



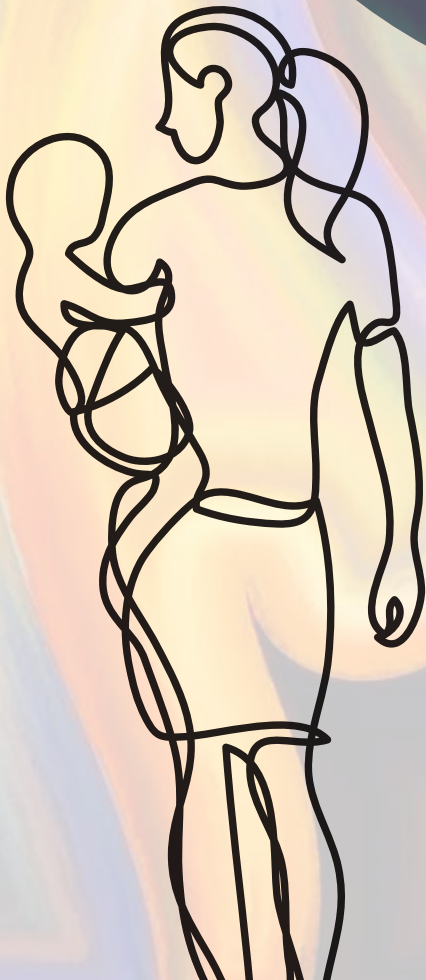
# Becoming a Mother in ministry

First edition: December 2018

Maternity leave of up to 12 months is a legal right in the UK, and this is reflected in the standard terms and conditions for appointment of accredited ministers. The minister chooses when to return to work in that period. Most ministers will qualify for maternity pay, either in the form of statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance. This model is mirrored for those ministers who are adopting children.

It is advisable for the minister and the church to plan together for a year of maternity leave, which can be reduced if the minister decides to return earlier. Flexibility is important as plans may change once the baby arrives!

Clear communication and careful planning will make a big difference to both the minister's and the church's experience during maternity leave. This guide helps to identify all the key planning points and provides outlines for the key points for discussion and communication.



# Contents



## ***For ministers (page 6)***

### Experiences of ministers

- Minister In Training (MIT) and maternity leave
- Multiple maternity leaves in one church
- Senior minister job share
- Maternity leave in team ministry
- Momentum of church life
- Miscarriage
- Ministry and fatherhood

## ***Reflections on pregnancy, motherhood and ministry (page 13)***

- Being the church's tummy
- The reality of pregnancy whilst in ministry
- Risk awareness
- Sundays are hard
- Joint pastorate challenges

## ***For churches (page 18)***

### Guide for meetings and discussion with a minister

- Pregnancy announcement
- Maternity leave arrangements
- Return to work interview
- Working hours
- In case of miscarriage or still birth
- Adopting a child
- IVF treatment

## ***Useful Links and resources (page 33)***

## ***Contributors and feedback (page 35)***

Please note that this guide should be read alongside BUGB standard terms and conditions for appointment of ministers.

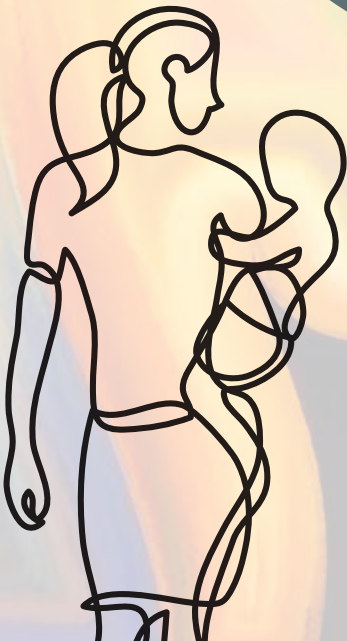
**[www.baptist.org.uk/toa](http://www.baptist.org.uk/toa)**

# Becoming a mother in ministry

Congratulations! You may now be considering for the first time what becoming a mother might mean as a minister. We include our experiences of pregnancy, maternity leave, children and ministerial life, hoping that this will provide you with encouragement and practical advice. Every pregnancy, birth and ministerial situation is different, and so your experience will be different again. We hope that you will be assured that you are not alone and that family life and being a minister are to be celebrated.

It is likely that you are the first female minister to have a child at your church, so it will be a new experience for your church too. We include a guide for churches to aid their support of you. We provide this advice with the aim of encouraging a healthy conversation about maternity leave between you and your church leadership team and wider church. This guide grew out of our concern to share our experience and examples of best practice across the Baptist Union. Each woman that participated in the planning of this guide is part of the Baptist Minister Mothers Facebook group, which you are welcome to join. Our small but growing group of female ministers with children support each other and provide a safe space to explore the tensions and delights of ministry as a mother.

