

Policy # 18
ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR CO-PASTORS WHO ARE SPOUSES

COM Approval: April 24, 2014

PGA Approval: May 1, 2014

When a co-pastor or co-associate (co-pastor #1) has been placed on paid administrative leave because of allegations of sexual abuse, paid administrative leave shall also be considered for the remaining co-pastor spouse or co-associate spouse (co-pastor #2).

Such consideration for co-pastor #2, shall be determined by the Committee on Ministry taking into consideration the impact on the congregation, the ability of co-pastor #2 to function as the pastor and other pertinent considerations. If the co-pastor is put on administrative leave, COM will clearly state that no written statement of an alleged offense was received about co-pastor #2.

Rationale:

When leaders of a congregation discover that sexual misconduct accusations have been made against one of their teaching elders, initial reactions may be intense and varied, depending on the circumstances. Responses may include: denial, anger, fear, loss, guilt, hurt, anxiety, grief, helplessness, shame, feelings of having been betrayed, and defensiveness. Past abuse in the lives of congregants can re-surface and cause individuals to withdraw from fellowship or to feel unsafe. A number of other factors can complicate the reaction of a congregation, e.g., identified victims who are minors, publicity, the prominence of the identified offender, and legal involvement. Church leaders often do not realize that the congregation could be an associate victim of the misconduct. A co-pastor who remains in such circumstances is given the tremendous burden of handling pastoral care, response to the community, steps to ensure a safe church environment and adequate processing of intense feelings within the church, including the co-pastor's own feelings of grief and anger. This may be especially true in the case of co-pastors or co-associates who are married. It may be that the continuing presence of one spouse in a clergy couple after the other has left a staff because of abuse allegations will have a chilling effect on the willingness of any potential victims to come forward.