



2026

Minimum Standards for Compensation and Benefits

Ministers of Word and Sacrament
Ministers of Word and Service
Lay Program and Support Staff
Appendices

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Congregations walking together + for the sake of mission + in God's world.

944 24 1/4 Street

Chetek, WI 54728

www.nwswi.org

715.859.6810

Rostered Leaders of the ELCA

Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Ordained ministers, or pastors, serve with hearts filled with love and courage, to offer the hope of the sacraments and to lead the proclamation of the Gospel. Typically, ordained ministers have a bachelor degree and a four year Master of Divinity degree. They have theological and practical training through seminary and the ELCA.

Ministers of Word and Service ("Deacons" per 2016 Constitution Changes)

Associates in Ministry

Partners in ministry, these leaders are commissioned for ministry to equip and enable others in their Christian lives. They serve in congregations and other ministries of the ELCA. Most have a bachelor degree or master degree in a field appropriate for the primary service area and are commissioned by the ELCA.

Diaconal Ministers

These consecrated leaders seek to equip and motivate others to lead a model Christian life. Their vocation is lived- out in both church and world. They have a theological master degree and are consecrated by the ELCA.

Deaconesses

The ELCA Deaconess Community supports women who are consecrated for service to the church. They have a degree appropriate to their primary service area and are consecrated by the ELCA.

Recommend changes from the Salary Standards Committee:

1. The Evangelical Leadership Commission recommends that our Salary Standards use the government set figure of 2.5%. This increase in the salary standards is just keeping even with inflation. If a congregation isn't able to reach these standards, then other conversations will no doubt need to take place regarding whether or not they can afford full time ministry, need to form a multi-point parish, etc.
2. The chart for Word and Sacrament now offer base salary for up to 40 years of experience. The second column of the chart is base plus housing allowance.
3. A new chart for Word and Service rostered leaders has been added.

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- A.** COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE
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Pastors (Minister of Word and Sacrament)
Base Salary Standards

- A** The minimum base salary Standards assume full-time ordained ministry and are to be pro-rated for calls other than full-time. These figures are minimum Standards and are not intended to restrict a congregation in fairly compensating a rostered leader. Congregations that are not presently at the salary standard range should attempt to reach the appropriate level within three years.

Experience	Year Ordained	Base 2026	Base + 30% Housing
0	2026	\$48,326	\$62,824
1	2025	\$49,358	\$64,165
2	2024	\$50,414	\$65,539
3	2023	\$51,493	\$66,941
4	2022	\$52,593	\$68,371
5	2021	\$53,719	\$69,834
6	2020	\$54,734	\$71,154
7	2019	\$55,768	\$72,498
8	2018	\$56,826	\$73,873
9	2017	\$57,900	\$75,270
10	2016	\$58,994	\$76,693
11	2015	\$59,720	\$77,636
12	2014	\$60,856	\$79,113
13	2013	\$62,016	\$80,621
14	2012	\$63,196	\$82,154
15	2011	\$64,401	\$83,721
16	2010	\$65,302	\$84,893
17	2009	\$66,217	\$86,083
18	2008	\$67,149	\$87,293
19	2007	\$68,089	\$88,516

Experience	Year Ordained	Base 2026	Base + 30% Housing
20	2006	\$69,046	\$89,760
21	2005	\$69,622	\$90,509
22	2004	\$70,604	\$91,785
23	2003	\$71,600	\$93,080
24	2002	\$72,608	\$94,391
25	2001	\$73,634	\$95,724
26	2000	\$74,554	\$96,921
27	1999	\$75,486	\$98,132
28	1998	\$76,430	\$99,359
29	1997	\$77,385	\$100,601
30	1996	\$78,352	\$101,858
31	1995	\$79,332	\$103,131
32	1994	\$80,324	\$104,421
33	1993	\$81,328	\$105,726
34	1992	\$82,344	\$107,047
35	1991	\$83,373	\$108,386
36	1990	\$84,416	\$109,740
37	1989	\$85,471	\$111,112
38	1988	\$86,539	\$112,501
39	1987	\$87,621	\$113,907
40	1986	\$88,716	\$115,331

Deacons (Minister of Word and Service)

Base Salary Standards

- B.** The minimum base salary Standards assume full-time ministry and are to be pro-rated for calls other than full-time. These figures are minimum Standards and are not intended to restrict a congregation in fairly compensating a rostered leader. Congregations that are not presently at the salary standard range should attempt to reach the appropriate level within three years.

Experience	Year Ordained	Guidelines with Bachelor's Degree	Guidelines with a Masters	Word and Service with Authorization to Preside
0	2026	\$46,800	\$51,862	\$57,048
1	2025	\$47,798	\$52,969	\$58,266
2	2024	\$48,818	\$54,103	\$59,513
3	2023	\$49,861	\$55,261	\$60,787
4	2022	\$50,922	\$56,441	\$62,086
5	2021	\$52,009	\$57,649	\$63,414
6	2020	\$52,991	\$58,739	\$64,613
7	2019	\$53,990	\$59,848	\$65,833
8	2018	\$55,010	\$60,984	\$67,082
9	2017	\$56,047	\$62,136	\$68,350
10	2016	\$57,105	\$63,311	\$69,642
11	2015	\$57,763	\$64,090	\$70,498
12	2014	\$58,862	\$65,309	\$71,840
13	2013	\$59,982	\$66,554	\$73,209
14	2012	\$61,120	\$67,820	\$74,602
15	2011	\$62,284	\$69,113	\$76,024
16	2010	\$63,157	\$70,080	\$77,088
17	2009	\$64,040	\$71,063	\$78,169
18	2008	\$64,940	\$72,062	\$79,268
19	2007	\$65,848	\$73,072	\$80,379
20	2006	\$66,771	\$74,098	\$81,508
21	2005	\$67,288	\$74,716	\$82,188
22	2004	\$68,236	\$75,770	\$83,347
23	2003	\$69,198	\$76,839	\$84,523
24	2002	\$70,172	\$77,921	\$85,713
25	2001	\$71,161	\$79,022	\$86,924
26	2000	\$72,051	\$80,009	\$88,010
27	1999	\$72,952	\$81,010	\$89,111
28	1998	\$73,863	\$82,022	\$90,224
29	1997	\$74,787	\$83,048	\$91,352
30	1996	\$75,722	\$84,086	\$92,494
31	1995	\$76,668	\$85,137	\$93,650
32	1994	\$77,626	\$86,201	\$94,821
33	1993	\$78,597	\$87,278	\$96,006
34	1992	\$79,579	\$88,369	\$97,206
35	1991	\$80,574	\$89,474	\$98,421
36	1990	\$81,581	\$90,592	\$99,652
37	1989	\$82,601	\$91,725	\$100,897
38	1988	\$83,633	\$92,871	\$102,159
39	1987	\$84,679	\$94,032	\$103,435
40	1986	\$85,737	\$95,208	\$104,728

1. Housing—For Ministers of Word and Sacrament only

For Ministers of Word and Sacrament, the congregation provides:

- (a) a housing allowance of 30% of base pay² or —
- (b) a parsonage, including utilities, maintenance, phone, and housing equity fund.³ (See I.B on page 7.)

2. Additional Functions

Salary often is driven by other factors in addition to years of experience. While these are more difficult to objectively quantify, they should nevertheless enter the conversation about salary. Some of these factors are:

a) Ratio of Staff to Size of Congregation (Based on Worship Attendance)

The size of the congregation and the ratio of staff to worship attendance should be considered. For example, a solo pastor with no program staff serving a congregation with average worship attendance of 250+ should receive an additional \$1,000 compensation to reflect the added demands placed upon them.

b) Supervisory Responsibilities for Program Staff

- (1) \$1,000 for supervision of 2–3 program staff
- (2) \$1,500 for supervision of 4+ program staff

c) Additional Education

Consideration of \$500 to \$1,500 for additional earned degrees beyond the master degree is appropriate.

d) Previous Work Experience Prior to Ordination

Experience may also include unordained ministry in the church and/or secular work which enhances a person's skills for ministry. Experience prior to ordination/consecration/commissioning is calculated at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 year for each year up to ten years of prior experience (up to 5 years credit).

e) Multi-point parish

A solo pastor with no program staff serving more than one congregation should receive an additional \$1,000 compensation to reflect the added demands placed upon them.

3. Ongoing Considerations

- a) Cost of living** is not an adequate adjustment when used alone. Each year also brings with it an additional year of experience. Using only cost of living adjustments year after year ignores the accumulating experience level and results in the rostered leader gradually slipping below standards.
- b) Review of performance** and changes in levels of responsibility should also be considered annually and may warrant additional salary consideration (see Appendix E).

4. Part Time Service

To remain on the rosters of this Church, a rostered leader must maintain at least a $\frac{1}{3}$ time call (15 hours per week). If a congregation calls a rostered leader part time, it should be understood that part time status pertains to all of the following: salary, responsibilities, and hours, including the proportional number of Sundays (e.g. $\frac{3}{4}$ time means three out of four Sundays, etc). The minimum contributions levels still apply for Portico Benefit Services health benefits (i.e. the minimum contribution is NOT proportional). Congregations may need to develop lay leadership in the areas of visitation to homebound and hospitalized, teaching confirmation and Bible studies, administration, pulpit supply, and more. An ongoing conversation with synod staff may be helpful.

² Pastors may request that some of their cash salary be designated as additional housing allowance (see I.B.1 under “Housing”).

³ See considerations for parsonage allowances in I.B.2 under “Housing.”

