

Policy on Announcing Significant Family Life Events for Pastoral Leaders

Pacific Northwest Conference of The United Methodist Church

The Pacific Northwest Conference recognizes the importance of significant family life events in the lives of our pastoral leaders. To honor their personal milestones while maintaining respect for privacy, the following guidelines will be observed:

Events Covered:

Significant family life events include births, adoptions, marriages, major anniversaries, retirements, serious illnesses, and deaths within the immediate family.

Consent and Timing:

Announcements will only be made with the expressed consent of the pastoral leader or their immediate family. Pastoral leaders are encouraged to notify the conference office promptly if they wish for an event to be shared.

Format of Announcement:

Announcements will be made through official conference communication channels to a list that includes other serving pastoral leaders and members (active and retired) of clergy orders and fellowships.

The announcement will include only the details the pastoral leader has approved.

Optionally, the same may be shared in the district newsletter of the district where the clergyperson lives or is serving.

Sensitivity and Support:

For sensitive events, such as illnesses or losses, announcements will be framed compassionately and appropriately.

Support resources or opportunities for congregational prayers and outreach may be included upon request.

Responsibility:

The conference communications team will coordinate with the pastoral leader to ensure accurate and timely announcements, respecting confidentiality and sensitivity.

Limitations:

The membership of deacons and elders is held at the annual conference level and not in any one church, making it logical that they may wish to share important life events when they occur. While membership being held at the conference level isn't true for all pastoral leaders, serving in a pastoral leadership role can create a level of collegiality that we want to honor by including them.

Of course, significant family life events impact lay people as well. While a rare exception may be made, the default expectation is that the local church is the best location for lay members to receive support, care, congratulations and prayers as the situation warrants it.