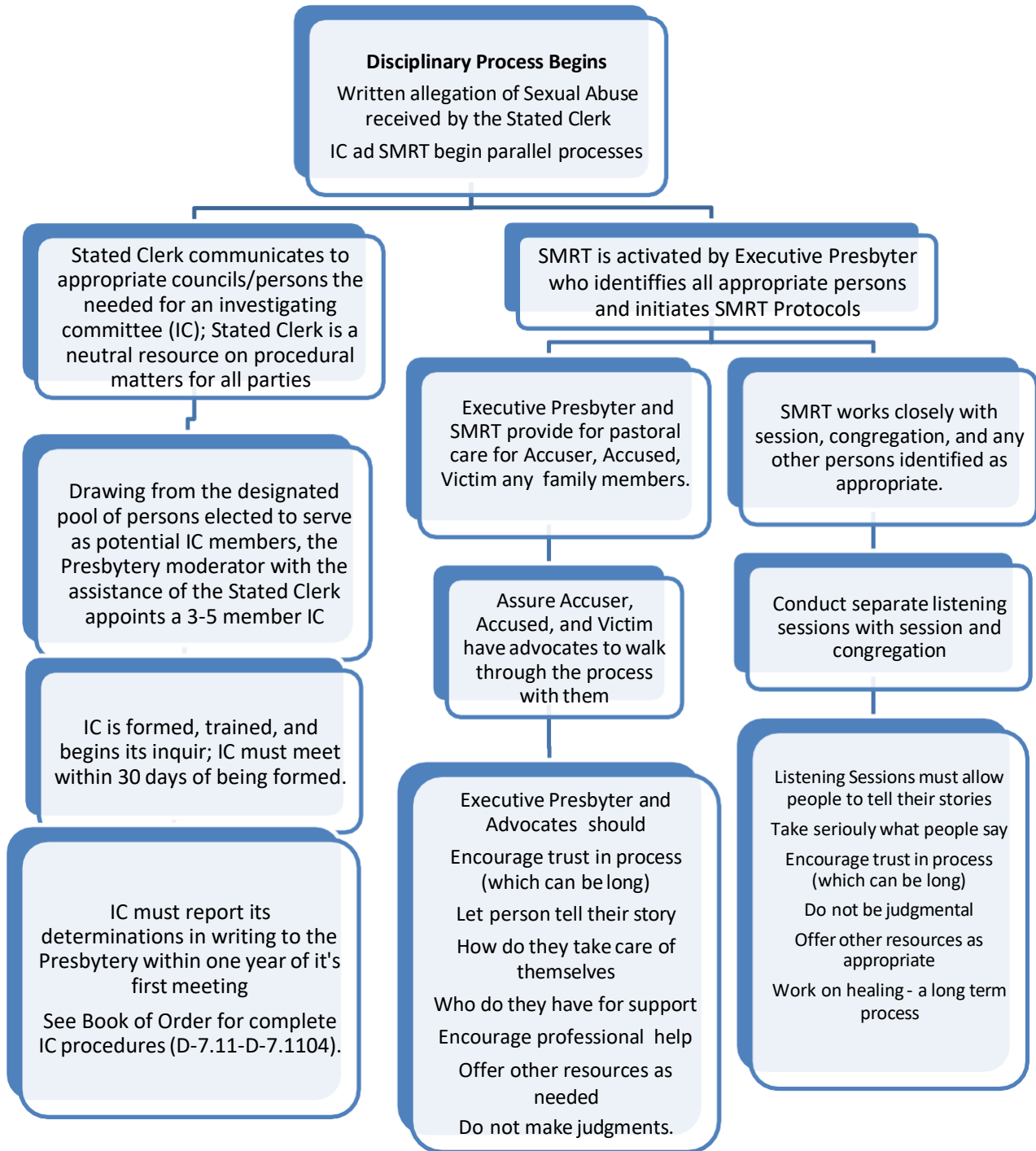
men, women, or children. Sexual harassment has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

- **Sexual Malfeasance** —is defined by the broken trust relationship resulting from sexual activities within a ministerial or professional (such as counseling or therapeutic) relationship that results in misuse of the ministerial or professional office or position.
- **Sexual Misconduct** – is a comprehensive term that includes Child Sexual Abuse (defined herein), Sexual harassment (defined herein), Sexual Malfeasance (defined herein), Sexual Abuse (defined at D-7.0901), and Misuse of Technology (defined herein). As noted above, all forms of Sexual Misconduct are subject to this Policy but not every instance of Sexual Misconduct will be a Constitutional offense.
- **Victim** — a person claiming to have been harmed and/or abused by a person covered under the Policy.