C. HOUSING FOR MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

A unique feature of *clergy* compensation is the distinctive tax law regarding housing allowance for ordained ministers. This originated for clergy (and the military) because a parsonage was, at one time, standard for housing.

1. Housing Allowance

When there is a housing allowance, the pastor determines the amount of compensation to be set aside for housing allowance (based on IRS form 1828) and submits it to the Congregation Council. The Congregation Council must annually include the amount to be designated for housing in the council minutes prior to the beginning of the new tax year. The pastor assumes full responsibility for complying with IRS definitions of "cost to provide a house."

2. Parsonage

a) Electric/Gas/Water/Sewer

When a parsonage is provided to the pastor, all utility costs and repairs are paid by the church. It is recommended that the congregation pay directly for the parsonage utilities because current tax law and Portico Benefit Services rules make such payment advantageous to both the congregation and the pastor.

OR in other instances when a parsonage is provided, the congregation may choose to grant an allowance for the pastor to pay for the utilities. The standard for this is \$2,400 annually. The annual costs should be reviewed to be sure this is in line with actual expenses for the utilities.

b) Phone Service

Since it is important to be able to contact the pastor in case of emergency, local phone service should be provided.

c) Housing Equity Allowance

Where a parsonage is provided, the congregation is expected to contribute to a housing equity fund. This may be done by enrolling in the Optional ELCA Retirement Account through the ELCA Portico Benefit Services and designating that payment as "housing equity program." The purpose of this allowance is to provide financial resources under the supervision of Portico Benefit Services for the pastor to purchase housing upon retirement, or when a new call requires the purchase of a home. This fund is not subject to income taxes since it is not paid directly to the pastor. The formula for the suggested amount is: housing equity allowance = (salary + 30% of salary) x 4.5%.

3. Furnishings Allowance

Whether the church provides a housing allowance or a parsonage, the tax code provides pastors an exemption from taxation on amounts spent for furnishings in the pastor's residence. Simply designate a certain amount of the cash salary or add a portion to the compensation labeled "furnishings allowance."

⁴ For tax purposes, the allowances in this section must be designated and clearly written by annual Congregation Council action before the year begins. Arrangements with the pastor for allowances paid for housing, utilities, and furnishings should be written clearly, so that they are excludable from taxable income according to the tax code. These are excludable only as spent; therefore, the designation may be stated on the high side. "Expenses of providing a home include rent, house payments, furniture payments, cost for a garage, and utilities. They do not include the cost of food or servants" (current Federal Tax Guide). See Appendix C for sample forms related to housing designations.

D. SOCIAL SECURITY, IRS REPORTING, AND WORKER'S COMPENSATION

1. Social Security Allowance for Word and Sacrament rostered leaders

All pastors are considered self-employed for social security purposes and therefore will pay a self-employment tax of 15.3% of their income. Thus, it is recommended that the church or calling agency provide a social security allowance, even though it is taxable, to their pastor(s) to pay at least half (7.65%) of the self-employment tax as they do for the other employees of the church when they pay the employer's share of the FICA tax. Use this formula to determine half of the tax: Social Security Allowance = (salary + (housing allowance or 30% of salary for parsonage) + furnishings allowance + utilities allowance) x 7.65%.

This allowance is included on the pastor's W2 as taxable income.

2. IRS Reporting for Word and Sacrament rostered leaders

Congregations are to file federal tax W2 forms for ordained clergy, not a 1099 form.

3. Social Security Withholding for Word and Service rostered leaders and lay employees

By law, congregations are required to pay half of the Social Security taxes (7.65% of taxable income) and to file federal tax W2 forms for all lay rostered employees.

4. Worker's Compensation

All congregations should provide worker's compensation coverage since definite liability accrues to the congregation in case of accidental death or disability in conjunction with one's employment.

II. BENEFITS

A. ELCA RETIREMENT ACCOUNT AND MAJOR MEDICAL/DENTAL BENEFITS

1. Participation

The congregation should budget for and participate in the ELCA Retirement Account and Other Benefits Plan for clergy and rostered leaders. The plan provides retirement, survivor, disability, and health (medical/hospital, prescription drug, dental, behavioral health) benefits. The congregation subscribes to this program for the employee. More information is available from the synod office or directly from Portico Benefit Services of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 800 Marquette Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55402; 800-352-2876. Employers are to maintain health coverage for all family members who do not have other adequate group coverage.

Health Benefits Coverage

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health, dental, prescription drug, retirement, disability, and group life insurance benefits in one bundled program.* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. A bundled approach helps ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, congregations** in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner.

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying all or a significant portion of the contributions for benefits. Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing the benefits (e.g., deductibles, coinsurance, and copays).

The ELCA Church Council has approved a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members. Portico offers a choice of ELCA-Primary health benefit options that fit this approved balance: Gold+, Value Copay, and Silver+ with either Level A or B employer HSA contribution. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs, and then make their selection during annual enrollment. Current contribution rates are available on at EmployerLink/PorticoBenefits.org or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer, or if they qualify for a subsidy due to income level when purchasing health coverage through the exchange.

***"Congregations" may also refer to multi-point parishes or other non-parish ministry agencies such as Bible camps, long-term care facilities, hospitals, campus ministries, etc.

1. ELCA Retirement Account Expectations

ELCA Retirement Account contributions are to be paid commensurate with years of experience even if a congregation is not currently meeting salary standards. This will insure that rostered leaders have an adequate ELCA Retirement Account at retirement. This in no way should prevent the rostered leader from receiving a salary increase each year.

2. Cost of Benefits

ELCA Portico Benefit Services uses "Defined Compensation" to determine the amount of the required retirement plan contribution for ordained clergy. Defined Compensation = base salary + (housing allowance or for a parsonage 30% of (salary + social security allowance)) + social security allowance.

An estimated cost of ELCA retirement account, medical/dental benefits, and disability/survivor/administration can be found by using the Employer Link services on the ELCA Portico Benefits website: www.porticobenefits.org

B. MEDICAL FLEXIBLE SPENDING PLAN

A 2008 change in the Portico Benefit Services health plan includes an optional flexible spending account (pre-tax dollars) administered by Portico Benefit Services in conjunction with Blue Cross-Blue Shield. Eligible health FSA out of pocket expenses include medical, dental, prescription, eye, and mental health. Dependent care FSA is available and would include day care for children or care for adult dependent care. For specific information about qualifications, enrollment etc., visit Portico Benefit Services website at <https://www.porticobenefits.org/> or call 800-352-2876.

C. PAID LEAVES

1. Sick Leave

In the event of accident or illness, a congregation's written policy should include one day of paid sick leave per calendar month, cumulative to 30 days.

2. Disability Leave

In event of disability of the congregation's called rostered leader, congregations are asked to cover the first two months, full salary and housing, after which the disability benefits of the ELCA take effect. Please check for details in the ELCA benefit information.

3. Family Leave⁵

Family leave is intended for birth, adoption, placement, call to guardianship of a child; or caring for a sick child, spouse, or parent. When a rostered minister is welcoming a child into their family, congregations should plan for family leave that includes twelve weeks for both women and men for the purpose of integrating the child into the family. When a rostered minister is dealing with a seriously ill child, congregations should plan for family leave that includes up to six weeks. If there are special needs related to caring for a seriously ill child, additional time may be negotiated. Family leave consists of full salary, housing and benefits. Vacation time or sick time may be used in addition to the family leave time. If the sick time used exceeds the one day of paid sick leave per calendar month, cumulative to 30 days, then the sick time used for family leave becomes unpaid. Unused family leave is forfeited.

Another option for extending family leave would be for the rostered minister to work part-time in the last few weeks of their leave, engaging in some of their responsibilities while making provisional arrangements for others. Also, family leave may be split between two different time periods to accommodate childcare in situations where finding newborn care is difficult.

Family Leave is equally applicable to rostered ministers serving in part-time calls.

Should a rostered minister experience a miscarriage or still birth, or the death of an older child, she/he shall be given appropriate medical and compassion leave.

Congregations are encouraged to establish a fund to pay for supply coverage and other costs when Family Leave, Medical Leave, and Compassion Leave need to be used.

4. Compassion Leave

Congregations should be prepared to offer compassion leave for a death in the rostered leader's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law or legal guardian). While this will vary widely upon circumstances, three to five days (potentially including a Sunday) of paid leave for funeral planning and family time would be a compassionate first step in a difficult time.

D. OTHER INSURANCE, OPTIONAL ELCA Retirement Account

ELCA Portico Benefit Services offers an ELCA Retirement Account for employer contributions such as housing equity for ordained clergy and/or voluntary salary reduction agreements if the rostered leader wishes to participate in a tax-sheltered annuity. Also, congregations may choose to provide additional benefits or insurance through other vendors.

III. REIMBURSED PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES⁶

A. AUTOMOBILE ALLOWANCE (Recommended: lease/purchase or IRS mileage rate)

1. Lease/Purchase Vehicle

It is recommended that a parish consider a purchase or lease arrangement of an automobile provided for the rostered leader for congregational business. An arrangement may also be made for private use by the rostered leader with reimbursement of mileage to the congregation.

2. IRS Mileage Rate

The most equitable way of reimbursement for congregational business travel when the car is owned by the individual, not the congregation, is to use the mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. For the current rate, type "mileage" into the search bar at www.irs.gov. Under present tax structure, if the congregation does not provide a vehicle, this is the fairest and best way for the individual to be reimbursed.