*Love from Baptist Minister Mothers*



**You can contact the  
Baptist Minister Mothers group  
by email at  
[baptistministermothers@gmail.com](mailto:baptistministermothers@gmail.com)  
or through our Facebook page  
'Baptist Minister Mothers'**

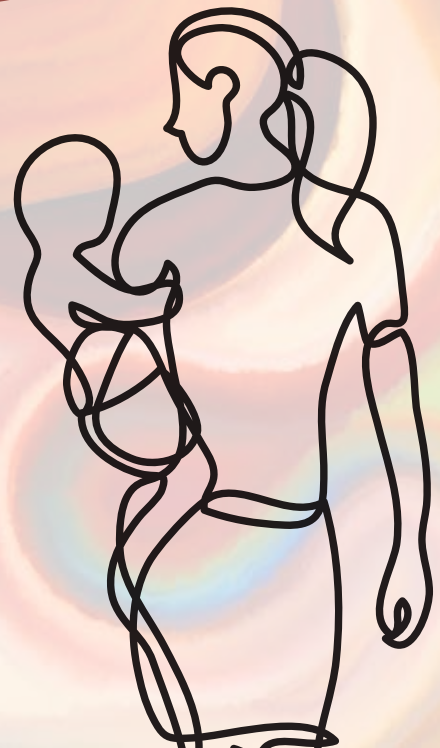
## Supporting a pregnant minister

Wonderful news! This is a great time for your church to be able to care and support a new child, minister and their family. However, it may be the first time your church has considered maternity leave for a minister. So we hope that this guide will support both the minister and the church in pregnancy, preparing for maternity leave and returning to work.

This document grew out of the collated stories of women who had experienced maternity leave in BUGB churches. For some the time was exciting and affirming, for others it highlighted tensions within the church. Our suggestion is that, if a minister and church leadership team make good use of discussion at key stages, this can be avoided. A supportive working environment will enable your minister to flourish and provide great benefits for your church and its mission.

*Blessings to you, Baptist Minister Mothers*

**Full details of the maternity, paternity and adoptive leave and pay provisions for accredited Baptist ministers can be found in the standard BUGB terms and conditions for ministers at [www.baptist.org.uk/toa](http://www.baptist.org.uk/toa) We recommend that you read these alongside this guide.**



## MIT and maternity leave

“ I found out I was pregnant in my first week as a Minister in Training. I had waited a long time to start ministry and it felt right to keep going so I only took four months leave. The church is not traditional, and I was not sole pastor, so it was able to be more flexible in its approach. I didn't qualify for maternity pay as I had not worked for the church for long enough, so I received maternity allowance as a state benefit instead. This meant that maternity leave was comparatively easy for the church.

I found the church to be very supportive without being overbearing. Typically, men said, “if you need more time take it” and the women said “we'll help you make this work”. The church meets mostly in the evening, so my baby and husband can only attend once a month, which is difficult for us as a family. Returning to ministry has been the right thing, but it has been tough at times and it is hard to know how much I can appropriately share with the church.”



Experiences



## Experiences



### Multiple maternity leaves in one church

“ My home church, where I am a minister now, has been incredibly supportive to me but at the same time left me to organise all cover and needed me to guide the church through the maternity leaves. Lay preachers took most services, including three using the same passage, but issues arose when lay preachers were unwell and cover was required at short notice! A great deal of pressure then landed on the church secretary to fill the gaps.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) days (see page 23) – I was unaware of these until part way through my first maternity leave. Prior to having this knowledge, a question had been raised “well surely you can do this as a church member?” Boundaries are therefore an issue during maternity leaves as members and friends of the church see you in a visible capacity but are unsure how to relate to you. As a result, boundaries improved in each maternity leave.

”

# Experiences

## Senior minister job share

“ My husband and I are both ministers, sharing a stipend, although I took the lead in the pastorate. I suffered from chronic sickness while pregnant which was difficult to deal with in ministry. The church sought to understand and be supportive, but ultimately it meant that my husband was left with significantly more responsibility during my pregnancy and maternity leave. I was left wondering whether this was right, or fair... but simply didn't know what we were entitled to, or what support there could be.

The hardest thing for me was returning to work after maternity leave. It felt like I was expected simply to 'pick up where I left off', but actually I needed things to be different and for boundaries to be drawn in different places. It was also difficult hearing church members express views on whether mothers should work etc. The negative voices were few – but they hurt. I became anxious and confused and soon felt very ground down. It wasn't long before I started wondering whether I needed to change pastorates.

When my youngest was two, we entered settlement and were called elsewhere. Starting afresh in a new pastorate has certainly been a good thing for me and my ministry after the crazy 'having babies' phase! ”



## Maternity leave in team ministry

“ I was fully supported throughout my pregnancy and found maternity leave to be liberating. However, I found my return to work stressful. I had arranged volunteers to cover my leave period to run basic functions while I was away. But I was told that nobody had missed me.

I did not attend my church in my maternity leave, but another local congregation instead. My maternity leave highlighted the pre-existing areas of conflict in the team and the church and ultimately, I decided to settle with another church.

Questions regarding childcare were constantly asked of me. It was assumed that I would not send my children to nursery but be a stay-at-home mother and a full-time minister. I found this attitude odd, as most church members had daughters of my age who worked and whose children were in some form of day care. However, the queue of eager babysitters was an absolute blessing. ”



Experiences

## Momentum of church life

“ Some people (from different generations often) seemed slightly begrudging of maternity leave. Since I was only replaced by a roster of visiting speakers and the diaconate, I think the quality of the provision was variable and there was a bit of a feeling of losing momentum, particularly with my second child.

When I came back to work after my second maternity leave, emotions and tensions were running high and various difficult confrontations arose. Some of this I think was in part because of my absence and because of the feeling of loss of momentum. It felt like being jumped on (by some) when I got back to fix the last six months, because we had 'lost time'.

