



Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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[metrodelca.org](http://metrodelca.org)

# **ROSTERED MINISTRY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2025**



# ROSTERED MINISTRY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2025

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Updated May 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

The Rostered Ministry Compensation Guidelines are offered to assist the members of a congregation in preparing an *initial* salary for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Rostered Ministers of Word and Service. A compensation package includes, but is not limited to, salary (including the cost of housing), medical and dental benefits, social security offsets, and pension contributions.

There are separate guidelines for each of the following:

Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament;  
Rostered Ministers of Word and Service; and  
supply pastors and church musicians.

As with all matters, the consideration of the issue of rostered ministership compensation should be entered into prayerfully and in recognition of many factors. Congregations should consider the following as a goal:

A rostered minister's total compensation package should, as much as possible, be comparable to the compensation received by members of the congregation in professional occupations, considering level of education and the years of experience.

In determining the compensation package, congregational members and the rostered minister should express their views honestly and, at all times, speak to each other with the love of Christ.

## COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

### I. DETERMINING THE INITIAL ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY

This following material is designed to provide guidance in determining a salary package to a newly called Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Please refer to the Worksheet on page 8 as you review these instructions. A spreadsheet version of the Worksheet is available at <https://metrodcelca.org/congregational-resources/documents-forms/>. If you are using the spreadsheet, be sure to enter the information on the Data tab; the workbook will then make the calculations based on the information on the Data tab.

#### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

The Unadjusted Minimum Salary is set annually by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Unadjusted Minimum Salary includes the base amounts for salary, the cost of housing, and the cost associated with Social Security offset.

##### Box 1: “Unadjusted Minimum Salary”

Write the 2025 minimum unadjusted salary amount of **\$73,495** in Box 1. If the terms of call are less than full-time, this figure should be adjusted accordingly in consultation with synod staff.

If use of a parsonage is included as a portion of compensation, enter the unadjusted minimum amount of **\$60,542** in Box 1. (Note that there is a separate worksheet in the Excel file to calculate compensation that includes use of a parsonage.)

#### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

There is great value in having the pastor living and identifying with the same parish community in which most of the members live. The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod covers a large, economically diverse area where the cost of living varies widely within and between the Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas. A regionally-based cost of living modification to the unadjusted minimum salary acknowledges this diversity. The cost of living salary modifier does not generally change from year to year.

This section refers to the **cost** of housing, which is distinct from the housing **allowance**. Housing allowances are discussed more fully in the Benefits section.

##### Box 2: Housing Cost

Enter in Box 2 the median single-family home price near the congregation, using the primary zip code(s) served by the congregation. This figure can be obtained by contacting a local realtor or by using <http://www.zillow.com/home-values>. If several zip codes are involved, find the average of all codes.

In circumstances in which the pastor plans to live outside the parish community in which most members live, figure the cost of living salary modifier using the church zip code and the pastor's actual zip code. Average the two figures and insert that number in Box 2.

**Box 3: Cost Over Threshold**

The calculation uses \$250,000 as the minimum cost of housing within the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod. If the figure in Box 2 exceeds \$250,000 (the minimum cost of housing within the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod), subtract \$250,000 from Box 2 and enter the resulting figure in Box 3.

**Box 4: Housing Cost Adjustment**

Multiply Box 3 by .03 (3%) and write the result in Box 4.

(Example: The price of a median single-family home in area served by congregation is \$300,000.  $\$300,000 - \$250,000 = \$50,000$ .  $\$50,000 \times .03 = \$1,500$  is recorded in Box 4.)

If use of a parsonage is included as a portion of compensation, a housing equity allowance should be calculated instead. This number will be a minimum of 30% of the amount determined above but may not be less than the amount the pastor is currently receiving (if any).

(Example:  $\$1,500 \times .30 = \$450$ .)

**Box 5: Regionally Modified Minimum Salary**

Add Box 1 and Box 4 to obtain the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary for the congregation, and enter this figure in Box 5.

### **Section 3: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Adjustment**

This section seeks to quantify the value of experience and education the pastor may possess and the unique aspects of the congregation. These factors will become a basis for adjustment to the minimum salary.

**Box 6: Years of Pastoral Experience**

As per most professional salary systems, the synod seeks to reflect the value of acquired skills, wisdom and experiences that can only come from actual pastoral experience. Credit one point for each year of service as an ordained pastor, up to 15, and enter in Box 6.

**Box 7: Worship Attendance**

Pastors of large churches often bear increased responsibilities and expectations. The synod seeks to acknowledge these responsibilities with this adjustment. Credit is given for primary leadership in congregations where the average weekly worship attendance exceeds 100 persons at a rate of one point for each 12 persons over the 100 worshiper threshold. Associate pastors would receive one-half point for each 12 persons over the 100 worshiper threshold.

To calculate the figure for Box 7, subtract 100 from the average number of worshipers (as reported on the congregation's annual parochial report). Divide that difference by 12, round to the nearest whole number, and enter the figure in Box 7.

(Example: Congregation reports an average of 265 worshipers.  $265-100=165$ .  $165/12=13.8$ . Round up to 14 points.)

#### Box 8: Advanced Education

Lutherans have long expected that their pastors be well-educated. This credit seeks to account for and encourage life-long learning for leadership in divinity or related fields. Credit is given (5 points) to those who have taken the time and made the commitment to earn a ministry-related degree in addition to the Master of Divinity.

#### Box 9: Longevity in Current Call

Research has established that vibrant, long-term pastorates are often associated with congregational growth. This adjustment seeks to reflect the shared valuing of healthy, longer-tenured pastorates. Credit one point for each year of service in the pastor's current call in Box 9, to a maximum of 5 points. After five years, consult Section II of this material.

#### Box 10: Related Non-Pastoral Experience

Increasingly, persons with prior experience in related fields are entering rostered ministry in our church. This adjustment seeks to acknowledge the value of prior experience in related fields that are helpful to the ministry (e.g. teaching, administration, financial, counseling, social work, etc.).

Generally this experience will be acknowledged by the Call Committee and will be recognized by the Church Council as it sets the rostered minister's first salary package.