3. Lump Sum Allowance

If the congregation and rostered leader choose to have a lump sum travel allowance, then the rostered leader must, by tax law, keep careful record of church business miles driven and report these to a congregation officer. This should be done also to keep the congregation informed of the pastor's need as to the amount of this allowance, as well as for reporting to the Internal Revenue Service.

B. CONTINUING EDUCATION (Recommended: \$900)

It is of prime importance both for the congregation and the rostered leader that continuing education be encouraged and supported by the congregation. Congregation councils and rostered leaders should mutually strategize about future educational opportunities and complete a Continuing Education Covenant.

1. General Expectations

Two weeks for continuing education including two Sundays with \$900 paid by the congregation is standard. An absolute minimum is one week with \$600 paid by the congregation. A minimum of 50 contact hours per year of intentional continuing education, or 150 contact hours each three-year period, is encouraged. Beyond structured classroom settings, this time may also include guided independent study.

2. First Call Theological Education

First Call Theological Education helps to develop and support leaders to grow in their ministry and benefits the congregation with healthy leaders and longevity. This is a structured program intended to provide development in three areas: ministerial identity, ministerial skills, and context of ministry. Congregations with First Call Rostered Leaders will need to plan additional funds and time for the individual to participate in the required First Call Theological Education required by the ELCA.

3. Long Term Planning

A provision allowing the rostered leader to accumulate continuing education time and money up to a maximum of three years provides for more structured study opportunity. If the rostered leader is to be gone for as much as

six weeks for this purpose it may be well to require that she/he agree to serve for at least one more year with the particular congregation. Accumulated funds for continuing education and sabbatical for the rostered leader should be reserved in the congregation treasury as funds restricted for that purpose. Monies for leadership training of other people of the congregation should be in another budget category.

6 Congregations are discouraged from shifting cash salary into reimbursable accounts because that decreases retirement plan contributions. Payment of taxes is required for all lump sum allowances that are not supported by adequate records.

A. PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY EXPENSES (Recommended: \$300)

1. Books, Periodicals, Dues, Etc.

An amount of \$300 is recommended for this reimbursable budget item for the purpose of books, periodicals, and appropriate dues. This should be a reimbursement allowance based upon actual expenditures only. Books, etc. purchased become the rostered leader's property.

2. Other Expenses

Expenses incurred in performance of the duties of the office shall be paid by the parish.

B. OFFICIAL MEETINGS (Recommended: \$600)

Rostered leaders under regular congregational call are expected to attend meetings of the synod each year:

- Winter Theological Event
- Synod Assembly
- Fall Ministry Retreat
- Conference Assembly

These meetings include the business of the synod, theological reflection, best practices in ministry training, conference involvement, healthy collegial interaction, and worship. An amount of \$600 is recommended to cover the registration fees of these meetings. Congregations are encouraged to reimburse their rostered leader's spouse for the Fall Ministry Retreat and the Synod Spouse's Retreat.

C. MOVING EXPENSES

The beginning of a new ministry partnership between a candidate and a congregation is a crucial time for ministry. Good conversation provides for a healthy beginning of ministry together. Call committees and candidates need to dialogue in the call process about both parties expectation around residency and moving expenses.

Congregations in self-study should budget for and begin to set aside funds for the interview process and moving expenses. Moving expenses vary greatly. Congregations will positively begin a relationship with a new rostered leader when adequate funds are readily available for the transition of the rostered leader. Congregations will provide for moving expenses of arriving rostered leaders. The rostered leaders should obtain multiple bids from professional movers to submit to the Congregation Council. Alternatives may be mutually negotiated.

IV. WEEKLY, ANNUAL AND SABBATICAL TIME COMPENSATION

A. SABBATH DAY (Recommended: 40 to 45 hours per week; at least one full day off)

1. Weekly Rhythm of Work and Rest

Full-time called rostered leaders of our congregations must strive for a healthy balance in their lives between their time for God, time for their families and personal life, and their calling to the church. Clearly defined expectations of work and time off are important for both the rostered leader and the congregation. Knowing that some weeks will be more demanding and some less, 40 to 45 hours per week is a fair expectation for both congregation and rostered leader. A Sabbath day each week is God's command and, even more importantly, God's gift.

Since church work requires a great deal of evening and weekend involvement, one way to reasonably set expectations with the rostered leader is to think in terms of blocks of time. Each day can be considered to have three blocks of time—morning, afternoon, and evening. A seven day week consists of 21 time blocks. A reasonable expectation of full-time service might be 13-14 time blocks. Weekly time off to provide a normal opportunity for renewal, refreshment, and personal business would usually involve 7-8 time blocks per week.

Arrangements should be flexible for both the rostered leader and the congregation, but should also provide for emergency pastoral care when the rostered leader is unavailable.

2. Encourage Rest as Well as Work

Congregations should be sure to support their rostered leader taking at least one full day off each week. The specific regular day off each week should be announced and communicated so all understand this. Flexibility is necessary, but a definite pattern makes for better health and attitude for all concerned.

B. VACATION TIME (Recommended: 4 weeks; 11+ years of experience: 5 weeks)

1. Vacation

Rostered leaders will receive four weeks including Sundays until the eleventh year of experience when vacation time will be increased to five weeks including five Sundays. Vacation time may not be carried over from one year to another, unless so stated in the Letter of Call or by specific agreement with the congregation. Rostered leaders in part-time calls should receive the same weeks of paid vacation, but at their usual part-time salary.⁷

2. Additional Personal Sundays

Some congregations choose to grant one or more Sundays or weekends to their rostered leader as personal time beyond the vacation agreement.

3. Encourage Annual Rest

The congregation's strong support of the vacation time of the rostered leader is very helpful. Remember that most rostered leaders do not get weekends off like many others in our society. Therefore, vacation time becomes more important due to of the "on-call" nature of the rostered leader's work as well as the limited, and often disrupted, day-off pattern, and the constant weekend duty. Congregations are encouraged to make sure their rostered staff takes full advantage of vacation.

4. Holidays

Congregations should provide appropriate time off for general holidays. If the actual day cannot be taken another day off should be granted.

C. CONTINUING EDUCATION TIME (Recommended: two weeks)

Two weeks for continuing education is standard. An absolute minimum is one week.⁸ See III.B on page 9.

D. SABBATICALS/RENEWAL LEAVE⁹ (Recommended)

1. Rationale

To encourage the congregational health that comes with longer tenured leaders, congregations should grant a sabbatical leave for rostered leaders after at least every seven years of service, with a minimum length of three months in the seventh year.

2. Funding Sabbaticals

Accumulated funds for a sabbatical for the rostered leader should be reserved in the congregational treasury as funds restricted for that purpose.

^{7,8} See Appendix H for Pulpit Supply standards and information.

⁹ See Appendix G for the synod's Model Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Agreement.

Guidance for 2026 Synod Compensation Guidelines

Health Benefits Coverage

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health benefits that also include dental and prescription drugs, as well as retirement, disability, and survivor benefits in one bundled program.* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. Our bundled approach is designed to help ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, congregations** in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner.

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying all or a significant portion of the contributions for benefits (i.e., monthly premiums for the health plan). Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing their health benefits through out-of-pocket costs when they receive care (e.g., deductibles, copays, and coinsurance).

The ELCA Church Council endorses a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members; the cost-sharing is reflected in all the ELCA-Primary health benefit options offered by Portico, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs and then make their selection during Portico's annual enrollment. Current contribution rates are available at EmployerLink.PorticoBenefits.org or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer, or if they qualify for a subsidy due to income level when purchasing health coverage through the exchange.

**“Congregations” may also refer to multi-point parishes or other non-parish ministry agencies such as Bible camps, long-term care facilities, hospitals, campus ministries, etc.

Compensation and Benefits for Program and Support Staff

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I. COMPENSATION

A. SALARY OR WAGES

1. Explore Local Comparable Salary and Wages

With the wide variety of economic conditions within the communities of this synod it is very difficult to provide standards for lay program and support staff personnel. Staff support committees are encouraged to find locally comparable positions. Also consider the cost of living in the community and strive for a wage that will attract and keep the employee, be commensurate with the area market, and provide just compensation. One way to determine this is to utilize a local job service in the area.

A parish personnel committee or the Congregation Council should review wages and job descriptions annually with the staff person participating. Salary changes should include a cost-of-living adjustment and merit increases.

Congregations hiring support staff are advised that persons with special needs and gifts are available in most communities to contribute their skills in meaningful employment. Federal and state programs may be available to assist with compensation.

2. Additional Factors

Compensation should be increased for two-year technical or associate degrees and advanced bachelor's or master's degree.

3. Ongoing Considerations

- a) **Cost of living** is not an adequate adjustment when used alone. Each year also brings with it an additional year of experience. Using only cost of living adjustments year after year ignores the accumulating experience level and results in the staff person gradually slipping below standards.
- b) **Review of performance** and changes in levels of responsibility should also be considered annually and may warrant additional salary consideration (see Appendix E).

4. Lay Program Staff¹⁰

Lay professionals are those who usually have a degree, specialized training, or certifications as Parish Worker, Youth Director, Parish Education Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Executive Assistant, etc. Their salaries do not include a housing allowance or parsonage and lay program staff with a bachelor degree is 20% less than those with a master degree. The following graph are the minimum standards for non-rostered program staff with a master degree in their field of work, who work full time (40-45 hours per week).

Experience	2026 Lay Staff			Experience	2026 Lay Staff	
0	\$38,292			13	\$49,725	
1	\$39,131			14	\$50,681	
2	\$39,988			15	\$51,659	
3	\$40,864			16	\$52,394	
4	\$41,756			17	\$53,135	
5	\$42,671			18	\$53,892	
6	\$43,496			19	\$54,657	
7	\$44,336			20	\$55,431	
8	\$45,193			21	\$56,219	
9	\$46,067			22	\$57,014	
10	\$46,954			23	\$57,825	
11	\$47,862			24	\$58,642	
12	\$48,784			25	\$59,462	

5. Organist/Church Musician

Church musicians/organists faithfully commit their time on Sunday mornings in addition to hours of preparation and practice. The following are suggested Standards to begin the conversation with your church musician for fair compensation taking into consideration the actual responsibilities expected of your church musician (leading hymns only, choir accompaniment, choir rehearsal, picking hymns, etc.), number of services, education level and years of experience. The suggested range for a worship service is \$30 to \$115.

6. Support Staff

The support staff provides necessary services to allow ministry to proceed effectively. The support staff has major responsibilities in public relations. The ministry of the congregation is greatly enhanced by the ability of its staff to deal with people. Support staff includes secretary, custodian, treasurer, financial secretary, etc.

II. BENEFITS

A. SOCIAL SECURITY, WORKER'S COMPENSATION

1. Social Security Withholding

By law, congregations are required to pay half of the Social Security taxes (7.65% of taxable income) and to file federal tax W2 forms for all lay employees.

2. Worker's Compensation

All congregations should provide worker's compensation coverage since definite liability accrues to the congregation in case of accidental death or disability in conjunction with one's employment.

B. MEDICAL, DENTAL AND ELCA RETIREMENT PLAN BENEFITS

1. Medical Benefits

Church staff workers who are employed for 20 or more hours per week for six or more months of the year are eligible to be included in the ELCA Retirement Plan and Other Benefits Program.

Health Benefits Coverage

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health, dental, prescription drug, retirement, disability, and group life insurance benefits in one bundled program.* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. A bundled approach helps ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, congregations** in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner. For more information, see the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits at PorticoBenefits.org/philosophy.

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying all or a significant portion of the contributions for benefits. Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing the benefits (e.g., deductibles, coinsurance, and copays).

The ELCA Church Council has approved a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members. Portico offers a choice of ELCA-Primary health benefit options that fit this approved balance. Each fall, congregations in this synod should select one of these approved options to offer their sponsored plan members for the following year. During annual enrollment, Portico will notify congregations which options fit within the range that the ELCA Church Council has approved. Congregations should engage in conversation with their rostered minister to determine the option that best fits their needs. Current contribution rates are available on at EmployerLink/PorticoBenefits.org or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer.

**"Congregations" may also refer to multi-point parishes or other non-parish ministry agencies such as Bible camps, long-term care facilities, hospitals, campus ministries, etc.

2. Medical Flexible Spending Plan

A 2008 change in the Portico Benefit Services health plan includes an optional flexible spending account (pre-tax dollars) administered by the Portico Benefit Services in conjunction with Blue Cross-Blue Shield. Eligible health FSA out of pocket expenses include medical, dental, prescription, eye, and mental health. Dependent care FSA is available and would include day care for children or care for adult dependent care. For specific information about qualifications, enrollment etc, visit Portico Benefit Services website at www.porticobenefits.org or call 800-352-2876. Alternatively, a congregation may provide a supplemental plan, or a medical/dental reimbursement arrangement, or an FSA. The amounts received by a plan member under an alternative arrangement may or may not be taxable as compensation, depending on the arrangement.

3. Pension Option

A tax sheltered annuity can be offered in lieu of the ELCA Retirement Plan should that be more valuable to the lay worker.

C. PAID LEAVES

1. Sick Leave

In the event of accident or illness, a congregation's written policy should include one day of paid sick leave per calendar month, cumulative to 30 days.

2. Family Leave¹¹

Family leave is intended for birth, adoption, placement, call to guardianship of a child; or caring for a sick child. When a staff person is welcoming a child into their family, congregations should make a plan for family leave that includes twelve weeks for both women and men for the purpose of integrating the child into the family. When a staff person is dealing with a seriously ill child, congregations should make a plan for family leave that includes up to six weeks. If there are special needs related to caring for a seriously ill child, additional time may be negotiated. Family leave consists of full salary and benefits. Vacation time or sick time may be used in addition to the family leave time. If the sick time used exceeds the one day of paid sick leave per calendar month, cumulative to 30 days, then the sick time used for family leave becomes unpaid. Unused family leave is forfeited.

Another option for extending family leave would be for the support staff to work part-time in the last few weeks of their leave, engaging some of their responsibilities while making provisional arrangements for others. Also, family leave may be split between two different time periods to accommodate childcare in situations where finding newborn care is difficult.

Family Leave is equally applicable to support staff serving part-time.

Should support staff experience a miscarriage or still birth, she/he shall be given appropriate medical and compassion leave.

3. Compassion Leave

Congregations should be prepared to offer compassion leave for a death in the employee's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, brother, sister, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law or legal guardian). While this will vary widely upon circumstances, three to five days (potentially including a Sunday) of paid leave for funeral planning and family time would be a compassionate first step in a difficult time.

¹¹ See Appendix F for Family Leave Agreement.

III. SUPPORT EXPENSES

AUTOMOBILE ALLOWANCE

The most equitable way of reimbursement for congregational business travel when the car is owned by the individual, not the congregation, is to use the mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. For the current rate, type "mileage" into the search bar at www.irs.gov. Under present tax structure, if the congregation does not provide a vehicle, this is the fairest and best way for the individual to be reimbursed.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Lay Program staff should receive a minimum of \$400 for continuing education and one week of continuing education. Continuing education is important to the effectiveness of lay staff workers. Congregations are encouraged to offer both time and funds to staff for continuing education opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY EXPENSES

Congregations will find it beneficial to provide lay workers with funds to purchase books and professional publications as a way of enriching the congregation's ministry.

IV. NON-FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

SABBATH DAY

Weekly Rhythm of Work and Rest

Support staff must strive for a healthy balance in their lives between their time for God, time for their families and personal life, and their calling to the church. While it is unusual for support staff to work more than 40 hours per week, they too need a day of rest. A Sabbath day each week is God's command and, even more importantly, God's gift.

Encourage Rest as Well as Work

Congregations should be sure to encourage their support staff taking at least one full day off each week. Regular posted hours are often helpful; flexibility is necessary, but a definite pattern makes for better health and attitude for all concerned.

VACATION TIME

A minimum of two weeks after one year, three weeks after four years, and four weeks after fifteen years of service should be provided. Sundays are to be included in vacation for those who have constant weekend duty.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education is important to the effectiveness of lay staff workers. Congregations are encouraged to offer both time and funds to lay staff for continuing education opportunities.

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APPENDIX C—FORMS

The ELCA Portico Benefit Services offers an ELCA Retirement Plan fund that can be used for Housing Equity compensation for ordained clergy. They have the forms necessary for the congregation. If the congregation chooses not use this fund, this form is available.

Housing Equity Allowance Agreement

At a properly called meeting of the congregation of _____ Lutheran Church, with a quorum present, held on _____ it was moved, seconded, and voted to establish a housing equity allowance fund for the Rev. _____ with (1) initial contribution of \$ _____ for the year 20____, and (2) with subsequent annual contributions to be determined each year thereafter by vote of the congregation.

The conditions of this agreement are as follows:

1. The annual contribution shall be placed in the _____ (name of fund).
2. The fund shall not be available for use by the congregation or by the pastor except for the purchase of a house by the pastor or the pastor's spouse.
3. The fund shall be paid in full, upon request, to the pastor or survivors in the event of the pastor's disability, retirement, or death.
4. The funds shall be payable to the pastor's estate if there is no surviving spouse.

Signed by an officer of the congregation

Date

Signed by the Pastor

Date

Housing Allowance Designation by Congregation Council

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to designate \$_____ of the cash salary for 20__ to be paid to the Rev. _____ as a housing/furnishings allowance in response to the pastor's request and acknowledgement that the allowance so designated does not exceed the fair rental value of his/her home, furnished, plus the cost of utilities.

Therefore, cash salary shall be \$_____ and the housing allowance shall be \$_____.

Signed by an officer of the congregation

Date

Signed by the Pastor

Date

Pastors: please note:

The amount of housing allowance that can be excluded from taxable income is always the smallest of the following three amounts:

- 1. the amount, officially designated in advance, as "housing allowance," by the pastor's congregation/church organization as housing allowance; or*
- 2. the amount spent for the pastor's primary residence (down payment, mortgage principal and interest, utilities, taxes, insurance, furnishings, maintenance, etc.).*
- 3. the fair rental value of the pastor's home including furnishings and cost of utilities (owned or rented).*

Pastor's Estimate of Housing Expense

This form may be used to help the Pastor determine an estimate of expenses qualifying under the Pastor's housing allowance.

To: (Name of Congregation)

From: (Name of Pastor)

Date:

Re: Housing allowance for year extending from _____, 20 to _____, 20 .

The amounts set forth below are the amounts I expect to spend during the period _____ (as above) to rent or otherwise provide a home for my family and me.

Item:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Rent on leased property or payments on purchase of a home
(including down payment, acquisition costs, mortgage payments of principal) | \$ _____ |
| 2. Garage rental (if not included above) | \$ _____ |
| 3. Utilities
(gas, electricity, water, sewer, oil, telephone, trash removal, firewood, cable TV) | \$ _____ |
| 4. Insurance (homeowner's, fire, extended coverage, liability, contents, flood) | \$ _____ |
| 5. Repairs and maintenance | \$ _____ |
| 6. Furnishings and improvements | \$ _____ |
| 7. Interest | \$ _____ |
| 8. Taxes | \$ _____ |
| 9. Other housing expense | \$ _____ |

TOTAL \$ _____

Signed

Date

Draft Language for Congregation Council Action on Housing Allowance

This wording may be used to officially describe the council's action on a housing allowance.

The _____ Committee advised the Congregation Council that under the tax laws an ordained minister of the Gospel is not subject to Federal Income Tax with respect "to the rental allowance paid as a part of compensation to the extent used to rent or provide a home." Where the pastor owns a home this amount of the allowance will be an amount equal to the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances such as a garage, plus cost of utilities.

The council, after considering the statement of the Rev. _____ setting forth estimates of the amount expect to be spent to rent or otherwise provide a home during the period _____ 20__ to _____ 20__, and in light of the Federal Income Tax law and of the established salary level, on motion duly made and seconded, and adopted the following resolution:

Resolved that the Rev. _____ receive a salary of \$ _____ for the year 20 __, and a housing allowance of \$ _____ for the year, the housing allowance to be so designated in the official records.

Signed by the secretary

Date

Draft Language for Notification of Housing Allowance by Congregation

This may be used to officially notify a Pastor of the approved housing allowance.

Date _____

Dear Rev. _____,

This is to advise you that at a meeting of the Congregation Council held on _____, your housing allowance for the year 20 __ was officially designated and fixed in the amount of \$ _____. Accordingly, \$ _____ of the total compensation payable to you during the year 20 __ will constitute housing allowance and the balance will constitute "salary" (as interpreted by the Income Tax Law).

Signed by the secretary

Date

APPENDIX D—COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT (CoLA HISTORY)

We studied the data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Social Security. For the year 2025, the Cost of Living Adjustment (CoLA) was calculated by Social Security Department to be 2.5%. The pay charts on pages 4, 5, and 20 reflect the 2.5% Cost of Living Adjustment.

The history of the CoLA can be found at: (<http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/SSlamts.html>)

APPENDIX E—MINISTRY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

“Conducting a fair and realistic evaluation of ministry is important for every congregation. A ministry review takes into consideration not only the leadership qualities of the pastor, but also the ministry provided by lay leaders and members of the congregation. This builds a foundation for performance evaluation through prayer, conversation, and team building” *Pastor and People*, 80.

This essential work does not focus on the pastor but how pastor (and other staff) and the congregation together are engaged in the mission of the church. “Healthy, growing congregations today realize that the church exists primarily for the sake of sharing the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ with people who are not yet active in the body of Christ” *Pastor and People*, 82.

In order for this to work, the first step is to develop clear goals which guide the direction of ministry within the congregation. Then review and evaluation become a mutual conversation between pastor and people about progress toward fulfilling the congregation’s goals. In addition to reflecting back on the previous year’s work, it is important to look ahead to where God is leading the congregation next.

Three tools are included here to help congregations enter into this process of developing ministry goals, reviewing the ministry goals of the past year, and evaluating performance. Again, the focus is on the shared ministry of pastor and people for the sake of mission in God’s world. The success or failure of congregations is measured by our communal, faithful response to the grace of God in our lives. How are we doing? Let’s reflect, evaluate, and plan to make Christ known.

For other helpful tools, purchase *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* from Augsburg Fortress or borrow it from the Synod Resource Center.

Developing Ministry Goals

1. As a group, consider these questions:
 - Are there goals from last year that need to be continued?
 - Are there current ministries that are effective, but need to be strengthened?
 - Is our outreach to the community as strong as it should be?
 - In what specific ways could we strengthen our witness to Christ by interacting with unchurched people in our area?
 - In what specific ways could we increase our support of the people who are already a part of our congregation?
 - Are we fully utilizing our gifts to support God’s people throughout the world?
2. Individually, before the next meeting, list up to four goals you believe will strengthen the congregation’s ministry during the coming year.
3. At the next meeting, work with your group to develop a set of realistic ministry goals. Once the goals have been agreed upon, go back to each one and decide how the pastor, staff, and laity will be expected to contribute to carrying out that particular ministry goal.

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Reviewing Ministry Goals and Achievements

On an annual basis, review the ministry goals established last year (or the priorities outlined on the pastor's Letter of Call—both general and specific) and discuss how the pastor, staff, and laity have contributed toward the meeting of each goal.

Provide each person participating in the evaluation process with a list of the ministry goals and a copy of this worksheet for each goal.

1. A ministry goal for this year was

2. I have attempted to carry out this goal by

3. I have seen the pastor, staff, or other members of the congregation carry out this goal by

4. Select the statement that best describes your current thoughts about this ministry goal:
☐ We have completed this goal.
☐ This goal needs more time and work.
☐ This goal is no longer necessary.
☐ This goal turned out to be unrealistic.

5. Additional comments you would like to make concerning this goal:

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Performance Evaluation

Use this tool to enable conversation about the ministry of pastor and people over the last year. Discuss the four basic ministry areas and the overall ratings and record what is well done, adequate, needs improvement, and/or items for further conversation.

1. Understanding of ministry	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
<p>Pastor demonstrates a clear understanding of responsibilities in this area (ELCA Model Constitution C9.03):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preaching • administering the sacraments 				
<p>Council members demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area (ELCA Model Constitution C12.04):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stating the congregation's mission, conducting long-range planning, and evaluating the council's activities • maintaining supportive relationships with the pastor and staff and assisting in annual evaluation of their ministries modeling a faithful lifestyle 				
<p>The climate or culture of the congregation encourages members to use their gifts for ministry in the congregation and community.</p>				

2. Caring for the needs of the congregation	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
Pastor demonstrates a clear understanding of responsibilities in this area (C9.03 and C9.12):				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting worship 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing pastoral care 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering instruction and services for confirmation and marriage, visiting the sick, and conducting funerals 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervising the congregation's schools and organizations 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • installing council members 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administering discipline with the council 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping accurate records on baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials, communicants, and membership 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submitting statistics to the synod annually 				

1. Caring for the needs of the congregation	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
<p>Council members demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area (C12.04):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking to involve all members of the congregation in congregational life • overseeing the administration of the congregation • arranging for pastoral services in the pastor's absence • handling the congregation's financial and property matters • preparing an annual budget 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that provisions of the constitution are carried out • submitting a comprehensive report at the annual meeting 				
<p>The climate or culture of the congregation encourages members to assume responsibilities and leadership roles and follow through on their commitments.</p>				

2. Taking Christ's mission into the world	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
<p>Pastor demonstrates a clear understanding of responsibilities in this area (C9.03):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaking for poor and oppressed people, calling for justice, and proclaiming God's love for the world • promoting the Kingdom of God • encouraging qualified individuals to consider ordained ministry • distributing information about the ELCA and its ministry • encouraging the congregation to support the synod and churchwide organization 				
<p>Council members demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area (C12.04):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging partnership with the synod and ELCA and the use of ELCA resources • inviting qualified individuals to consider ordained ministry 				

3. Taking Christ's mission into the world	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
<p>Members of the congregation are willing to actively invite others to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • worship and other ministry opportunities • serve non-members in the name of Christ • carry out the work of Jesus Christ in the world today 				

4. Mutual ministry	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
<p>Pastor demonstrates a clear understanding of responsibilities in this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervising staff members • communicating well with the council • caring for our mutual life together in ways that create a positive climate 				

4. Mutual ministry	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
Council members demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area:				
• communicating well with the pastor				
• caring for our mutual life together in ways that create a positive climate				
The climate or culture of the congregation encourages members to care for one another and for our mutual life together in ways that create a positive climate				

5. Overall ratings	Well done	Adequate	Needs improvement	For further conversation
Overall, the pastor is functioning effectively.				
Overall, the congregation council is functioning effectively.				
Overall, our congregation is functioning effectively.				

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APPENDIXF—FAMILY LEAVE AGREEMENT

“But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”

—Luther’s Works 45:46

Introduction

The birth, adoption, placement, or call to guardianship of a child is usually a cause for celebration but always a cause of substantial changes in the normal routine of life.

Birth is unpredictable and can bring about health concerns for a mother or child(ren). While an adoption, placement, or call to guardianship may not present the same health stressors, it can present greater emotional and psychological needs in the family.

Either way, time for the family to begin its life together is essential, especially in a time-consuming calling such as ministry in the church. Both primary caregivers and other dependents need time to adjust and bond, regardless of the means by which a new child or children enter the family.

Background

The National Partnership on Women and Families reports that “parental leave allows new parents time to care for their children--giving them the best chance at a healthy start on life.”¹

Our ELCA Social Statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* notes:

...we cannot be healthy by ourselves. We help each other attain good health through our ways of living together and through supporting those who provide all forms of health care services and healing. *Health care, therefore, must be a shared endeavor.*² (Emphasis added)

¹ National Partnership on Women and Families, “Fact Sheet: Children Benefit when Parents Have Access to Paid Leave,” March 2015, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/children-benefit-when-parents.pdf> (accessed September 13, 2018).

² The Department for Studies, Division for Church in Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*, (Chicago, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, November 2003), 3. http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf?_ga=2.206376851.1000188151.1536877290-245926210.1533143196 (Accessed September 13, 2018).

God creates human beings as whole persons—each one a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Health concerns the proper functioning and well-being of the whole person. A Christian perspective on health, therefore, shares the concern of the apostle Paul that “our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This understanding of human wholeness means that concern for health should attend to the physical, mental, spiritual, and communal dimensions of a person’s entire well-being. Health is good for its own sake; it also is good for living abundantly in relationship with God and in loving service to our neighbor in the vocations to which God has called us.

Because human beings are mortal, suffering and death are a part of life. Perfect health eludes us. Although health depends in part on individual behavior, it is also to a significant degree beyond individual control. Many factors contribute to health or its absence: genetics, physical and social environments, individual behaviors, and access to care.

The draft ELCA Social Statement *Women and Justice: One in Christ* notes:

Society's economic and social structures should provide generously for parents' needs in order to support [arrangements that balance personal strengths and interests with both the needs of work and income and the need to care for children and others in the extended family or household]. This includes, for example, parental leave for parents who do not give birth, as well as adequate leave for parents who do give birth. It is critical in U.S. society that we find ways to increase paid parental leave for the care of family members and increased support for child care. Additionally, parents returning to work after raising children need profession-specific attention for support and advancement."³

Context of Ministry⁴

- Studies have shown a changing family benefits from the love, care, and bonding time from one family member to another. Studies also show that inadequate family leave can damage a person's ability to perform in the work environment due to lack of time to find a family and work balance.^{5,6,7}
- In the church's ministry to children, and in the covenant act of dedicating a child to the life of the church, the Body of Christ pledges to take an active role in raising the child in faith and community. This ministry begins in the act of fully supporting primary caregivers to be an active presence in a child's life.
- Pastors are called to model a healthy, balanced life of compassion, as well as the importance of Sabbath and rest as called forth by the covenants of God in Creation and the 10 Commandments.
- Clergy care is part of the biblical calling of hospitality for all people. Hospitality is emphasized in stories of those who wandered in the wilderness to those who welcomed the missionary Paul into their homes.
- The needs and demands of ministry create a unique and challenging calling, replete with shifting demands, unpredictable schedules, and the emotional burden of compassion and care part and parcel to the office. A well-rested, healthy pastor and family reflects respect both of people and gifts, and likewise means a better served congregation.
- By granting just, compassionate, and generous family leave, the Body of Christ creates stronger and more supportive relationships and longer and stronger ministries.

Because of our sinful nature, we often turn in on ourselves and away from God and neighbor. We frequently become unfaithful stewards of our health, tending at times to disregard it and at other times to idolize it. Sin also corrupts our social systems and relationships in ways that directly and indirectly threaten health. We see sin at work in the environmental damage, poverty, social isolation, discrimination, oppression, and violence that degrade health and the relationships necessary to support it.

When we understand health in this larger context, we realize that we cannot be healthy by ourselves. We help each other attain good health through our ways of living together and through supporting those who provide all forms of health care services and healing. Health care, therefore, must be a shared endeavor.

³ ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice, (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2017), 48.

⁴ Adapted from Resolution: Parental Leave Act: (Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption Policies) Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Olivia Bryan Updegrave and the First Christian Church of Orange Leadership Board.

⁵ Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Paid Parental Leave in the United States," March 2014, 7-9, 13-15, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/B334-Paid%20Parental%20Leave%20in%20the%20United%20States.pdf> (accessed September 14, 2018)

⁶ Pinka Chatterji and Sara Markowitz, "Family Leave After Childbirth and the Mental Health of New Mothers," *The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*, 15, 61-76 (2012), http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2015/images/10/28/15-061_text.pdf (Accessed September 14, 2018)

⁷ United States Department of Labor, "DOL POLICY BRIEF Paternity Leave: Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families," June 2016, <https://www.dol.gov/asp/policy-development/PaternityBrief.pdf> (Accessed September 13, 2018)

The following is a model for Family Leave. Congregations and pastors are encouraged to use this as a guide to develop a leave agreement that best meets the needs of both the congregation and the pastor(s). Central to the model is the need for real rest and renewal and time for the new formation of family to bond, while at the same time ensuring that the essential ministries of the congregation continue.

The model below assumes a solo pastor. Adapt as appropriate for multiple ordained staff situations, rostered ministers, or lay staff. *Synod staff will also meet with rostered minister and congregation council to help with negotiating a leave agreement.*

Family Leave Plan for [Rostered Minister Full Name] & [Church Name]

Child due/arrival date: _____

Family leave is intended for birth, adoption, placement, or call to guardianship of a child. Congregations should make a plan for family leave that includes **twelve weeks for both women and men** for the purpose of integrating the child into the family. Family leave consists of full salary, housing, and benefits. Vacation time or sick time may be used in addition to the family leave time. If the sick time used exceeds the one day of paid sick leave per calendar month, cumulative to 30 days, then the sick time used for family leave becomes unpaid. Unused parental leave is forfeited.

Another option for extending family leave would be for the rostered minister to work part-time in the last few weeks of his/her leave, engaging some of their responsibilities while making provisional arrangements for others. Also, family leave may be split between two different time periods to accommodate childcare in situations where finding newborn care is difficult.

Should a rostered minister experience a miscarriage or still birth, she/he shall be given appropriate medical and compassion leave.

Family leave is equally applicable to rostered ministers serving in part-time calls.

- As of [council date to be presented], _____ has taken _____ vacation days and _____ sick days.

Her/His plan is as follows:

- _____ weeks of leave when the child is born or placed.
- _____ weeks of phasing back in/returning at part time, leading worship and being there for emergencies (or list specific duties the leader will be returning for).
- List any weddings, baptisms, or other special events the Rostered Leader commits to doing prior to official return date.
- List date the Rostered Minister expects to return at full time.
- See Timeline at the end of this document for details.

The Family Leave Plan is created to help provide for good ministry both during Family Leave and at the return of the pastor. It is a plan developed to provide for open communication and mutual encouragement for both the congregation and rostered minister. The Family Leave Plan is taken from the model for Family Leave Agreement Appendix F from the 2019 Synod Standards.

The birth, adoption, or placement of a child is always a cause for celebration, and includes changes in the normal routine of life. Birth is also unpredictable and can bring about health concerns for a mother or child. When a birth occurs, parents and child need time together and parents need time to restore health.

The following is a model for Family Leave. Congregations and pastors are encouraged to use this as a guide to develop a leave agreement that best meets the needs of both the congregation and the pastor. Central to the model is the need for real rest and renewal for the parents and child while at the same time ensuring that the essential ministries of the congregation continue.

1. A Family Leave Plan will be created with congregational leadership and the rostered minister, either at the time of the call, at the announcement of pregnancy, anticipated placement date of a child, or at the earliest date thereafter.

The congregation and rostered minister are encouraged to work together to ensure that the needs of both are met in a spirit of Christian care and concern. The congregation and rostered minister will consult with the bishop and will appropriately and openly communicate the Family Leave plan with the members of the congregation.

- **The Family Leave Team includes [list names of members of a specific team if one is established, or council members/executive members].**

2. The beginning of Family Leave will have an estimated date, often times a due date/placement date. The delivery of the baby or placement date is a good guide for the beginning of family leave, remembering that pregnancy is unpredictable. Parents may choose to begin family leave on a due date/placement date, even if the child has not arrived, or they may have health issues that require the use of sick leave prior to delivery. Family Leave will continue for twelve weeks with full salary, housing and benefits as defined in the congregation's mission plan (budget) for the year.

- Due/Arrival Date: _____
- List the date the parent plans to begin leave: _____
- If child arrives before previously listed date, name who is on call to lead worship _____
- List any other special accommodations or coverage plans.

3. The pastor will work with a designated person or group of people to identify pastoral needs during a time of leave. The initial planning may be with a president, the executive committee, a mutual ministry committee, personnel committee, or a "Family Leave Planning Team". The Congregation Council must approve the Family Leave Plan. The plan should include a primary contact person in the congregation with clear instructions for notifying those involved in covering the ministry responsibilities including pulpit supply, funerals, teaching, pastoral care, etc.

- Date this document receives council approval: _____
- **Primary Congregational Contact Person:** _____ (phone: _____) to contact the following:

1) _____, Council President (phone numbers: _____), to contact

a) The Council

b) If on weekend, staff as needed for worship:

- Name of supply pastor: _____, (phone: _____)

- Church musicians: list names and numbers

2) _____, Office Administrator, to contact

a) Contact supply pastor (If before due date, list name of on call pastor:)

b) Contact Music staff (list names)

c) Contact Emergency Pastoral Care Minister, list name and number

d) Contact Funeral Home(s) (as FYI about who is now on call, funeral home

number)

- **Backup Primary Contact will be:** _____ (phone numbers: _____)
who will set into motion the above.

4. The Family Leave Plan should include provision for the planning and leading of weekly worship services, including the designation of who will be proclaiming the gospel, whether there will be adjustments to the communion schedule, and other details pertinent to weekly worship.

- **Worship Schedule** (provide calendar as appendix)

- Rostered Minister On Call – list any dates this person may be unavailable.

- List Supply Pastors and dates they will cover, along with plans for Holy Communion on dates they supply.

- List any additional weekly worship and coverage plan (i.e. Wednesday/Saturday evenings). Keep in mind coverage can also include plans for lay coverage/preaching.

5. The Family Leave Plan should include instructions for providing pastoral care in homes, during hospitalization, and in other times of emergency or crisis. Congregational members are encouraged to provide home visits to shut-ins. Hospitals generally have chaplaincy programs to assist families during a hospitalization or an emergency. Arrangements may be made with another pastor to cover other crisis situations.
 - **Emergency Pastoral Care/Funerals** – List name and congregation of supply pastor
 - phone:
 - email:
 - **Backup Emergency Pastoral Care (if you have one):** List name and congregation of supply pastor
 - Phone:
 - email:
 - List who will cover hospital visits. Consider making a plan for who will conduct hospital visits in various regions/at specific hospitals as this applies to your setting i.e.: **Hospital Visits in Chippewa or Eau Claire:**
 - List name and congregation of supply pastor:
 - Phone:
 - email:
 - **Hospital Visits in Stanley:** List name and congregation of supply and contact info
 - **Hospital Visits in Marshfield:** List name and congregation of supply and contact info
 - **Regular Shut-in Communion Visits** – list the names of lay members who will comprise a pastoral care team. Make sure this team is trained with rostered minister prior to their leave.
6. The Family Leave Plan should include instructions for coverage of funerals and weddings both during the planned leave and unexpected early needs. Please remember that Rostered Ministers do care about families at the time of death, and although it may be difficult for both the Rostered Minister and congregation all must remember that God will provide for support and care even if a pastor is not able to lead the funeral service.
 - The following to be shared with _____ funeral home:
 - **Emergency Pastoral Care/Funerals** – List name and congregation of supply pastor
 - phone:
 - email:
 - **Backup Emergency Pastoral Care (if you have one):** List name and congregation of supply pastor
 - Phone:
 - email:
 - List any back-up plans for any already scheduled weddings the Rostered Minister may miss on account of unexpected early arrival of child.
7. The Congregation Council and those designated in the Family Leave Plan will take the lead in providing guidance to the ministries of the congregation, recognizing that the ministry which takes place in the congregation is ultimately the responsibility of the people of God gathered in this place and at this time.
 - **List any important plans for any regular ministry activities such as Confirmation, youth group, adult studies, summer trips, etc.**
8. General administrative duties will be overseen by the congregation's Executive Committee or Congregation Council.
9. Records of emergencies, visits, funerals, marriages and congregational activities will be kept and made available to the Rostered Minister for clear communication and continuity of ministry.
 - **Records will be maintained** by _____ in the office will notify [Rostered Minister's name] of these happenings via [email/phone preference].
10. As the gift of a new child is celebrated, the Rostered Minister understands the need of the congregation to celebrate that gift with the Rostered Minister and family.
 - List any specific plans for how this will take shape, making sure to emphasize any specific boundaries. i.e. _____ will send pictures for sharing with the congregation after the arrival, but

does not plan to attend worship services for the duration of family leave. OR _____
welcomes/prefers not to receive phone calls and visits, etc.

11. During the Family Leave, the congregation's members will keep the minister/staff and her/his family in their prayers.

For Council Approval

_____ and _____ will be the primary coverage for Sunday worship with lay leaders filling in for Wednesdays. Pay for both pastors will be _____ (Synod Standards for Sunday worship are recommended: \$125 for one worship service and mileage to/from the church.)

Reimbursement for mileage should always be considered as part of pay.

Funerals and Emergencies will be covered by _____ and _____. Funerals will be paid at _____ (Recommended Sunday worship rate for one service, \$125) in addition to the honorarium offered by the family. Additional time of a visitation service, or pastoral care provided to the family will be paid at: _____ (per context) per hour. Pastoral visits, hospital calls, counseling meetings, emergencies, etc., including appropriate travel time will be paid at _____ (per context) per hour.

A statement of services provided by the pastors will be submitted to _____ for payment. (attach a form)

* "Council Person on Call:" For the worship dates below, a council person is needed to be on hand to: [list any specific duties for your congregation]

Timeline – due date/arrival date: _____

Date

Council Person on Call

(_____ on backup weekly)

List all worship dates

List Council Member

Congregations may find it helpful to include the basics of the Family Leave Plan in their monthly publication and/or as a bulletin insert prior to Family leave on a Sunday where a council member or otherwise designated lay person might share the plan publicly to help with communication of the plan. Below is an example:

Q & A about [Rostered Minister's/lay staff] Family Leave

Q: How long will [Rostered Minister/lay staff] be on leave?

A:

Q: While she/he is away, whom can we turn to with day-to-day church business concerns?

A:

Q: Who will lead worship?

A:

Q: What if there is a hospital emergency, and my family requires pastoral care?

A: All local hospitals have chaplains on call 24/7. In addition, the following pastors are available to contact and make visits:

Always feel free to contact the church office first, and _____ can help contact the above pastors if needed.

Q: What if there is a funeral?

A: Please know that while [Rostered Minister/lay staff] is away, she/he still holds the parish in her/his concern.

Pastor _____ will be available to provide for funeral services during the Family Leave.

Q: How can we best support [Rostered Minister/lay staff and spouse/partner] while she/he is away?

A:

i National Partnership on Women and Families, "Fact Sheet: Children Benefit when Parents Have Access to Paid Leave," March 2015, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/children-benefit-when-parents.pdf> (accessed September 13, 2018).

ii The Department for Studies, Division for Church in Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor, (Chicago, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, November 2003), 3. http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/HealthSS.pdf?_ga=2.206376851.1000188151.1536877290-245926210.1533143196 (Accessed September 13, 2018).

God creates human beings as whole persons—each one a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Health concerns the proper functioning and well-being of the whole person. A Christian perspective on health, therefore, shares the concern of the apostle Paul that "our spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This understanding of human wholeness means that concern for health should attend to the physical, mental, spiritual, and communal dimensions of a person's entire well-being. Health is good for its own sake; it also is good for living abundantly in relationship with God and in loving service to our neighbor in the vocations to which God has called us.

Because human beings are mortal, suffering and death are a part of life. Perfect health eludes us. Although health depends in part on individual behavior, it is also to a significant degree beyond individual control. Many factors contribute to health or its absence: genetics, physical and social environments, individual behaviors, and access to care.

Because of our sinful nature, we often turn in on ourselves and away from God and neighbor. We frequently become unfaithful stewards of our health, tending at times to disregard it and at other times to idolize it. Sin also corrupts our social systems and relationships in ways that directly and indirectly threaten health. We see sin at work in the environmental damage, poverty, social isolation, discrimination, oppression, and violence that degrade health and the relationships necessary to support it.

When we understand health in this larger context, we realize that we cannot be healthy by ourselves. We help each other attain good health through our ways of living together and through supporting those who provide all forms of health care services and healing. Health care, therefore, must be a shared endeavor.

iii ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice, (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2017), 48.

iv Adapted from Resolution: Parental Leave Act: (Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption Policies) Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Olivia Bryan Updegrove and the First Christian Church of Orange Leadership Board.

v Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Paid Parental Leave in the United States," March 2014, 7-9, 13-15, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/B334-Paid%20Parental%20Leave%20in%20the%20United%20States.pdf> (accessed September 14, 2018)

vi Pinka Chatterji and Sara Markowitz, "Family Leave After Childbirth and the Mental Health of New Mothers," *The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*, 15, 61-76 (2012), http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2015/images/10/28/15-061_text.pdf (Accessed September 14, 2018)

vii United States Department of Labor, "DOL POLICY BRIEF Paternity Leave: Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families," June 2016, <https://www.dol.gov/asp/policy-development/PaternityBrief.pdf> (Accessed September 13, 2018)

APPENDIX G—MODEL SABBATICAL/RENEWAL LEAVE AGREEMENT

The model below assumes a solo pastor. Adapt as appropriate for multiple ordained staff situations, rostered leaders, or lay program staff.

Congregations of the ELCA have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to pastors for continuing education. From time to time, however, pastors need an extended Sabbath rest from the demands of daily ministry for spiritual renewal. This is sabbatical/renewal leave.

The Scripture points to the renewing power of Sabbath time. We usually think of Sabbath as the seventh day of creation when God finished creating and rested. More than an afterthought of creation, the Sabbath is a gift from God of rest, renewal, and hope. The first books of Scripture speak of Sabbath days and years. Even the land was given a Sabbath when it was left to lie fallow and replenish itself.

Sabbaticals allow for possible new directions. Jesus' forty days in the wilderness marked a turning point in his ministry. Moses' time spent tending sheep helped change his perspective on life. David tended sheep too, and learned valuable lessons about God's care and provision. Paul struck down on the Damascus Road, disappeared into the desert of Arabia for three years and emerged with new vision.

In addition to Scripture, experience has shown that the congregation's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal. Long-term ministry is revitalized and stimulated. All parties benefit.

"A sabbatical offers opportunity to get off the treadmill and provides an opportunity for renewal of vision and hope. It's more than just a chance to recharge your batteries for another year. It can be a life and soul-changing time, a time when perspective and the Holy Spirit can come together." (Alban Institute)

PURPOSE

A sabbatical/renewal leave is granted to provide an opportunity for pastors to take an extended period of time for renewal, spiritual growth, skill development, research, exploration, enrichment, study, and/or travel.

Think about what a pastor does every day: sermon preparation, bible study preparation, counseling, visiting the hospitalized and homebound, crisis management, parish administration, teaching confirmation, teaching adults, funerals, weddings, baptisms, stewardship drives, fund raising, denominational activities, and recruitment of people for tasks such as property maintenance, Sunday school, altar guild, committees, council, and more. And we want pastors to be healthy in body, mind and spirit, have a strong, healthy marriage, be a good parent and so on. But one thing is more important still—maintaining a right relationship with God for the benefit of the ministry the pastor leads with a congregation. The health of a congregation is directly connected to the health of its pastoral leaders.

A sabbatical, or Sabbath rest, for pastors is fundamentally different from the concept of sabbatical in the academic or business world. In the latter, those periods of time away from daily responsibilities are usually directed toward developing new courses, doing research, finishing advance degrees or achieving some definable success. A sabbatical for a pastor is dedicated to time with God so that the pastor may be refreshed by the Spirit and grow in love for God, God's church and God's people. When that time is granted, the pastor will bring back fruits to the congregation that wouldn't necessarily have been available without the sabbatical.

DURATION

A sabbatical is typically three months in length (including the two weeks of continuing education granted each year), and may be taken after every sixth full year of service in a call. Vacation should not be included as sabbatical time.

A SABBATICAL MAY INCLUDE:

A pastor is, above all, an authentic spiritual leader who carries out numerous roles and tasks for a congregation. However, underlying all of them is their role as spiritual leader. Therefore a sabbatical should include: time of reflection to sense God's voice and guidance, rekindling the spirit and the sense of calling by God, reconnecting more deeply with the tradition (Scripture, theology, liturgy), and deepening one's own spiritual life. A suggested guideline is a period of total rest and relaxation, a period of personal study for the purpose of renewal and for the sake of learning, and a period of study that will directly benefit the congregation.

BENEFITS FOR THE CONGREGATION

A sabbatical can be a great time to develop lay leadership within the congregation using the gifts God has provided to those in the Body of Christ and not just the pastor. A well-planned sabbatical can be a great occasion for re-visioning, re-invigorating, and recommitting lay leadership. For this very reason, it may be desirable not to seek an interim pastor, except for emergencies. This can give the congregation and especially its leadership a much clearer picture of what actually happens in the congregation and what the pastor does.

A sabbatical leave may be a time for the whole congregation to get into the "sabbath" mood—a distinctively counter-cultural stance of letting go and letting God, and rethinking the "busyness" of congregational, family, and individual life.

The congregation will benefit from a refreshed, re-energized pastoral leader. The congregation will reap the fruits of the pastor's renewed spirit as well as insights from study and reflection.

COST TO THE CONGREGATION

1. The congregation will continue to pay regular salary and benefits (base salary, Social Security allowance, housing allowance/parsonage, ELCA Retirement Account, and insurance coverage). Car allowance and other reimbursements for ministry expenses are normally not paid during sabbatical time.
2. Up to three years of accrued continuing education dollars can be used for educational costs of the sabbatical.
3. The congregation will need to provide for their ministry needs during the sabbatical time. The Congregation Council in cooperation with the synod office and the pastor will need to determine if pastoral coverage is needed. This can range from some level of part-time pastoral care or pulpit supply for worship leadership to full-time interim ministry. Another pastor can be contracted for certain responsibilities, other staff may adjust responsibilities, and/or neighboring clergy may agree to cover certain responsibilities.
4. Prior to the time of a sabbatical leave, a congregation should establish a savings plan to be used to cover congregational expenses.
5. The congregation is not obligated to fund the sabbatical in any other way.

PLANNING

The planning for how the sabbatical time will be used is up to the pastor in consultation with the synod office and the local congregation. This “three way” partnership is very important. Neither the pastor nor the Congregation Council should make plans independent of this partnership. Be intentional in planning, but allow enough freedom for the movement of the Spirit.

A 7 year sabbatical/renewal leave plan could look like this:

1. Year 1: begin saving for the congregational expenses of the sabbatical/renewal leave.
2. Year 2: begin educating the congregation about the need for and benefits of sabbatical/renewal leave.
3. Year 3: explore spiritual gifts with all members of the congregation in anticipation of shared ministry during the sabbatical/renewal leave.
4. Year 4: identify areas of ministry that members can take on and determine the need for pastoral coverage during sabbatical/renewal leave.
5. Year 5: plan how congregational members will engage in ministry responsibilities during sabbatical/renewal leave.
6. Year 6: prepare lay people to engage in ministry responsibilities and determine the content of the sabbatical/renewal leave.
7. Year 7: send the pastor off for sabbatical/renewal leave and welcome the pastor back after three months.

COMMITMENTS FOLLOWING THE SABBATICAL

1. The pastor submits a report of the sabbatical/renewal leave and shares with congregational members their experience, reactions, learnings, insights, etc.
2. The pastor is normally expected to remain in the parish at least one year following a sabbatical/renewal leave.

CHECKLIST:

Congregations are encouraged to use this checklist as a framework for planning ministry coverage during a pastor’s sabbatical leave.

1. Mutual Ministry Committee or Congregation Council encourages the pastor to consider a sabbatical/renewal leave.
2. Pastor determines interest and how they might use the three months.
3. A sabbatical/renewal leave plan will be created with congregational leadership and the pastor to ensure that the needs of both are met in a spirit of Christian care and concern. The congregation and pastor will consult with the synod office and will communicate the Sabbatical Leave plan with the members of the congregation.
4. Congregation Council contacts the synod office for partnership in the sabbatical plans, and, if needed, aid in finding an interim minister.
5. The pastor will work with a designated group of people to identify pastoral needs and coverage during the sabbatical/renewal leave. The initial planning may be with the executive committee, a mutual ministry committee, personnel committee, or a “Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Planning Team”. The Congregation Council must approve the Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan. The plan should include a

primary contact person in the congregation with clear instructions for those involved in doing ministry, including: pulpit supply, funerals, teaching, pastoral care, etc.

6. The Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan should include provision for the planning and leading of weekly worship services, including the designation of who will be proclaiming the gospel, whether there will be adjustments to the communion schedule, and other details pertinent to weekly worship.
7. The Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan should include instructions for providing pastoral care in homes, during hospitalization, and in other times of emergency or crisis. Congregational members are encouraged to provide home visits to shut-ins. Hospitals generally have chaplaincy programs to assist families during a hospitalization or an emergency. Arrangements may be made with another pastor to cover other crisis situations.
8. The Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan should include instructions for coverage of funerals and weddings during the planned leave. Please remember that pastors do care about families at the time of death, and although it may be difficult for both the pastor and congregation all must remember that God will provide for support and care even if a pastor is not able to lead the funeral service. Neighboring clergy may agree to “be on call” to cover these responsibilities.
9. The Congregation Council and those designated in the Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan will take the lead in providing guidance to the ministries of the congregation, recognizing that the ministry which takes place in the congregation is ultimately the responsibility of the people of God gathered in this place and at this time. Among other things, the Sabbatical/Renewal Leave Plan should include details for confirmation ministry, bible studies and any other pastoral responsibilities.
10. General administrative duties will be overseen by the congregation’s Executive Committee or Congregation Council.
11. Records of emergencies, visits, funerals, marriages and congregational activities will be kept and made available to the pastor for clear communication and continuity of ministry.
12. The Sabbatical Planning Team in consultation with the Congregation Council should determine if an interim pastor is needed. If so, how much time will the interim need to work? Will it be full time? Part time? Will regular office hours need to be kept? What are the expectations of the interim? Etc. Compensation should follow synod standards. The planning team may choose to apply for a grant for financial assistance, however these are limited.
13. The Council may need to adjust the budget to allow for additional staff coverage, if any.
14. Arrangements with all individuals involved should be in place three months in advance of the sabbatical including any compensation, number of hours to be worked, etc for an interim.
15. The pastor makes all necessary arrangements for their course of study, travel, etc.

Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning by Richard Bullock and Richard J. Bruesehoff.

Please contact the synod office if you have questions.

APPENDIX H—PULPIT SUPPLY STANDARDS AND INFORMATION

(When your regular worship leader is not available for whatever reason, these standards will help you fairly compensate whomever fills in.)

A. WORSHIP SUPPLY MINIMUM REMUNERATION

(These standards apply to all congregations or parishes.)

1. \$175 for One Worship Services Plus Actual Travel Expenses

Actual Travel expenses include round trip mileage for each trip, lodging if an overnight stay is necessary, and meals. In addition, please consider the amount of preparation and time away from home in your compensation.

2. \$50 for Each Additional Worship Service plus Actual Travel Expenses

B. WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

\$150 for Each Wedding or Funeral plus Actual Travel Expenses Paid by the Congregation Any honorarium paid by the family should be in addition to this cost.

C. MINIMUM HOURLY RATE

\$20 per Hour plus Actual Travel Expenses

In circumstances where the regularly called pastor is on vacation or otherwise unavailable, other pastors can be paid an hourly wage for emergency visits, pre-marriage preparation, hospital visits, confirmation, etc.. Consider the amount of time and preparation involved.

D. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Mileage

Use the current mileage rate established by the Internal Revenue Service. For the current rate, type "mileage" into the search bar at www.irs.gov. If more than 50 miles one way is traveled, consideration in remuneration should be allowed for travel time.

2. Remuneration

Have the check on hand to reimburse one time persons immediately, or by arrangement with congregation and pastor. Make sure you agree to compensation when securing pulpit supply. It is recommended that you send a letter confirming the dates, expectations and compensation to the pastor ahead of time. When contacting a supply pastor, be aware of rates in the synod where the supply pastor is from for example: East Central Wisconsin Synod or St. Paul Synod, etc. The same is true if you are using a pastor from one of our ecumenical partner churches. (United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Reformed, Episcopal, or Presbyterian) Individual pastors might also have their own minimum rates which differ from these minimum standards.

3. Overnight Remuneration

If a supply pastor is expected to serve on a Saturday evening and Sunday morning compensation should include mileage for each trip or a hotel room should be provided in addition to meals.

4. Budget Planning

Congregations need to include in their annual budget and make plans to secure enough funds to cover pulpit supply for the number of weeks of vacation and continuing education granted to the pastor each year (generally 6-7 weeks).



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Walking together + for the sake of God's mission + in the world