

**West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America  
Pastoral Compensation/Expenses/Benefits Package Expectations For 2018**

The “normal” pastoral compensation/expenses/benefits package, as contained in most congregational budgets, usually looks something like this:

**Defined Compensation:**

- (1) Base Salary \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) Housing Allowance, Utilities, Furnishing Allowance \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) Educational Debt Reduction \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Social Security Allowance \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenses:**

- (5) Automobile Allowance \_\_\_\_\_
- (6) Continuing Education Allowance \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) Publication & Media Resources \_\_\_\_\_
- (8) Official Meetings \_\_\_\_\_

**Benefits:**

- (9) Pension & Other Benefits \_\_\_\_\_
  - (10) Additional Benefits \_\_\_\_\_
- (e.g. Optional Pension, annuity, additional life insurance)

(1) **The Synod Council voted** on March 25, 2017, to increase the base salary to \$34,000 for a first call starting in 2018. This increase will keep us in line with our sister synods that are also located in the Appalachian Region. There is no recommendation for salary increases beyond these base salary increases.

When reviewing an experienced pastor’s package, please consider also the years of service the pastor has given to the congregation. (see page 3 for years of service)

Merit increases may also be considered. Resources for evaluation for both pastor and congregation are available and can be recommended by the Committee for Pastoral Support.

**In light of economic situations, many congregations cannot afford an increase in pastoral compensation. Annual increases should be based on what is realistic for the congregation.**

(2) **The Synod Council expects** that the congregation will provide a Social Security Tax allowance for the pastor. Social Security Tax is based upon the addition of the Base Salary plus the Housing Allowance and/or Home Furnishings Allowance. This figure is multiplied by .082837 (8.2837%) to achieve a fair Social Security allowance. **For Social Security purposes, a pastor is considered to be self-employed and must pay that tax at the self-employed rate which is 15.3%. Frequently, that takes a giant bite out of the pastor's salary.**

(3) Educational debt reduction allowance could be considered in the amount of \$1,000 a year (if applicable). Please note: If a congregation establishes this allowance, it is considered as taxable income by the IRS.

(4) We recommend pastors living in a parsonage have part of their income designated as a "Furnishings Allowance." As long as that money is spent for its intended purpose – and the

pastor must be prepared to document this – it is not counted as taxable income, it is for a pastor living in a parsonage. **Please note that pastors are assessed a fair rental value of the parsonage and will pay Social Security tax on this value as well as on the furniture allowance.**

(5) For a pastor living in a parsonage, a congregation might also consider providing an equity allowance.

(6) **The Synod Council expects** that the congregation will review the automobile allowance provided the pastor. The IRS “optional standard mileage rates” used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business purposes is 53.5 cents per mile for 2017; a different rate may be announced later in the year for 2018.

(7) **The Synod Council expects** that the congregation will provide at least \$800 and 14 days for continuing education purposes. It is the expectation of the ELCA that pastors receive a minimum of 50 hours of continuing education each year. The 2001 Synod Assembly adopted a Sabbatical Policy for all Rostered persons. The expectation is that all congregations will adopt a Sabbatical Policy using the synod policy as a guideline.

Pastors in their first call are required to attend an annual retreat known as First Call Theological Education, which occurs in each of the first three years. The \$200 fee is the responsibility of the congregation; **it is matched by the synod for every first call pastor.** It is our expectation that this will be provided in addition to the \$800 recommended education allowance.

(8) **The Synod Council expects** that the congregation will grant four weeks, including four Sundays, vacation. **Congregations should consider giving one additional week of vacation for each 10 years of Rostered service.**

(9) **The Synod Council expects** that the contribution rate for the ELCA pension plan will be at the rate of 12%. **Because this number is different than the default rate of the ELCA, be certain that your pension rate is at 12%.** When a change of salary occurs, be certain that the correct percent is noted on the change of salary report form. (Item 1, page 2) If you have any questions, please consult [www.Porticobenefits/supportcenter](http://www.Porticobenefits/supportcenter) (there you will find a drop down menu that will provide you with contact information based upon your needs) or phone **the synod office at 304-363-4030.**

(10) **The Synod Council expects** that each congregation will provide a mutual ministry support committee. There is a book available from Augsburg Fortress entitled **Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work** for guidance. Supporting study/worksheets can be downloaded @ [www.augsburgfortress.org/cls/index.asp?PageID-1767](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/cls/index.asp?PageID-1767)

At its meeting of March 25, 2017, the Synod Council approved a **minimum and entry-level salary and benefits package for 2018.** It appears on page four. You will want to review it carefully. **Remember:** this is the compensation/expenses/benefits package that will be offered in our synod next year to those newly ordained and beginning ministry in their first call. If your pastor's compensation and expenses and benefits package are below this, you should consider readjusting to meet the expectations.

On behalf of the pastors and associates in ministry of our synod, all faithful servants, **the Synod Council expresses its appreciation** to those congregations who have been taking the council's recommendations seriously each year and who have sought to implement them.

**Years of Experience – Call Process Information**

Congregations often ask if they are paying their pastor fairly for the number of years he or she has been in the ministry. The Synod Council recommends that for pastors with years of experience, \$400 per year should be added to the **minimum** base salary to determine the appropriate base salary.

For example:

- 1. A pastor who has 20 years in the ministry -  $\$400 \times 20$  = \$ 8,000  
Synod **Minimum** Base Salary = \$34,000  
Pastor should receive base salary of = \$42,000
  
- 2. A pastor who has 10 years in the ministry -  $\$400 \times 10$  = \$ 4,000  
Synod **Minimum** Base Salary = \$34,000  
Pastor should receive base salary of = \$38,000

The pension and health benefits, Social Security allowance, housing allowance, car allowance, and continuing education are in addition to the base salary.