Credit is given for each year of prior experience in a related field up to ten years. Multiply the pastor's years of significant prior experience by 0.5 (# years x 0.5) and write either that figure or the number 5 (whichever is less) in Box 10.

#### Box 11: Total Points

Add together the credits in Boxes 6 through 10 to create a point total and write that number in Box 11.

#### Box 12: Salary Adjustment

The number recorded in Box 11, multiplied by the predetermined adjustment factor of \$700 for pastors without parsonage or \$576 for those with parsonage, generates the minimum salary adjustment. Transfer that dollar figure to Box 12.

### **Section 4: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Range**

#### Box 13: Minimum Salary

By adding the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (Box 5) and the Salary Adjustment (Box 12) figures together, the appropriate minimum salary limit is determined. Write that figure in Box 13.

**Box 14: Median Salary**

The median salary is calculated by multiplying Box 13 by 1.15 (15%). Enter that figure in Box 14.

**Box 15: Upper Salary**

The higher salary range limit is calculated by multiplying Box 13 by 1.30 (30%). Enter that figure in Box 15.

**Box 16: Mutually-Negotiated Pastoral Salary**

Although the synod may produce helpful guidelines and suggested ranges for appropriate salary, congregations need to review and revise compensation for their rostered ministers each year. Using the figure in Box 13 as a minimum and Box 15 as an upper range, it is the responsibility of the congregation to determine actual annual salary.

During the course of the conversation between the pastor and those responsible for annual salary recommendations, consider using the following questions as guides:

- Does our pastor bring any additional or special skills to the position that ought to be rewarded?
- Do we expect our pastor to take on any significant additional responsibilities as a leader of our congregation?
- Does the pastor face any unique financial issues that ought to be addressed by the congregation?

The figure entered in Box 16 represents the mutually-negotiated pastoral salary (adjusted accordingly if the terms of call are less than full-time).

## **ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT BENEFITS**

### **Housing Allowance**

The Housing Allowance is a separate calculation and relates solely to the individual pastor's tax situation. U.S. law provides that members of the clergy may exclude from their taxable income the designated Housing Allowance, provided that the congregation's Church Council/Board has made such a designation prior to the beginning of the year.

The amount of the Housing Allowance that is excludable from gross income is the LEAST of (1) the amount actually used to provide a home, (2) the amount officially designated as housing allowance, or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and utilities. The pastor will propose an amount to the Church Council; it may not exceed the salary paid.

### **Pension and Major Medical**

Congregations are also responsible for providing pension and major medical coverage through Portico, the ELCA's benefits program. The pension allowance should be at least 10%. Health insurance should include medical and dental coverage for the pastor's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance coverage and the pastor consents to waiving medical-dental coverage for them under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program.

The cost of these benefits is based on the total salary package. The Portico website (<https://porticobenefits.org>) offers very useful calculators to determine the total cost of these benefits and their representatives are happy to assist in making these calculations.

### **Vacation**

A minimum of four weeks of vacation shall be provided.

### **Study Leave**

A minimum of two weeks paid study leave is recommended annually with the provision for the accumulation of unused study leave up to six weeks.

### **Parental/Family Leave**

It is recommended that congregations develop a program for parental leave which includes childbearing and childcare leave. The program should include both the birth and adoption of children and cover full salary, housing and benefits with the understanding that the individual would return to work for a minimum of six months after taking the leave. It is recommended that congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least eight weeks. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth as well as time for the emotional adjustment to a new child. It is also recommended that congregations provide paid childcare (for mother or father) leave of at least four to six weeks. This leave recognizes the need for parents to spend time bonding with the child. Childcare leave could run consecutively to childbearing or be split into smaller increments.

Congregations are encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.

### **Sabbatical**

An extended leave/sabbatical of one to three months may be granted after the pastor has served the congregation for three to five years.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

### **Automobile Expense**

Pastors using personal cars for business shall be reimbursed for the actual costs they incur for church business, based upon the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines.

### **Continuing Education**

A minimum contribution of \$500 per year toward the pastor's continuing education is recommended. This shall include participation in a First Call Theological Education Program, where applicable.

### **Books and Periodicals**

A minimum book allowance of \$300 per year is recommended.

### **Conventions, Assemblies, and Pastoral Conferences**

Coverage of expenses for official meetings of the synod is required.

Given the changing nature of ministry in response to COVID-19, congregations may want to consider how items like professional expenses and travel reimbursements should be adjusted. For example, if it is anticipated that a Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament is working primarily from a home office, the congregation may want to consider reimbursing internet and cellphone costs. If travel is significantly reduced and digital worship services continue to be offered, the congregation may want to consider temporarily reducing a mileage allowance and shift that funding in 2025 to provide continuing education to support digital ministry.

## 2025 ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY RANGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the ELCA

### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Unadjusted Minimum Salary 1

### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

Median Housing Cost 2

Cost Over Threshold (subtract \$250,000 from box 2) 3

Housing cost adjustment (multiply box 3 by 0.03) 4

(If parsonage provided, enter agreed upon housing equity instead.)

Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (add boxes 1 and 4) 5

### Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment

Years of Pastoral Experience (maximum 15 points) 6

Worship Attendance 7

Advanced Education 8

Longevity in Current Call (maximum 5 points) 9

Related Non-Pastoral Experience (maximum 5 points) 10

Total Points (Add boxes 6 through 10) 11

Salary Adjustment (multiply box 11 by \$700 no parsonage or \$576 parsonage)  12

### Section 4: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Range

Minimum Salary (add boxes 5 and 12) 13

Median Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.15) 14

Maximum Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.30) 15

Mutually-Negotiated Pastoral Salary 16

## **II. DETERMINING ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY AFTER FIVE YEARS IN A CALL**

After five years in the current call, the calculations indicated by Box 9 on the worksheet are no longer appropriate. Congregation and pastor should know each other's gifts, abilities, and needs well enough to make future compensation discussions deeply fruitful.

Near the end of the fifth year in a call, or during the next salary discussion after the fifth year anniversary, the Church Council should designate a group to develop goals and objectives with and for the pastor, for the congregation's leadership, and for the congregation itself. (The Church Council may decide to do this work.) Part of the goal- and objective-setting process will require careful description of when and how to review and re-evaluate the pastor and the process itself. Formal agreement between the pastor and the Church Council will be part of this process and will be recorded in the Church Council minutes.