When you have a new born baby, and you are experiencing post-natal hormones and still adjusting to a new child at home, this is not a good time to have the church come down on you and be extra demanding – this had a serious effect on my mental health. ”



Experiences

## Miscarriage

“ When I had a miscarriage, I don't think I had any time off initially, maybe a day or two, since my work is part-time and flexible. A couple of weeks later I really hit a wall of grief and told my mentor what had happened. She was extremely helpful, took my service for me that weekend and advised me to go back to the doctor, who wrote me off sick for a couple of weeks to recover.

During that time, I was able to grieve properly and come back much healthier. I didn't know until it happened how deep the loss of even an early pregnancy can be. The church responded with care and compassion and the regional office sent me flowers (no idea who told them!), which touched me because it validated my loss. ”

*The Churches' Ministerial Counselling  
Service exists to provide confidential  
support to ministers and adults  
in their immediate household  
through short term, professional  
counselling  
[www.cmincs.net](http://www.cmincs.net)*



Experiences

## Ministry and fatherhood

Where does ministry sit in relation to fatherhood? Am I a father who ministers or a minister who fathers or what? Both are indelible callings. Both require both a state of being and action, faith and works. Both call me into the role of teacher-pastor for which each and every doctrine and manual prove inadequate sooner or later. Both lead to tears and joys unspeakable. And I am one person, no more willing to foist platitudes on my children than on my congregation, stumbling my way through responsibility, seeking to not make too many mistakes.

Practically, life changes not only with childbirth, but every family transition, from the arrival of a sibling, to leaving home, to marriage, to bereavement. For all this, the jolt into parental responsibility felt severe for me at the time. After three near sleepless nights, looking after my firstborn while my wife recovered from surgery post-partum, I collapsed onto the furry purple sofa of the hospital counsellor. "I can't do this!" And once I had been handed a man-sized tissue I was told to go home and get some sleep! Thus ended the first lesson of fatherhood. I am not superman.

I took three months' paternity leave with each child. This was not as difficult for me as my wife job shared with me and returned to work herself. I appreciate the challenge may be much greater to convince another leadership team to fulfil this, but I wholeheartedly commend it. The experience set the tone well for job-sharing at home too, which is what couples actually do, whether tasks are fairly distributed or not. And since then I have not worked full time for the church (meaning that I've imposed limits on the time I've allowed myself to be away from parental responsibility). Church does not get to trump family, although sacrifices work both ways for the greater good. I would not have life any other way.



## Experiences

## ‘Being the church’s tummy’

### **Body changes**

As a public person in the life of the church, when a minister becomes pregnant, her physical changes are noticed often and may be commented on frequently.

*Suggestion: Think through how you might feel if someone wants to touch your tummy, and prepare to say “I’d rather you didn’t, thank you” if you wish.*

### **Sharing scan results**

Some members will keep asking about your scan results, often around the time of the 20 week scan in particular. Many will try to insist on your sharing of the sex of your baby, while others will have strong opinions about abnormality scans.

*Suggestion: Consider carefully whom you will communicate with about your pregnancy, and pay special attention to what and when you share information. For some women, scans are a pleasant experience, for others they reveal difficult information regarding the health of their baby. It may be best to share after the event exactly what you wish to be communicated. It is easier to set a high boundary regarding information and then reduce it if you wish.*



### **Your Obligations**

**You need to inform the church that you are pregnant, when the baby is due and when you plan to start your maternity leave at least 15 weeks before the week that the baby is due. The church does not have the right to know any more details unless you choose to share them. If you feel that you are being pressured to disclose more than you are comfortable with, it is fair to say “I don’t want to share the detail at this stage, but thank you for your prayers for me.”**

## The reality of pregnancy whilst in ministry

Every pregnancy is different, but as an expectant mother you will experience a range of changes in your body, which may affect how you choose to work. Below are a few of our experiences:

### **Morning (or anytime!) sickness**

Nausea can be merely annoying for some or debilitating for others. One minister needed a sick bag in the pulpit!

*Suggestion: Be aware of how your body is reacting to pregnancy and be kind to yourself. If your sickness is unbearable, do speak to your leadership team.*

### **Visiting**

"I knew that one of my church members kept an unruly parrot and chain-smoked, so I declined to visit her at home while pregnant. The visit was undertaken by another member of the pastoral team."

*Suggestion: If you are aware that certain pastoral visits may be difficult, re-arrange where possible.*

### **Tiredness**

Pregnancy is hard and tiring work, and sleeping is more difficult nearer to your due date.

*Suggestion: Plan to take short naps at lunchtime if you can, and reduce evening meeting commitments where possible.*

### **Risk awareness**

As you are pregnant, you may encounter physical and emotional challenges and risks in ministry. If your responsibilities include moving chairs or lifting heavy items, these activities can strain your pregnant body.

*Suggestion: Find other people to assist you setting up rooms, and moving heavy items.*

*Suggestion: Make good use of the risk assessment form for expectant and nursing mothers available on the Baptist Union website. Complete the form with your church secretary and another member of your leadership team. Review it regularly throughout your pregnancy, particularly as your body changes.*

*([www.baptist.org.uk/riskassessmentform](http://www.baptist.org.uk/riskassessmentform))*

## The reality of pregnancy whilst in ministry - continued

### **Increased sharing with congregation**

Pregnancy may well open up all sorts of conversations with other members of the congregation regarding their experience of pregnancy, not being able to have children, miscarriage, fertility treatments and birth. In addition, some cultures will infer that as a pastor you will be blessed with twins or boys first.

