

A Note from Council Regarding Childcare

Those of us who still have young children in our homes know one thing of a certainty: the household arrangements have changed a great deal even since we were children ourselves—and dramatically from the households in which our own parents were raised. We have responsibilities outside the home that can call us away 24-7. Arranging for the care of our children can be a real challenge, especially when there is a single parent in the household or both parents hold demanding professional positions.

The presbytery council and leadership are aware of these issues and how they relate to the lives of many who are called to serve the church as commissioners to presbytery meetings. Meetings called in the evenings and for Saturdays both broaden the opportunities for involvement by some with busy careers even as these hours outside those of traditional childcare service providers complicate things for those who have children at home not capable of supervising themselves.

In recent years the presbytery has tried to provide childcare services during its meetings for those who have requested it in advance. But to be frank, the system has not worked well. From the standpoint of commissioners, there has been the problem of school-aged children who fell in the gap between the ages for which childcare was available and when they could reasonably care for themselves. For the presbytery staff, there has been the problem of uncertainties about utilization and of difficulties in physical facilities at sites where meetings are being held.

The council has decided to approach this issue in a “new way” as well. The September 22 meeting will be the last for which we will arrange childcare for preschool children for whom a parent requests that service in advance. Beginning with the November meeting, we are asking churches to partner with us in covering expenses related to providing childcare for their commissioners and pastors. The presbytery will split those costs with the congregation 50-50. We simply ask that churches present these requests for reimbursement to the Stated Clerk / Treasurer’s office after they have been paid.

This approach will allow for increased flexibility in childcare arrangements depending on the number of families affected from each congregation, including care at a child’s own home or group care at the church or another location. It is also consistent with the principle that congregations should support expenses related to participation by their commissioners.

Certainly this is not a perfect solution, but no single approach could address the variety of circumstances our pastors and commissioners face. We do believe, however, that the potential benefits improve significantly upon the situation as it is now. We appreciate your cooperation as we try this “new way” of caring for one another in the context of presbytery meetings.