Then after review, the pastor's salary should be increased in keeping with the accomplishment of goals and objectives that had been agreed upon. The increases may take the form of an additional percentage of the previous salary, of additional points on a re-worked "Salary Range Development Worksheet," or of a decision to move the pastor's compensation up through the minimum-median-maximum salary range.

The successful use of a goal-setting and evaluation process requires open-minded and honest negotiation by all the parties involved. The synod office is able to assist with this kind of negotiation, especially until everyone becomes accustomed to the process. The synod office also has tools to recommend for use in helping pastors, councils, and congregations set and pursue goals effectively and in a Christian spirit.

## COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE

In light of the ELCA's shift from lay to ordained status and their additional to rostered status, the Synod offers the following compensation guidelines to congregations for the initial compensation package of Rostered Ministers of Word and Service who are employed at least 20 hours per week in a paid position with programmatic responsibilities. In addition, the status of Rostered Ministers of Word and Service with regard to tax considerations (e.g., self-employment tax and housing allowance) is very much in flux and will continue to evolve over time. (Please see further discussion below in the Benefits section.)

Because of the diversity of skills, jobs and responsibilities, compensation guidelines for Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are more loosely framed and need to be subjected to a greater degree of interpretation than the Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament guidelines.

### ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE SALARY

Following are considerations and instructions for completing "2025 Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary Range Development Worksheet" (page 15).

#### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly annually sets an Unadjusted Minimum Salary for rostered Ministers of Word and Service

##### Box 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Write the baseline salary amount of **\$51,026** in Box 1

#### Section 2: Rostered Ministers of Word and Service Regional Cost of Living Modifier

There is great value in having the rostered minister living and identifying with the same parish community in which most of the members live. The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod covers a large, economically diverse area where the cost of living varies widely within and between the Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas. Congregations are urged to include appropriate adjustments to cover the cost of housing as outlined below.

This section refers to the **cost** of housing, which is distinct from the housing **allowance**. Housing allowances are discussed more fully in the Benefits section.

##### Box 2: Housing Cost

Determine the median single-family home prices near the congregation, using the primary zip code(s) served by the congregation. The figure can be obtained by contacting a local realtor or by using <http://www.zillow.com/home-values>.

### Box 3: Cost Over Threshold

The minimal amount required for a home in this area is \$250,000. Many of the regional areas in the synod have considerably higher housing costs. If the figure in Box 2 exceeds \$250,000, subtract \$250,000 from Box 2 and enter the resulting figure in Box 3.

### Box 4: Housing Cost Adjustment

Multiply Box 3 by .03 (3%) and write the result in Box 4.

(Example: The price of a median single-family home in areas served by the congregation is \$300,000.  $\$300,000 - \$250,000 = \$50,000$ .  $\$50,000 \times .03 = \$1,500$  is recorded in Box 4.)

### Box 5: Regionally Modified Minimum Salary

Add Box 1 and Box 4 to obtain the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary for the congregation, and enter this figure in Box 5.

## **Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment**

This section seeks to quantify the value of experience and education a rostered minister may possess. These factors will become a basis for possible adjustment to the minimum salary.

### Box 6: Years of Experience

As per most professional salary systems, the synod seeks to reflect the value of acquired skills, wisdom and experiences that can only come from actual rostered ministership experience. Credit one point for each year of service as a rostered minister, up to 15, and enter in Box 6.

### Box 7: Worship Attendance

Rostered Ministers of Word and Service of large churches often bear increased responsibilities and expectations. The synod seeks to acknowledge such with this adjustment. Credit is given for leadership in congregations where the average worship attendance exceeds 100 persons at a rate of 1 point for each 24 worshippers over the 100 worshiper threshold.

To calculate, subtract 100 from the average worship attendance as reported on the congregation's annual parochial report. Divide that difference by 24 and enter the figure in Box 7.

(Example: Congregation reports average worship attendance of 155.  $155 - 100 = 55$ .  $55 / 24 = 2.2$ . Round to 2 points.)

### Box 8: Advanced Education

Lutherans have long expected that their rostered ministers be well-educated. This credit seeks to account for and encourage life-long learning for leadership in Divinity or related fields. Credit is given (5 points) to those who have taken the time and made the commitment to earn a ministry related degree beyond the Master's level. Depending upon the types of tasks the congregation calls their rostered minister to perform; these degrees may be in music, counseling or other related fields. If such is the case, enter 5 points for each degree earned in addition to the Master's degree in Box 8.

**Box 9: Longevity in Current Call**

To effectively establish a vibrant and growing ministry, the synod seeks to recognize Rostered Ministers of Word and Service's long-term calls. Credit one point for each year of service in the rostered minister's current call in Box 9 up to a maximum of 5 points.

**Box 10: Related Non-Pastoral Experience**

Increasingly, persons with prior experience in related fields are entering Rostered Ministers of Word and Servicehip roles in our church. This adjustment seeks to acknowledge the value of prior experience in related fields that are helpful to the ministry of the rostered minister. Credit may be given for each year of prior experience in a related field up to ten years. Multiply the rostered minister's years of significant prior experience by 0.5 (# years x 0.5) and write either that figure or the number 5 (whichever is lesser) in Box 10.

**Box 11: Total Points**

Add together the credits in Boxes 6 through 10 to create a point total and write that number in Box 11.

**Box 12: Salary Adjustment**

The number recorded in Box 11, multiplied by the predetermined adjustment factor of **\$485**, generates the minimum salary adjustment. Transfer that dollar figure to Box 12.

## **Section 4: Determining Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary Range**

**Box 13: Minimum Salary**

By adding the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (Box 5), the Salary Adjustment (Box 12) and the Specific Responsibilities Adjustment (Box 13) figures together, the appropriate minimum salary limit is determined. Write that figure in Box 14.

**Box 14: Median Salary**

The median salary is calculated by multiplying Box 14 by 1.15. Enter that figure in Box 15.

**Box 15: Upper Salary**

The higher salary range limit is calculated by multiplying Box 14 by 1.30. Enter that figure in Box 16.