*Suggestion: This may be a helpful opportunity for pastoral care, but also consider as you are pregnant it may be too much to bear to hear difficult stories. Invite other members of the congregation in pastoral roles to care for these individuals rather than yourself, and make sure that this is signposted in the church.*

### **Attending church on maternity leave**

Once you have had your baby you might consider how much you wish to attend church during your maternity leave. Some ministers attend their own church throughout their leave and others attend occasionally. Whenever you attend church, you will hear about or see things related to your sphere of work. It can be difficult to pass over pastoral concerns or listen to different preaching etc.

Some take the opportunity to experience another local church for maternity leave. This can be beneficial as you are no longer in your working environment and can relax and enjoy the service. However if you already have other children settled into junior church then you may not wish to move them for a short period.

Inevitably with a young baby it is hard to get anywhere on time, so you may need to rest, visit extended family and so not attend church regularly.

*Suggestion: Communicate your plans for attending church as a place of worship with your leadership team.*



## Reflection

### ‘Sundays are hard’

**Before you return to work, consider carefully how you will arrange your responsibilities as a minister and as a parent. It is difficult to care for your children and lead and or preach at the same time.**

*Suggestion:*

- *Agree the care of your child with your spouse, as this may affect their ability to serve in the church.*
- *Agree the care of your child by another family member for Sunday services.*
- *Arrange for church friends to collect your child before church to enable you to prepare. This also helps the child settle with the friend, rather than screaming while being taken away from you just before the service begins.*
- *Pay for a childminder or nanny to include Sunday mornings – this may allow you to focus on your part in the service.*
- *Arrange for your child to be cared for at home while you are at church.*

**Pastoral conversations after church are hard to listen to with your child crying or wanting attention**

*Suggestion: This is super tricky! Some top tips are: lots of healthy snacks (or a tactical milk feed in the last hymn), arranging for your child to be taken home by someone else or taken for a walk in their pushchair.*

**Everyone wants to hold the baby** it can be very disconcerting to find that your baby is being passed around whilst you are in conversation. A helpful tip is to put baby into their car seat or baby sling after the service. This gives you a reason to keep them with you, and you can quite reasonably say that the baby is comfortable or going to sleep and that you don't want to take them out.





## Reflection

### Joint Pastorates 'Overhearing church life'

Where a minister holds a joint pastorate position with their partner, consider carefully and regularly how you will arrange your duties. Once your baby is born, if they have colic, or you are trying to feed/settle them, how appropriate is it to have meetings in the manse? It is too easy to be distracted by meetings or pastoral conversations while trying to care for your child.

*Suggestion: Talk through a strategy with your partner and move meetings out of the manse so that you can relax with your baby.*

### Joint Pastorates reallocating responsibilities

It is natural to assume that the other joint minister will take on the responsibility of the other while on leave. However this can lead to tension on return to work within a relationship or within a church.

*Suggestion: Talk about this ahead of time and set clear guidelines of what can be achieved with the church. If this means increased hours of work for one partner, then discuss extra payment for these additional responsibilities. On your return from maternity leave have a constructive conversation about whether you will take all responsibilities back immediately or whether this can be phased over your first few months.*

## Guide for churches with a pregnant minister

Having a minister with a young family is a significant benefit to your church; and celebrating a young child, as a new member of the congregation, will be a delight to your community. As church leaders, please be aware that the legal rights and entitlements related to maternity and other parental leave continue to expand. So, things may have changed considerably since your own children were born. Full details of maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave for ministers can be found in the standard terms and conditions for accredited Baptist ministers on our website [www.baptist.org.uk/toa](http://www.baptist.org.uk/toa).

### **Maternity leave**

Maternity leave is a defined period of time when a church needs to think through the practical and emotional impact of not having their minister working. It is well worth considering finding extra cover for preaching, pastoral care or other responsibilities. We recognise that this creates an added workload for leaders and volunteers, so good planning in advance is essential.

### **Return to work**

A healthy working relationship between minister and church is vital for a church to thrive, and as such it is suitable to consider a gentle return to work with your minister. It is an emotionally difficult task returning to work after a period of leave, and especially with the added complications of new childcare arrangements. If a return to work is a smooth process, your minister is more likely to be happy and flourish in ministry at your church.

It is not appropriate to expect your minister to recommence work with every responsibility straight away, nor to manage any failings of volunteers/ temporary staff in her absence. Just as in a pastoral vacancy, however, a maternity leave offers a church an opportunity to pull together and work in new and exciting ways. Moreover as a maternity leave is for up to 12 months, most church members are happy to volunteer for extra responsibilities as needed.

## Guide for churches with a pregnant minister

We recommend the following approach once the leadership team has been told that a minister is pregnant.

*Suggestion: Create at least four opportunities for the pregnant minister to meet with two members of the leadership team. If serving in a team ministry, do include the other minister/s as well. Discuss the following items as the pregnancy is announced, before maternity leave begins and before a return to work is planned. Be prepared to meet at other times according to the minister's individual situation.*



# First meeting: Hearing the news

## ***When will we hear the news?***

As long as the minister lets you know that she is pregnant by the start of the 15th week before her baby is due, it is up to her to decide when to share the news with you, and when she is happy for it to be shared more widely within the church. Most women will wait until they are at least three months into their pregnancy before sharing the news, primarily because the miscarriage risk is far higher during that early period. Some women will want to have seen their first scan results before they make any announcement.



## ***Initial planning***

By the time she shares the news with you, your minister will already have been thinking about what her pregnancy means for her ministry. Do listen carefully to her initial thoughts, accepting that her plans may change as the pregnancy progresses or once the baby is born.

We would encourage you to read through the detailed guidance notes on maternity leave for ministers as both the minister and the church have legal obligations to each other.

## ***Speak carefully***

Be aware that your minister may be feeling very anxious about her pregnancy, may be fearful of miscarriage or potential issues with the baby's health. By the time she tells you, she may also be dealing with morning sickness and loss of energy.

## ***Questions to ask when your minister tells you she is pregnant***

- *How are you feeling?*
- *When is the baby due?* The minister may already have a copy of her MAT B1 form to give you, which is the official confirmation of pregnancy by her doctor, or this might come later.
- *Have you had any initial thoughts about when you would like to start your maternity leave?* Maternity leave can start, at the earliest, 11 weeks before the baby is due and at the latest, when labour starts (although we wouldn't recommend this!).
- *What can we do to help and are there any adjustments that would be useful straightaway?*
- *When would you like to share this news with the church?* It is important that leaders keep the news to themselves until the minister agrees that she is happy for the rest of the church to know.

# Second meeting:

Maternity plans discussed with leadership team (likely to be between three and five months into pregnancy)

If you have never dealt with maternity leave before, you are welcome to speak with Rachel Stone, who is HR Adviser to BUGB churches. Please contact her on [rstone@baptist.org.uk](mailto:rstone@baptist.org.uk). She will be able to answer all your questions and to help with example letters setting out maternity rights and obligations.

## **Questions for churches to ask at this meeting:**

- How are you feeling?
- Are there any changes that need to be made to your working arrangements?
- Please consider any pregnancy related illness or sickness and how this might be managed. In later stages of pregnancy encourage the minister to take short naps at lunch time if she wishes.
- Is there anything that you are concerned about at this stage? How can we help to resolve this?
- Do you have any questions about maternity leave and pay entitlements?
- Have you had any more thoughts about when you will start your maternity leave?
- How do you plan to announce your pregnancy?

It is the minister's decision to decide how to let the congregation know she is pregnant.

*Suggestion: Consider addressing the church on the matter of personal space for the minister. Many women find multiple people rubbing their bellies awkward and comments about a changing body shape demeaning. Many ministers say that they find the phrase 'the church's baby' quite difficult, as it makes their pregnancy too public.*

*As a leadership team, you may need to give some direction to the congregation to think carefully before overloading the minister with pregnancy and childcare advice, particularly if it is a difficult pregnancy. The leadership team can suggest that all advice given from the congregation should be offered carefully and be such that it sustains the minister and encourages her and her family.*

# Second meeting:

Maternity plans discussed with  
leadership team - continued

## ***Checklist to complete as soon as pregnancy announced***

Confirm the minister's maternity leave and pay entitlements in writing and confirm the earliest date on which her maternity leave can start, together with her latest date of return (12 months after maternity leave starts).

Make sure the minister is aware that she has the right to attend ante-natal appointments during her normal working time without any loss of pay

Conduct a risk assessment for lone working and lifting and handling (ie setting up rooms for services and activities). A risk assessment form for pregnant workers is available on the BUGB website ([www.baptist.org.uk/riskassessmentform](http://www.baptist.org.uk/riskassessmentform))

You should repeat this later in pregnancy as risks may change as pregnancy progresses (see page 14 on risk awareness).



# Third meeting:

## Planning before maternity leave begins

Use the following to form a discussion and plan for the minister's maternity leave cover and how she wishes to interact with the congregation while on leave. Depending on the situation this may be appropriate at six months or a little later on in her pregnancy.

### ***Continuation of role***

It will be necessary to consider how the minister's role and function will be continued while she is on maternity leave. It is a good idea to discuss a lay preaching rota, volunteer cover for pastoral and other work and the options for offering an **honorarium**<sup>1</sup> to local ministers who are not currently in pastorate, students or retired ministers. If you have a joint or team ministry in place, make sure that everyone is in agreement about how work will be shared.

### ***Annual leave***

Annual leave is accrued as normal throughout maternity leave. A minister may wish to use her annual leave to start maternity leave early or delay her return to work (and pay) but be on annual leave. This accrued leave can be taken in different ways but often it is taken either as a few weeks together or a day a week on return to work. All ministers should be encouraged to take all their annual leave!

### ***Keeping In Touch (KIT) days***

- A minister who has had a baby can take up to 10 paid days of work across a maternity leave in order to ease a return to work. One day counts as any visit to a place of work. It may be that attending a leadership team meeting, or a special project, might be helpful to the minister. These days are chosen at the discretion of the minister.
- Churches cannot require a minister on maternity leave to be available for KIT days so it is helpful to discuss this before maternity leave starts.

### ***Communicating with the wider church***

Before maternity leave starts, agree with the minister how cover arrangements will be communicated to the church. For example:

- When maternity leave will be starting
- The minister's preferences in terms of contact before and after the baby is born
- Who will be covering each area of the minister's work and how to contact the relevant people.

### ***Reclaiming maternity pay***

The church can reclaim 103% of the money it pays out in statutory maternity leave. Even very large churches can reclaim the majority (92%) of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) payments. For more details on how to do this please use the following link: [www.gov.uk/recover-statutory-payments](http://www.gov.uk/recover-statutory-payments).

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<sup>1</sup> An **honorarium** is an ex gratia **payment** that someone receives for doing something which is not a normal part of their job.

# Fourth meeting: After the baby is born

Please note that it is a legal requirement that women who have given birth are not permitted to work for 14 days after the birth. This is a health and safety provision.

## **Visiting**

Experience: Some ministers are overwhelmed with kind but numerous and lengthy visits in the early days after their baby is born.

*Suggestion: Please discuss with the minister how often they may wish to be visited, and by whom. Assure the minister that this will be communicated widely and that it may be altered at any time of their choosing. Decide how this will be achieved and by whom it will be communicated.*

## **Attending church**

Some ministers attend church for worship throughout maternity leave, some attend occasionally and others may attend another church for a period of time. Whenever she attends church she may feel awkward or overwhelmed worshipping in her place of work while on leave.

*Suggestion: Ask your minister what she intends to do and communicate what she wishes to the wider congregation as needed. Be aware of these pressures and ensure she is not burdened by any pastoral concern while on leave, by effective maternity leave planning for the smooth running of church life.*

## **Holding the baby**

Experience: Some ministers have found others caring for their baby a delight, but for others it has been stressful.

*Suggestion:*

- *Discuss with the minister their feelings regarding other members of the congregation touching their baby.*
- *It may be that there are safeguarding issues in your church where certain members would not be allowed to be near a baby; please think this issue through carefully and make a good plan and communicate it to all necessary persons. It may be that the minister is naturally uneasy about multiple people holding their baby. Discuss this together and agree a suitable solution (ie minister to sit with baby with a spare chair alongside, or put baby in their pushchair for example).*



# Fourth meeting:

## After the baby is born - continued

### **Gifts and meals**

**Experience:** Some churches like to give gifts to ministers at such a time, which is to be encouraged.

*Suggestion: It might be helpful to ask the minister if there is anything they need for the baby, instead of everyone knitting a baby blanket. Likewise, some churches provide meals to those families who have just had a baby, so please ask the minister if they would like to receive cooked meals and when it would be appropriate for this to be given.*

### **Childcare vouchers/contribution schemes**

The government offers support to women returning to work by tax-free vouchers or contribution schemes to pay for childcare. These schemes can be started as soon as the child is born. Every couple's financial situation is different, and so must be carefully considered by the couple themselves alongside government advice available online at [www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator). The minister may wish to make contributions or collect vouchers ahead of returning to work.

*Suggestion: Discuss any plans that the minister might have made regarding childcare. Research options regarding the church joining a childcare voucher scheme where vouchers are collected via stipend, or contribution schemes which the minister makes directly to the government scheme.*

# Fourth meeting:

## After the baby is born - continued

### ***Breastfeeding***

Experience: Finding somewhere calm and private to breastfeed at church on Sundays while on maternity leave or once returned to work can be difficult.

Advice from ACAS 'Accommodating breastfeeding workers in the workplace' guide

The law requires an employer to provide somewhere for a breastfeeding worker to rest and this includes being able to lie down. Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

- The law allows workers to ask for flexible working for any reason (Children and Families Act April 2014) eg breastfeeding/pumping.
- Breastfeeding can be a sensitive and difficult issue for workers to discuss with their employer, but it is an important one to help their transition back to work after maternity leave.
- It is good practice for employers to discuss with workers who are still breastfeeding what could reasonably and proportionately be done to facilitate their return to the workplace. An employer may consider nominating a female leader to conduct these discussions if there is a question of sensitivity or appropriateness.
- Enabling workers to continue breastfeeding at work can encourage staff loyalty and the organisation can benefit from the skills of the worker returning sooner that might otherwise be the case. However employers should be careful not to inadvertently pressurise workers to return to work.

*Suggestion: Discuss and regularly review the provision of a calm space for the minister to breastfeed/pump. This could be a spare room at church, or her office as suitable. A healthy discussion and sensitive provision for her is part of a church's responsibility of care for its minister.*

# Return to work meeting

When it is time for the minister to return to work, a return to work meeting should take place with two or three leadership team members to discuss the following items:

## ***The minister's plan to return to work***

- Unless told otherwise by the minister, the church should work on the basis that the minister will return to work 12 months after she started her maternity leave.
- If a minister wishes to return early from maternity leave, she should give the church at least eight weeks' notice of this.
- If the minister decides not to return she should give the church the equivalent of her full contractual notice.
- The church must offer her own position back or one that is equivalent to her role prior to taking maternity leave.
- The minister has an opportunity to discuss any changes to her role and working hours that she may wish to make. For example, a minister may wish to reduce a role to part-time or change working hours to fit with her partner's working commitments.
- Once the minister's request has been made, the leadership of the church must consider it carefully.

## ***Working hours***

Experience: Ministry can be all-encompassing of life and can often take place at unsocial hours.

### *Suggestion:*

- *Discuss your church's particular pattern of ministry with the minister, agree a working schedule in principle and set a date to review it regularly in the early months of returning to work.*
- *It may be difficult for the minister to attend evening meetings. The church might offer babysitters and or host the meeting where the minister lives to enable her to attend.*
- *Discuss the time that the minister will be able to spend with her family and create effective patterns to establish, encourage and protect such times.*

## ***Sabbaticals***

- As the BU guidance states, sabbatical is work and so taking maternity leave does not affect this entitlement.
- Sabbaticals are intended to enrich ministry through the provision of an extended period of study, reflection and prayer. For all ministers with children, appropriate childcare would need to be considered to avoid undue pressures put on other family members.
- In most cases, it will not be helpful for the minister or church for the minister to take sabbatical during the first year after their return from maternity leave.

# Return to work meeting

- continued

## ***First service after maternity leave***

It is a good idea to warmly welcome your minister back to work at the earliest opportunity at a Sunday service. It would be appropriate to pray for her and her family and offer a card or small gift (eg flowers/cake to share after church).

## ***Prayer for welcoming a minister back after maternity leave***

*Wonderful God, today is a happy day!  
We are delighted that our minister has returned to us.  
Thank you for all that she means to us and to you.  
Thank you for caring for her over this period of leave.  
As she has loved and nurtured her beautiful child,  
May she be reminded of your care for her.  
As she starts to serve you afresh by leading in this church,  
May we be mindful of her new responsibilities and pressures.  
May the Spirit guide her,  
Refresh her and bless her richly  
in her calling of ministry and motherhood.  
Amen*

# In cases of miscarriage and stillbirth

The loss of a baby through miscarriage or stillbirth is an incredibly sad and challenging experience for the minister and her spouse. Churches need to be sensitive to the need for privacy and allow time to grieve.

## ***Miscarriage***

It may be that the minister informs the leadership team of a miscarriage. In this circumstance, please be mindful of the following recommendations:

- Make confidentiality a priority. She may share this difficult news with just the leadership team and choose not to tell the church. It is up to the minister to share this news and no one else.
- Allow for compassionate leave but do not enforce it; it is the minister's choice.
- Make sure the minister is aware of local counselling services and support groups, for example, the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service (CMCS) is a useful resource for Baptist ministers (see page 34).
- Be aware of vulnerabilities that may be experienced at this time. Consider together what regular activities might be maintained and ask if the minister wishes to continue with difficult planned pastoral visits (eg funeral visits) and if they might value another person accompanying them.
- It may be that the minister's experience of miscarriage draws out similar experiences within the leadership team and or church. It may be very difficult to hear other stories of loss for the minister at this time. The minister needs to be afforded time to grieve and be comforted without the pressure of caring for others at the same time.
- Use of scripture can be helpful or unhelpful. Encourage all who support the minister at this time to use bible verses with care and pray with sensitivity and love.
- If the minister has already announced their pregnancy to the church, ask them if they would prefer one of the leaders to let others know that they have miscarried.

# In cases of miscarriage and stillbirth - continued

## ***Stillbirth or early death of a newborn baby***

- Women who have been through the trauma of the still birth of their baby, or who lose their baby soon after birth, have full entitlement to their maternity leave and maternity pay. No attempt should ever be made to ask them to return more quickly, or to suggest that this period of leave is not needed.
- Churches need to be aware that this is a time to protect their minister. Leaders will want to make sure that boundaries of privacy and space to grieve are not overstepped by church members.
- The care and support of the church will be important, but there are also several specialist organisations who can provide information and support to parents as they grieve in this situation. We would advise church leaders to look at the resources available from Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity ([www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)).

# Adopting a child

The rights of adoptive parents in terms of leave and pay mirror those provided through the maternity leave provisions. The key difference is that either parent can take the longer period of adoptive leave and the other parent, whether male or female, can take the shorter paternity leave period.

The process of being approved for adoption can be both lengthy and arduous for prospective adoptive parents. Some ministers will choose to share this with the church, but others may wish to wait until they are approved and are waiting to be matched with a child or children.

News of the match with a child can come at very short notice – in some cases, less than a week. This means that the church could hear that their minister is about to start 12 months of adoptive leave on very short notice. This is simply the way the adoption process works and the inevitable challenges of planning at such short notice should not reflect in any way into frustration with your minister. They are probably as shocked as you are!

All of the guidance notes about planning, communication and sensitivity apply equally in the adoptive leave process.

Adoptive leave is available even if the child is far older. In fact, an adoptive parent will be entitled to take adoptive leave for any child they adopt between a newborn and an 18 year old.

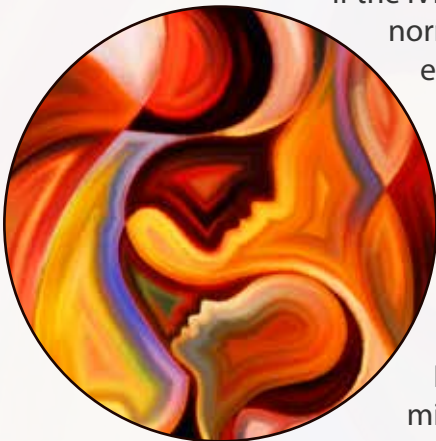


# IVF treatment

There are no special leave entitlements in relation to IVF treatment, although a church may wish to be generous in allowing their minister extra flexibility in terms of the plethora of appointments and clinic visits that they may need during the IVF process.

IVF treatment will involve an extensive drug regime for your minister, and it is possible that there may be occasions where she is too unwell to work. We would suggest that you treat these as sick leave days. Many women describe the impact of the drugs, coupled with the stress and uncertainty of the process as 'an emotional rollercoaster'.

If the IVF treatment is successful, your minister is entitled to all the normal maternity leave and pay arrangements as outlined earlier and in the terms and conditions document [www.baptist.org.uk/toa](http://www.baptist.org.uk/toa).



Some women ministers who have been through IVF treatment whilst in ministry have commented that it is hard to know how to respond to church members who express strong views about the concept of IVF or who ask intrusive questions about the reasons for the need for IVF. Church leaders may want to provide support to their minister in encouraging sensitivity amongst church members, especially where the minister undergoes several rounds of treatment.





# Useful links and resources

## ***Within our Baptist family***

Ministers and churches can seek advice from Rachel Stone, BUGB's HR and Safeguarding Manager, who can provide guidance on calculating key dates as well as helping churches with letters to set out maternity rights. You can contact Rachel by email to [rstone@baptist.org.uk](mailto:rstone@baptist.org.uk) or ring her on 01235 517730.

If you have concerns about putting in place sufficient cover during a period of maternity leave, please speak to your Regional Minister at your local Baptist Association.

The Baptist Minister Mothers group can be contacted through their Facebook page 'Baptist Minister Mothers' and members of the group are available to talk with fellow ministers if this is helpful.

## ***Theological reflections on Christianity and motherhood***

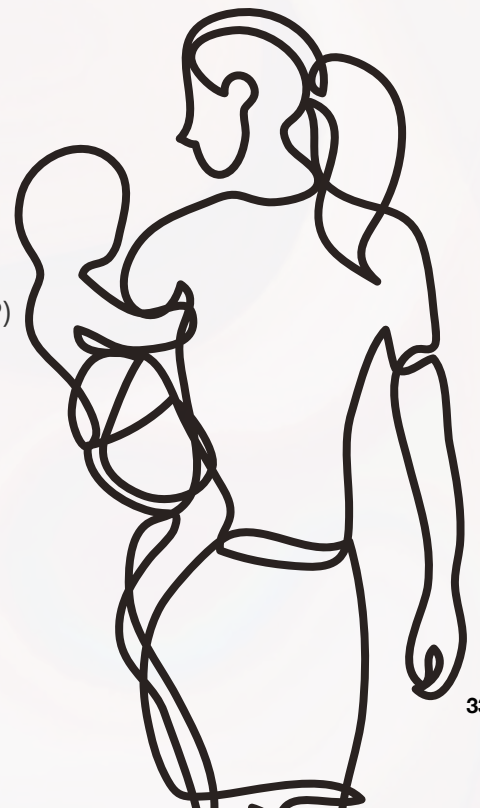
These books are recommended by the Baptist Minister Mothers group:

*Long Days of Small Things: Motherhood as a Spiritual Discipline*  
Catherine McNiel, 2017 (Nav Press)

*Motherhood and God*  
Margaret Hebblethwaite, 1993 (Chapman)

*Ordinary mum, extraordinary mission*  
Joy French and Anna France-Williams, 2013 (IVP)

*Soul Food for Mums*  
Lucinda van der Hart and Anna France-Williams, 2011 (IVP)



# Useful links and resources

## ***Understanding maternity, paternity, adoptive and shared parental leave rights***

Please see the BUGB standard terms and conditions for appointment of accredited ministers – the family friendly section is on page 8: [www.baptist.org.uk/toa](http://www.baptist.org.uk/toa).

Excellent information for individuals and churches is available from the government's main website. The links below will take you to the beginning of the pages in each area:

[www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave](http://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave)  
[www.gov.uk/maternity-paternity-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/maternity-paternity-calculator)  
[www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave](http://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave)  
[www.gov.uk/plan-adoption-leave](http://www.gov.uk/plan-adoption-leave)  
[www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay-employer-guide](http://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay-employer-guide)

ACAS publishes a series of informative guides for individuals and employers. Links to key documents are given below or you can search for more information from their website front page.

[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1753](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1753)

[www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/b/s/Acas-guide-on-accommodating-breastfeeding-in-the-workplace.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/b/s/Acas-guide-on-accommodating-breastfeeding-in-the-workplace.pdf)

[www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/r/Shared-Parental-Leave-a-good-practice-guide-for-employers-and-employees.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/r/Shared-Parental-Leave-a-good-practice-guide-for-employers-and-employees.pdf)

## ***Counselling support***

The Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service exists to provide confidential support to ministers and adults in their immediate household through short-term, professional counselling.

This support is heavily subsidised by BUGB.

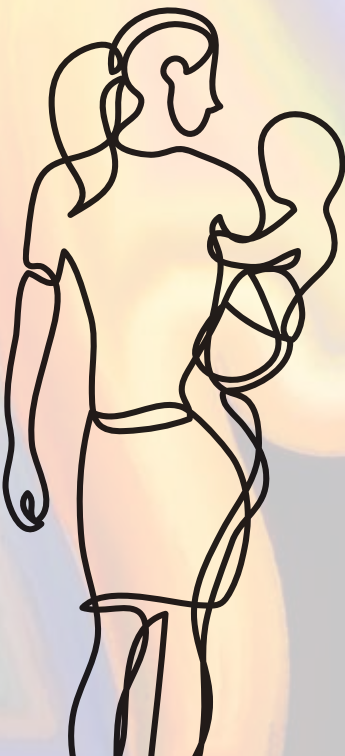
[www.cmincs.net](http://www.cmincs.net)



## Contributors

Our thanks go to all the members of the Baptist Minister Mothers Group who have contributed their experiences to this guide.

Thanks also to Rachel Stone, BUGB's HR and Safeguarding Manager, for her practical and legal input and to Mike Lowe, BUGB's Communications Enabler, for the beautiful design and format which brings the information to life.



## Feedback?

This is the first edition of this guide and we would welcome your feedback. If we've missed something that you think is vital, or if you have helpful experience to share, we will be updating this document at the start of 2020 so would appreciate any constructive comments.

Please send your feedback to [rstone@baptist.org.uk](mailto:rstone@baptist.org.uk)



[baptist.org.uk/mother](http://baptist.org.uk/mother)