**Portico Health Plan – 2017**

Annually congregations and Rostered Leaders will need to make selections related to their Health Plan and Pension Plans with the Synod Council recommending the Gold Level Plan.

**Please note: Synod Council expects that congregations will cover the cost of the Portico Gold Health Plan for their pastor, spouse and their children.**

**Expected Minimum Compensation/ Expenses/Benefits Package  
For 2016 For First Year Of Ordained Ministry**

**COMPENSATION**

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Base Salary  | \$34,000                 |
| Years of service following ordination*\$400 _____              |                          |
| <b>Minimum Housing Allowance (If no parsonage is provided)</b> | <b>\$10,000</b>          |
| <hr/>  |                          |
|  | <i>Subtotal \$44,000</i> |
| <hr/>  |                          |
| Social Security Tax Allowance (multiply Subtotal by .0765)     | \$ 3,366                 |
| <hr/>  |                          |
| <b>Total Defined Compensation</b>                              | <b>\$47,366</b>          |

**EXPENSES**

|                                  |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Automobile Allowance             | \$4,400 |
| Continuing Education Allowance   | \$ 800  |
| First Call Theological Education | \$ 200  |

**BENEFITS**

**Pension and Health Plan Benefits**

**We expect the contribution for Pensions to begin at 12% and that families are covered by the congregation's Health Plan through Portico.**

**The benefit programs from Portico will vary in nearly every situation. Please consult the calculations page from the Portico web site <https://myportico.porticobenefits.org/>**

4 weeks of vacation  
14 days continuing education (excluding Sundays)

\*\*\*\*\*

The Pastoral Compensation/Expenses/Benefits Package Expectations for 2018

*and*

The Expected Minimum Compensation/Expenses/Benefits Package for 2018 for First Year of Ordained Ministry were approved by Synod Council on March 25, 2017.

### Who should decide the pastor's salary?

In most congregations, the final recommendation to the congregation regarding the salary for the pastor will be made by the church council. Resource material for this decision should include the synod expectations, a local survey of pastors' salaries in the surrounding area, and any data one can find on merit increases currently being given in local industry. **Please keep in mind that in calculating base salary for the pastor, housing allowance is NOT included.**

If it is the practice for the pastor not to be present at the Finance Committee or Congregational Council meeting when the pastor's compensation is discussed or voted upon, the congregation should have a Pastoral Support or Mutual Ministry committee (which usually does not include members of the council), where the pastor would have an opportunity to indicate fully and confidentially any concerns in the area of his/her compensation. The Pastoral Support Committee can then pass on these concerns to the Congregational Council.

### How do we use the synod expectations?

The first thing to recognize is that the expectations are designed to indicate minimum salary. Such things as average worship attendance, years since ordination, cost of living in your area, the knowledge and skill needed by the pastor, and the current salary of an incoming pastor should all be factored in to decide where your pastor should start. Once you have decided where the starting point should be, your plan each year should take the percent increase in the minimum expectations, add that to the pastor's salary and then add on any additional merit increase you feel is warranted. **These expectations only give you a starting point.**

### If we cannot afford to pay at the current expectations, what should we do?

First of all, recognize that paying your pastor below the synod expectations often results in friction between the pastor and the council. Turnover may result, and you will be faced with difficulty in replacing your pastor. The best advice is to lay out a two to three year plan and work toward bringing your pastor's salary in line with synod expectations. Sharing this plan with the pastor will create an open environment based on trust and understanding; then, follow through with your commitment.

### How do we get feedback from the pastor regarding his/her compensation?

The first thing to do is to build an atmosphere of trust and openness. We suggest that you form a Mutual Ministry committee, which includes the pastor. The purpose of this group is to look at all issues such as working with the congregation, spiritual needs of the pastor, physical needs, and family needs. The mutual ministry committee can be the advocate for the pastor and provide recommendations to the council. However, it is assumed that matters discussed with the pastor remain with the committee, and confidences must not be violated.

**We have members in our congregation who believe that the total package is too high. How do we explain a total package in a way that makes sense?**

You need to distinguish between cost to the congregation and what the pastor receives. A large part of the cost to the church comes in the form of pension, medical benefits, and travel expenses. For those of you who worked in industry, you probably received these same items, but never considered them part of your compensation. These are expenses to the congregation much like the expense a corporation has for the work of an employee. Therefore, it is not fair to consider them part of the pastor's salary. Base pay plus housing constitutes the bulk of what your pastor actually receives.

**How do we reward the pastor for holidays worked or missed days off or days off interrupted by congregational emergencies?**

- 1) Insist that your pastor take days off to compensate for the lost time. Make sure the congregation respects this time off. Pastors need time away to refresh themselves, and we need to respect that. Inform your congregation of the pastor's personal time and ask them to respect this need for time away.
- 2) Insist that your pastor take a sabbatical leave on a regular basis.
- 3) An alternative not preferred or to be encouraged, is to consider pay in lieu of vacation days.

**In case of an illness longer than 20 days, but not catastrophic, what should we do?**

Every case needs to be reviewed on its own merits. Your church council should be the final judge of what is right. They know the pastor best and the effort he or she extends on behalf of the congregation. Make a decision based on what is fair and appropriate for the circumstances and for everyone involved. Nothing can substitute for good judgment.

**Do clergy expectations apply to Associate Pastors?**

The basic intent of the expectations would stay the same, but the specifics need to be modified or factored to reflect the differing roles each staff member has in the church.