**Box 16: Mutually-Negotiated Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary**

Although the synod may produce helpful guidelines and suggested ranges for appropriate salary, congregations need to annually review and revise salary for the Rostered Minister of Word and Service. Using the figure in Box 14 as a minimum and Box 16 as an upper range, it is the responsibility of the congregation to determine the actual annual salary. During the course of the conversation between the rostered minister and those responsible for annual salary recommendations, consider using the following questions as guides for allowing one to move up or down in the range presented.

- What are the duties and responsibilities of the rostered minister in our congregation?
- Does our rostered minister bring any additional or special skills to the position that ought to be rewarded?

- Do we expect our rostered minister to take on any significant additional responsibilities in our congregation?
- Does our rostered minister face any unique financial issues that ought to be addressed by the congregation?
- Are we in an area where housing costs are unusually high and special consideration may need to be made?

The figure entered in Box 17 represents the mutually-negotiated rostered minister salary. If the terms of call are less than full-time, this figure should be adjusted accordingly.

## **ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE BENEFITS**

### **Social Security Offset and Housing Allowance**

It is an open question as to whether Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are subject to traditional Social Security (FICA) taxes or whether, like Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament, they are considered self-employed. Similarly, it is unclear if Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are allowed to claim a housing allowance. ***The ELCA has not taken a position on this issue.*** Congregations are referred to IRS Publication 517 (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p517.pdf>) for more information. The ELCA has informed the Synod that the IRS has made clear that it will not be issuing any additional private letter rulings on who qualifies as a minister for purposes of the housing allowance.

### **Pension and Major Medical**

Congregations should also be responsible for providing pension and major medical coverage. Current contribution rates for the ELCA's Portico coverage can be found at <https://porticobenefits.org>.

### **Vacation**

A minimum of four weeks of vacation shall be provided.

### **Study Leave**

A minimum of two weeks paid study leave annually with the provision for the accumulation of unused study leave up to six weeks.

### **Parental/Family Leave**

It is recommended that congregations develop a program for parental leave which includes childbearing and childcare leave. The program should include both the birth and adoption of children and cover full salary, housing and benefits with the understanding that the individual would return to work for a minimum of six months after taking the leave. It is recommended that congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least 8 weeks. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth as well as time for the emotional adjustment to a new child. It is also recommended that congregations provide paid childcare (for mother or father) leave of at least four to six weeks. This leave recognizes the need for parents to spend time bonding with the child. Childcare leave could run consecutively to childbearing or be split into smaller increments.

Congregations are encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.

### **Sabbatical**

An extended leave/sabbatical of one to three months may be granted after the rostered minister has served the congregation for three to five years..

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

### **Automobile Expense**

Rostered Ministers of Word and Service using personal cars for business shall be reimbursed for the actual costs they incur for church business, based upon the IRS guidelines.

### **Continuing Education**

A minimum contribution of \$500 per year towards the rostered minister's continuing education is recommended. This shall include participation in a First Call Theological Education Program, where applicable.

### **Books and Periodicals**

A minimum book allowance of \$300 per year is recommended.

### **Conventions, Assemblies, and Conferences**

Coverage of expenses for official meetings of the synod is required.

Given the changing nature of ministry in response to COVID-19, congregations may want to consider how items like professional expenses and travel reimbursements should be adjusted. For example, if it is anticipated that a Rostered Minister of Word and Service is working primarily from a home office, the congregation may want to consider reimbursing internet and cellphone costs. If travel is significantly reduced and digital worship services continue to be offered, the congregation may want to consider temporarily reducing a mileage allowance and shift that funding in 2025 to provide continuing education to support digital ministry.

## 2025 ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE SALARY RANGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Metropolitan Washington, D.C Synod of the ELCA

### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Unadjusted Minimum Salary 1

### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

Median Housing Cost 2

Cost Over Threshold ..... 3

Housing cost adjustment (multiply box 3 by 0.03)..... 4

Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (add boxes 1 and 4)..... 5

### Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment

Years of Experience (maximum 15)..... 6

Worship Attendance..... 7

Advanced Education..... 8

Longevity in Current Call (maximum 5 points) 9

Related Non-Pastoral Experience (maximum 5 points) ..... 10

Total Points (Add boxes 6 through 10)..... 11

Salary Adjustment (multiply box 11 by \$485)..... 12

### Section 4: Determining Rostered Minister Salary Range

Minimum Salary (add boxes 5, 12)..... 13

Median Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.15) 14

Maximum Salary (multiply box 14 by 1.30) 15

Mutually-Negotiated Rostered Minister Salary..... 16

## **SUPPLY PASTORS**

Compensation to visiting pastors is the responsibility of the host congregation. Congregations should consider the following to be a guideline in compensating supply pastors:

One Service	\$200.00
Each additional service	\$ 50.00
Preparing for and Teaching Bible Class	\$ 50.00

Mileage over 25 miles round trip should be paid at the IRS approved rate for business travel.

## **CHURCH MUSICIANS**

The makeup of individuals employed in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod as a church musician has changed from predominantly Organists to Choir and Music Directors. Although this document cannot suggest specific salary information, the following should be taken into consideration:

Compensation should increase along with the congregation size. As with Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Rostered Ministers of Word and Service, the larger the congregation, the more likely the musician will lead choir(s) and have more responsibilities than simply instrumental. As such, the salary should increase along with the responsibilities.

Regional costs of living should be considered when setting a church musician's salary. Compensation should increase based on education. Individuals working in the church in the capacity of Music Director may have college and advanced degrees. This knowledge and background should be recognized in salary considerations.

Longevity in a position should be acknowledged in salary considerations. As with rostered ministers, length of service in a call should be considered in compensation discussions.

Benefits should be provided to church musician staff members that are in full-time roles. Fringe benefits should be comparable to that of rostered members of the staff.

### **Supply Organist**

When the congregation needs a supply organist, they should be compensated a minimum of \$100.00 on any given Sunday. Of course, this compensation should be altered depending upon the number of services, requirement for choral direction and rehearsals.



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SYNOD ELCA

# ROSTERED MINISTRY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2026



# ROSTERED MINISTRY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES FOR 2026

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Updated April 2025

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## INTRODUCTION

The Rostered Ministry Compensation Guidelines are offered to assist the members of a congregation in preparing an *initial* salary for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Rostered Ministers of Word and Service. A compensation package includes, but is not limited to, salary (including the cost of housing), medical and dental benefits, social security offsets, and pension contributions.

There are separate guidelines for each of the following:

Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament;  
Rostered Ministers of Word and Service; and  
supply pastors and church musicians.

As with all matters, the consideration of the issue of rostered ministership compensation should be entered into prayerfully and in recognition of many factors. Congregations should consider the following as a goal:

A rostered minister's total compensation package should, as much as possible, be comparable to the compensation received by members of the congregation in professional occupations, considering level of education and the years of experience.

In determining the compensation package, congregational members and the rostered minister should express their views honestly and, at all times, speak to each other with the love of Christ.

## COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

### I. DETERMINING THE INITIAL ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY

This following material is designed to provide guidance in determining a salary package to a newly called Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Please refer to the Worksheet on page 8 as you review these instructions. A spreadsheet version of the Worksheet is available at <https://metrocelca.org/congregational-resources/documents-forms/>. If you are using the spreadsheet, be sure to enter the information on the Data tab; the workbook will then make the calculations based on the information on the Data tab.

#### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

The Unadjusted Minimum Salary is set annually by the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Unadjusted Minimum Salary includes the base amounts for salary, the cost of housing, and the cost associated with Social Security offset.

##### Box 1: “Unadjusted Minimum Salary”

Write the 2026 minimum unadjusted salary amount of **\$75,700** in Box 1. If the terms of call are less than full-time, this figure should be adjusted accordingly in consultation with synod staff.

If use of a parsonage is included as a portion of compensation, enter the unadjusted minimum amount of **\$62,358** in Box 1. (Note that there is a separate worksheet in the Excel file to calculate compensation that includes use of a parsonage.)

#### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

There is great value in having the pastor living and identifying with the same parish community in which most of the members live. The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod covers a large, economically diverse area where the cost of living varies widely within and between the Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas. A regionally-based cost of living modification to the unadjusted minimum salary acknowledges this diversity. The cost of living salary modifier does not generally change from year to year.

This section refers to the **cost** of housing, which is distinct from the housing **allowance**. Housing allowances are discussed more fully in the Benefits section.

**Box 2: Housing Cost**

Enter in Box 2 the median single-family home price near the congregation, using the primary zip code(s) served by the congregation. This figure can be obtained by contacting a local realtor or by using <http://www.zillow.com/home-values>. If several zip codes are involved, find the average of all codes.

In circumstances in which the pastor plans to live outside the parish community in which most members live, figure the cost of living salary modifier using the church zip code and the pastor's actual zip code. Average the two figures and insert that number in Box 2.

**Box 3: Cost Over Threshold**

The calculation uses \$250,000 as the minimum cost of housing in Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod. If the figure in Box 2 exceeds \$250,000 (the minimum cost of housing within the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod), subtract \$250,000 from Box 2 and enter the resulting figure in Box 3.

**Box 4: Housing Cost Adjustment**

Multiply Box 3 by .03 (3%) and write the result in Box 4.

(Example: The price of a median single-family home in the area served by the congregation is \$300,000.  $\$300,000 - \$250,000 = \$50,000$ .  $\$50,000 \times .03 = \$1,500$  is recorded in Box 4.)

If use of a parsonage is included as a portion of compensation, a housing equity allowance should be calculated instead. This number will be a minimum of 30% of the amount determined above but may not be less than the amount the pastor is currently receiving (if any).

(Example:  $\$1,500 \times .30 = \$450$ .)

**Box 5: Regionally Modified Minimum Salary**

Add Box 1 and Box 4 to obtain the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary for the congregation, and enter this figure in Box 5.

**Section 3: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Adjustment**

This section seeks to quantify the value of experience and education the pastor may possess and the unique aspects of the congregation. These factors will become a basis for adjustment to the minimum salary.

**Box 6: Years of Pastoral Experience**

As per most professional salary systems, the synod seeks to reflect the value of acquired skills, wisdom and experiences that can only come from actual pastoral experience. Credit one point for each year of service as an ordained pastor, up to 15, and enter in Box 6.

### Box 7: Worship Attendance

Pastors of large churches often bear increased responsibilities and expectations. The synod seeks to acknowledge these responsibilities with this adjustment. Credit is given for primary leadership in congregations where the average weekly worship attendance exceeds 100 persons at a rate of one point for each 12 persons over the 100 worshiper threshold. Associate pastors would receive one-half point for each 12 persons over the 100 worshiper threshold.

To calculate the figure for Box 7, subtract 100 from the average number of worshipers (as reported on the congregation's annual parochial report). Divide that difference by 12, round to the nearest whole number, and enter the figure in Box 7.

(Example: Congregation reports an average of 265 worshipers.  $265-100=165$ .  $165/12=13.8$ . Round up to 14 points.)

### Box 8: Advanced Education

Lutherans have long expected that their pastors be well-educated. This credit seeks to account for and encourage life-long learning for leadership in divinity or related fields. Credit is given (5 points) to those who have taken the time and made the commitment to earn a ministry-related degree in addition to the Master of Divinity.

### Box 9: Longevity in Current Call

Research has established that vibrant, long-term pastorates are often associated with congregational growth. This adjustment seeks to reflect the shared valuing of healthy, longer-tenured pastorates. Credit one point for each year of service in the pastor's current call in Box 9, to a maximum of 5 points. After five years, consult Section II of this material.

### Box 10: Related Non-Pastoral Experience

Increasingly, persons with prior experience in related fields are entering rostered ministry in our church. This adjustment seeks to acknowledge the value of prior experience in related fields that are helpful to the ministry (e.g. teaching, administration, financial, counseling, social work, etc.).

Generally this experience will be acknowledged by the Call Committee and will be recognized by the Church Council as it sets the rostered minister's first salary package.

Credit is given for each year of prior experience in a related field up to ten years. Multiply the pastor's years of significant prior experience by 0.5 (# years x 0.5) and write either that figure or the number 5 (whichever is less) in Box 10.

### Box 11: Total Points

Add together the credits in Boxes 6 through 10 to create a point total and write that number in Box 11.

**Box 12: Salary Adjustment**

The number recorded in Box 11, multiplied by the predetermined adjustment factor of 1% of box 1. Transfer that dollar figure to Box 12.

**Section 4: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Range**

**Box 13: Minimum Salary**

By adding the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (Box 5) and the Salary Adjustment (Box 12) figures together, the appropriate minimum salary limit is determined. Write that figure in Box 13.

**Box 14: Median Salary**

The median salary is calculated by multiplying Box 13 by 1.15 (15%). Enter that figure in Box 14.

**Box 15: Upper Salary**

The higher salary range limit is calculated by multiplying Box 13 by 1.30 (30%). Enter that figure in Box 15.

**Box 16: Mutually-Negotiated Pastoral Salary**

Although the synod may produce helpful guidelines and suggested ranges for appropriate salary, congregations need to review and revise compensation for their rostered ministers each year. Using the figure in Box 13 as a minimum and Box 15 as an upper range, it is the responsibility of the congregation to determine actual annual salary.

During the course of the conversation between the pastor and those responsible for annual salary recommendations, consider using the following questions as guides:

- Does our pastor bring any additional or special skills to the position that ought to be rewarded?
- Do we expect our pastor to take on any significant additional responsibilities as a leader of our congregation?
- Does the pastor face any unique financial issues that ought to be addressed by the congregation?

The figure entered in Box 16 represents the mutually-negotiated pastoral salary (adjusted accordingly if the terms of call are less than full-time).

**ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT BENEFITS**

**Housing Allowance**

The Housing Allowance is a separate calculation and relates solely to the individual pastor's tax situation. U.S. law provides that members of the clergy may exclude from their taxable income the designated Housing Allowance, provided that the congregation's Church Council/Board has made such a designation prior to the beginning of the year.

The amount of the Housing Allowance that is excludable from gross income is the LEAST of (1) the amount actually used to provide a home, (2) the amount officially designated as housing allowance, or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and utilities. The pastor will propose an amount to the Church Council; it may not exceed the salary paid.

### **Pension and Major Medical**

Congregations are also responsible for providing pension and major medical coverage through Portico, the ELCA's benefits program. The pension allowance should be at least 10%. Health insurance should include medical and dental coverage for the pastor's spouse and children unless they have other employer-provided group medical insurance coverage and the pastor consents to waiving medical-dental coverage for them under the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program.

The cost of these benefits is based on the total salary package. The Portico website (<https://porticobenefits.org>) offers very useful calculators to determine the total cost of these benefits and their representatives are happy to assist in making these calculations.

### **Vacation**

A minimum of four weeks of vacation shall be provided.

### **Study Leave**

A minimum of two weeks paid study leave is recommended annually with the provision for the accumulation of unused study leave up to six weeks.

### **Parental/Family Leave**

It is recommended that congregations develop a program for parental leave which includes childbearing and childcare leave. The program should include both the birth and adoption of children and cover full salary, housing and benefits with the understanding that the individual would return to work for a minimum of six months after taking the leave. It is recommended that congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least eight weeks. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth as well as time for the emotional adjustment to a new child. It is also recommended that congregations provide paid childcare (for mother or father) leave of at least four to six weeks. This leave recognizes the need for parents to spend time bonding with the child. Childcare leave could run consecutively to childbearing or be split into smaller increments.

Congregations are encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.

### **Sabbatical**

An extended leave/sabbatical of one to three months may be granted after the pastor has served the congregation for three to five years.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

### **Automobile Expense**

Pastors using personal cars for business shall be reimbursed for the actual costs they incur for church business, based upon the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines.

### **Continuing Education**

A minimum contribution of \$500 per year toward the pastor's continuing education is recommended. This shall include participation in a First Call Theological Education Program, where applicable.

### **Books and Periodicals**

A minimum book allowance of \$300 per year is recommended.

### **Conventions, Assemblies, and Pastoral Conferences**

Coverage of expenses for official meetings of the synod is required.

Given the changing nature of ministry in response to COVID-19, congregations may want to consider how items like professional expenses and travel reimbursements should be adjusted. For example, if it is anticipated that a Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament is working primarily from a home office, the congregation may want to consider reimbursing internet and cellphone costs. If travel is significantly reduced and digital worship services continue to be offered, the congregation may want to consider temporarily reducing a mileage allowance and shift that funding in 2026 to provide continuing education to support digital ministry.

## 2026 ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY RANGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

*Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the ELCA*

### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Unadjusted Minimum Salary 1

### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

Median Housing Cost 2

Cost Over Threshold (subtract \$250,000 from box 2) 3

Housing cost adjustment (multiply box 3 by 0.03) 4

(If parsonage provided, enter agreed upon housing equity instead.)

Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (add boxes 1 and 4) 5

### Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment

Years of Pastoral Experience (maximum 15 points) 6

Worship Attendance 7

Advanced Education 8

Longevity in Current Call (maximum 5 points) 9

Related Non-Pastoral Experience (maximum 5 points) 10

Total Points (Add boxes 6 through 10) 11

Salary Adjustment (multiply box 11 by 1% of Box 1) 12

### Section 4: Determining Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament Salary Range

Minimum Salary (add boxes 5 and 12) 13

Median Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.15) 14

Maximum Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.30) 15

Mutually-Negotiated Pastoral Salary 16

## **II. DETERMINING ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT SALARY AFTER FIVE YEARS IN A CALL**

After five years in the current call, the calculations indicated by Box 9 on the worksheet are no longer appropriate. Congregation and pastor should know each other's gifts, abilities, and needs well enough to make future compensation discussions deeply fruitful.

Near the end of the fifth year in a call, or during the next salary discussion after the fifth year anniversary, the Church Council should designate a group to develop goals and objectives with and for the pastor, for the congregation's leadership, and for the congregation itself. (The Church Council may decide to do this work.) Part of the goal- and objective-setting process will require careful description of when and how to review and re-evaluate the pastor and the process itself. Formal agreement between the pastor and the Church Council will be part of this process and will be recorded in the Church Council minutes.

Then after review, the pastor's salary should be increased in keeping with the accomplishment of goals and objectives that had been agreed upon. The increases may take the form of an additional percentage of the previous salary, of additional points on a re-worked "Salary Range Development Worksheet," or of a decision to move the pastor's compensation up through the minimum-median-maximum salary range.

The successful use of a goal-setting and evaluation process requires open-minded and honest negotiation by all the parties involved. The synod office is able to assist with this kind of negotiation, especially until everyone becomes accustomed to the process. The synod office also has tools to recommend for use in helping pastors, councils, and congregations set and pursue goals effectively and in a Christian spirit.



## COMPENSATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE

In light of the ELCA's shift from lay to ordained status and their additional to rostered status, the Synod offers the following compensation guidelines to congregations for the initial compensation package of Rostered Ministers of Word and Service who are employed at least 20 hours per week in a paid position with programmatic responsibilities. In addition, the status of Rostered Ministers of Word and Service with regard to tax considerations (e.g., self-employment tax and housing allowance) is very much in flux and will continue to evolve over time. (Please see further discussion below in the Benefits section.)

Because of the diversity of skills, jobs and responsibilities, compensation guidelines for Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are more loosely framed and need to be subjected to a greater degree of interpretation than the Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament guidelines.

### ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE SALARY

Following are considerations and instructions for completing "2026 Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary Range Development Worksheet" (page 15).

#### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod Assembly annually sets an Unadjusted Minimum Salary for rostered Ministers of Word and Service.

##### Box 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Write the baseline salary amount of **\$52,557** in Box 1

#### Section 2: Rostered Ministers of Word and Service Regional Cost of Living Modifier

There is great value in having the rostered minister living and identifying with the same parish community in which most of the members live. The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod covers a large, economically diverse area where the cost of living varies widely within and between the Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas. Congregations are urged to include appropriate adjustments to cover the cost of housing as outlined below.

This section refers to the **cost** of housing, which is distinct from the housing **allowance**. Housing allowances are discussed more fully in the Benefits section.

##### Box 2: Housing Cost

Determine the median single-family home prices near the congregation, using the primary zip code(s) served by the congregation. The figure can be obtained by contacting a local realtor or by using <http://www.zillow.com/home-values>.

**Box 3: Cost Over Threshold**

The minimal amount required for a home in this area is \$250,000. Many of the regional areas in the synod have considerably higher housing costs. If the figure in Box 2 exceeds \$250,000, subtract \$250,000 from Box 2 and enter the resulting figure in Box 3.

**Box 4: Housing Cost Adjustment**

Multiply Box 3 by .03 (3%) and write the result in Box 4.

(Example: The price of a median single-family home in areas served by the congregation is \$300,000.  $\$300,000 - \$250,000 = \$50,000$ .  $\$50,000 \times .03 = \$1,500$  is recorded in Box 4.)

**Box 5: Regionally Modified Minimum Salary**

Add Box 1 and Box 4 to obtain the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary for the congregation, and enter this figure in Box 5.

**Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment**

This section seeks to quantify the value of experience and education a rostered minister may possess. These factors will become a basis for possible adjustment to the minimum salary.

**Box 6: Years of Experience**

As per most professional salary systems, the synod seeks to reflect the value of acquired skills, wisdom and experiences that can only come from actual rostered ministership experience. Credit one point for each year of service as a rostered minister, up to 15, and enter in Box 6.

**Box 7: Worship Attendance**

Rostered Ministers of Word and Service of large churches often bear increased responsibilities and expectations. The synod seeks to acknowledge such with this adjustment. Credit is given for leadership in congregations where the average worship attendance exceeds 100 persons at a rate of 1 point for each 24 worshippers over the 100 worshiper threshold.

To calculate, subtract 100 from the average worship attendance as reported on the congregation's annual parochial report. Divide that difference by 24 and enter the figure in Box 7.

(Example: Congregation reports average worship attendance of 155.  $155 - 100 = 55$ .  $55 / 24 = 2.2$ . Round to 2 points.)

**Box 8: Advanced Education**

Lutherans have long expected that their rostered ministers be well-educated. This credit seeks to account for and encourage life-long learning for leadership in Divinity or related fields. Credit is given (5 points) to those who have taken the time and made the commitment to earn a ministry related degree beyond the Master's level. Depending upon the types of tasks the congregation calls their rostered minister to

perform; these degrees may be in music, counseling or other related fields. If such is the case, enter 5 points for each degree earned in addition to the Master's degree in Box 8.

**Box 9: Longevity in Current Call**

To effectively establish a vibrant and growing ministry, the synod seeks to recognize Rostered Ministers of Word and Service's long-term calls. Credit one point for each year of service in the rostered minister's current call in Box 9 up to a maximum of 5 points.

**Box 10: Related Non-Pastoral Experience**

Increasingly, persons with prior experience in related fields are entering Rostered Ministers of Word and Servicehip roles in our church. This adjustment seeks to acknowledge the value of prior experience in related fields that are helpful to the ministry of the rostered minister. Credit may be given for each year of prior experience in a related field up to ten years. Multiply the rostered minister's years of significant prior experience by 0.5 (# years x 0.5) and write either that figure or the number 5 (whichever is lesser) in Box 10.

**Box 11: Total Points**

Add together the credits in Boxes 6 through 10 to create a point total and write that number in Box 11.

**Box 12: Salary Adjustment**

The number recorded in Box 11, multiplied by the predetermined adjustment factor of **\$510**, generates the minimum salary adjustment. Transfer that dollar figure to Box 12.

**Section 4: Determining Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary Range**

**Box 13: Minimum Salary**

By adding the Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (Box 5), the Salary Adjustment (Box 12) and the Specific Responsibilities Adjustment (Box 13) figures together, the appropriate minimum salary limit is determined. Write that figure in Box 14.

**Box 14: Median Salary**

The median salary is calculated by multiplying Box 14 by 1.15. Enter that figure in Box 15.

**Box 15: Upper Salary**

The higher salary range limit is calculated by multiplying Box 14 by 1.30. Enter that figure in Box 16.

**Box 16: Mutually-Negotiated Rostered Minister of Word and Service Salary**

Although the synod may produce helpful guidelines and suggested ranges for appropriate salary, congregations need to annually review and revise salary for the Rostered Minister of Word and Service. Using the figure in Box 14 as a minimum and Box 16 as an upper range, it is the responsibility of the congregation to determine the actual annual salary. During the course of the conversation between the rostered minister and those responsible for annual salary recommendations, consider using the following questions as guides for allowing one to move up or down in the range presented.

- What are the duties and responsibilities of the rostered minister in our congregation?
- Does our rostered minister bring any additional or special skills to the position that ought to be rewarded?
- Do we expect our rostered minister to take on any significant additional responsibilities in our congregation?
- Does our rostered minister face any unique financial issues that ought to be addressed by the congregation?
- Are we in an area where housing costs are unusually high and special consideration may need to be made?

The figure entered in Box 17 represents the mutually-negotiated rostered minister salary. If the terms of call are less than full-time, this figure should be adjusted accordingly.

## **ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE BENEFITS**

### **Social Security Offset and Housing Allowance**

It is an open question as to whether Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are subject to traditional Social Security (FICA) taxes or whether, like Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament, they are considered self-employed. Similarly, it is unclear if Rostered Ministers of Word and Service are allowed to claim a housing allowance. **The ELCA has not taken a position on this issue.** Congregations are referred to IRS Publication 517 (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p517.pdf>) for more information. The ELCA has informed the Synod that the IRS has made clear that it will not be issuing any additional private letter rulings on who qualifies as a minister for purposes of the housing allowance.

### **Pension and Major Medical**

Congregations should also be responsible for providing pension and major medical coverage. Current contribution rates for the ELCA's Portico coverage can be found at <https://porticobenefits.org>.

### **Vacation**

A minimum of four weeks of vacation shall be provided.

### **Study Leave**

A minimum of two weeks paid study leave annually with the provision for the accumulation of unused study leave up to six weeks.

### **Parental/Family Leave**

It is recommended that congregations develop a program for parental leave which includes childbearing and childcare leave. The program should include both the birth and adoption of children and cover full salary, housing and benefits with the understanding that the individual would return to work for a minimum of six months after taking the leave. It is recommended that congregations provide paid childbearing leave of at least 8 weeks. This allows time to recover from the physical demands of childbirth as well as time for the emotional adjustment to a new child. It is also recommended that

congregations provide paid childcare (for mother or father) leave of at least four to six weeks. This leave recognizes the need for parents to spend time bonding with the child. Childcare leave could run consecutively to childbearing or be split into smaller increments.

Congregations are encouraged to consider the provisions of the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which allow for up to 12 weeks leave (which can be a combination of paid and unpaid leave). FMLA leave can be used for personal or family member care situations.

### **Sabbatical**

An extended leave/sabbatical of one to three months may be granted after the rostered minister has served the congregation for three to five years..

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

### **Automobile Expense**

Rostered Ministers of Word and Service using personal cars for business shall be reimbursed for the actual costs they incur for church business, based upon the IRS guidelines.

### **Continuing Education**

A minimum contribution of \$500 per year towards the rostered minister's continuing education is recommended. This shall include participation in a First Call Theological Education Program, where applicable.

### **Books and Periodicals**

A minimum book allowance of \$300 per year is recommended.

### **Conventions, Assemblies, and Conferences**

Coverage of expenses for official meetings of the synod is required.

Given the changing nature of ministry in response to COVID-19, congregations may want to consider how items like professional expenses and travel reimbursements should be adjusted. For example, if it is anticipated that a Rostered Minister of Word and Service is working primarily from a home office, the congregation may want to consider reimbursing internet and cellphone costs. If travel is significantly reduced and digital worship services continue to be offered, the congregation may want to consider temporarily reducing a mileage allowance and shift that funding in 2026 to provide continuing education to support digital ministry.

## 2026 ROSTERED MINISTER OF WORD AND SERVICE SALARY RANGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

*Metropolitan Washington, D.C Synod of the ELCA*

### Section 1: Unadjusted Minimum Salary

Unadjusted Minimum Salary 1

### Section 2: Regional Cost of Living Salary Modifier

Median Housing Cost 2

Cost Over Threshold ..... 3

Housing cost adjustment (multiply box 3 by 0.03)..... 4

Regionally Modified Minimum Salary (add boxes 1 and 4)..... 5

### Section 3: Determining Salary Adjustment

Years of Experience (maximum 15)..... 6

Worship Attendance..... 7

Advanced Education..... 8

Longevity in Current Call (maximum 5 points) 9

Related Non-Pastoral Experience (maximum 5 points) ..... 10

Total Points (Add boxes 6 through 10)..... 11

Salary Adjustment (multiply box 11 by \$510)..... 12

### Section 4: Determining Rostered Minister Salary Range

Minimum Salary (add boxes 5, 12)..... 13

Median Salary (multiply box 13 by 1.15) 14

Maximum Salary (multiply box 14 by 1.30) 15

Mutually-Negotiated Rostered Minister Salary..... 16

## SUPPLY PASTORS

Compensation to visiting pastors is the responsibility of the host congregation. Congregations should consider the following to be a guideline in compensating supply pastors:

One Service	\$200.00
Each additional service	\$ 50.00
Preparing for and Teaching Bible Class	\$ 50.00

Mileage over 25 miles round trip should be paid at the IRS approved rate for business travel.

## CHURCH MUSICIANS

The makeup of individuals employed in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod as a church musician has changed from predominantly Organists to Choir and Music Directors. Although this document cannot suggest specific salary information, the following should be taken into consideration:

Compensation should increase along with the congregation size. As with Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Rostered Ministers of Word and Service, the larger the congregation, the more likely the musician will lead choir(s) and have more responsibilities than simply instrumental. As such, the salary should increase along with the responsibilities.

Regional costs of living should be considered when setting a church musician's salary. Compensation should increase based on education. Individuals working in the church in the capacity of Music Director may have college and advanced degrees. This knowledge and background should be recognized in salary considerations.

Longevity in a position should be acknowledged in salary considerations. As with rostered ministers, length of service in a call should be considered in compensation discussions.

Benefits should be provided to church musician staff members that are in full-time roles. Fringe benefits should be comparable to that of rostered members of the staff.

### Supply Organist

When the congregation needs a supply organist, they should be compensated a minimum of \$100.00 on any given Sunday. Of course, this compensation should be altered depending upon the number of services, requirement for choral direction and rehearsals.