**Section 8.02 Definitions in the BOOK OF ORDER. Other terms used in this Policy are defined in the BOOK OF ORDER. Those definitions also apply to this Policy. Terms defined in the BOOK OF ORDER RELEVANT to this Policy include (but are not limited to):**

- Allegation -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.0201c.
- Alternative Resolution -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.16
- Charges -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1503.
- Investigating Committee -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.05.
- Mediation -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1604.
- Offense – Book of Order D-7.0103.
- Rights of the Accuser -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1001.
- Rights of the Victim -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1002.
- Rights of the Accused - BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1003
- Restorative Justice -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.1603
- Sexual Abuse -- BOOK OF ORDER D-7.0901.

### Flow Chart of Intersection of an IC and the SMRT in a Disciplinary Case



## **Conclusion**

A healthy relationship between the church and its employees is a vital component of the development and maintenance of a healthy and thriving congregation. The importance of these relationships is worthy of the time, effort, prayer and caring all parties — teaching elders, ruling elders, church members and councils — give to develop and maintain the elements of trust and care that display the Kingdom of God to the world.

## **Addendum**

### **How to Cover 12 Weeks of Family Leave**

Covering twelve weeks of Family Leave can be difficult, especially in a smaller congregation, but it is not impossible. Within your community you have resources and abilities to make this possible with a little work and creativity. It will involve reaching both inside and outside your church walls and being open to the guiding of the Spirit.

Here is a sample of what twelve weeks might look like:

Sunday 1 — Ruling elder proclaims the Word

Sunday 2 — Invite a community partner to come and share their mission.

Sunday 3 — Music Sunday. Select a passage of scripture and a selection of music which reflects that passage.

Sunday 4 — Youth Sunday or a video sermon from the presbytery library.

Sunday 5 — Invite a mission co-worker to share their work. This takes advance planning and can happen in person or virtually. This will involve an honorarium.

Sunday 6 — Ruling elder proclaim the Word.

Sunday 7 — Men's Sunday

Sunday 8 — Do you have a retired minister off Word and Sacrament or a retired educator in your congregation? Ask them for one Sunday as a gift to the church.

Sunday 9 — Women's Sunday

Sunday 10 — Invite another community partner to come and share their mission.

Sunday 11 — Is there someone in your congregation that has a story of faith to share (or several people)? Gove them a prompt to help shape their comments.

Sunday 12 — You made it! Celebrate with a hymn sing and prepare to welcome your pastor back!

*The Presbyterian Outlook* publishes liturgy for each Sunday of the year, typically two weeks ahead of schedule. This is one element of worship that you may use with minimal cost. You will need to give proper credit.

Holy Humor Sunday may be celebrated any day of the year.

A candidate under the care of your presbytery may be able to fill the pulpit on a Sunday. The presbytery office can help with these arrangements.

A nearby Presbyterian seminary or a seminary of one of our partner denominations may have students or teachers who might be available. Reach out and see.

Is there someone in your congregation or a neighboring congregation who service on a presbytery or synod committee? Is there someone in your presbytery who serves on one of the denomination's national committees? Ask them to share about their work.

The bottom line is that with some creativity and thinking beyond the usual box of worship planning and execution you can make Family Leave work well for your church and your staff.

The 2024 Minimum Compensation Standards were approved by the Commission on Ministries on July 26, 2023 and adopted by the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley at its duly called regular stated meeting on August 5, 2023.

The Family Leave and Other Leave Policy was approved by Coordinating Council Commission on January 24, 2024 and adopted by the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley at its duly called regular stated meeting on February 24, 2023, and supersedes any previously adopted or amended policy on Family and Civic Leave for this Presbytery.

The Sexual Misconduct Policy was approved by Coordinating Council Commission on January 24, 2024 and adopted by the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley at its duly called regular meeting on February 24, 2023, and supersedes any previously adopted or amended policy on Sexual Misconduct for this Presbytery.

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Rev. Terry Epling

Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley