

Northwestern Ohio Synod SAM Compensation Guidelines

Overview

The Northwestern Ohio Synod responds to the needs of parishes typically and historically served by rostered ministers, by working with parish and lay leadership throughout the Synod to listen, uplift, recruit, train and place Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) in these settings as mutually agreed between parish leadership and Synod staff. SAMs are lay persons recommended by the Bishop, and both authorized and appointed by the Synod Council to serve one or more parish for a specified period of time, generally one year, with the possibility of renewal for additional one-year increments.

Parish leadership and SAMs should outline compensation and benefits in a written Compensation Agreement and update such agreement annually. It is recommended that a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase be made each year to salary.

Salary

Because the responsibilities and time expectations of SAMs vary, and will likely continue to, it is reasonable to recommend salary compensation levels accordingly. Responsibilities may range from only leading worship services to the full range of duties similar to those performed by rostered ministers. It is assumed here that a forty-hour work week constitutes full-time status, and that part-time status will involve a minimum of twenty hours per week.

Recommendations:

- Full-time w/ full range of responsibilities: minimum starting salary of \$35,000
- Part-time w/full range of responsibilities: minimum starting salary of \$20,000
 - Less than part-time w/o full range of responsibilities:
For leading worship and preaching follow the compensation guidelines for supply pastors.
 - Additional duties (attendance at council meetings, teaching classes, making visits, etc.) may be contracted with the parish at an hourly rate of \$25.

Supervision Fee: \$1,000 per year

This fee is to be paid by the parish(es) served by a SAM to the SAM Supervising Pastor at the time of applying for renewal, October 31 of each year. Individual parishes who share a SAM may share the fee. A copy of the check(s) should be sent with renewal forms to NWOS. This will begin in 2026.

Social Security

As lay employees of the parish, SAMs should receive social security benefits just as any other lay employee would.

ELCA Pension and Other Benefits

If it is expected that the SAM will be serving in a particular setting on an ongoing, longer-term (more than one year) basis, then it is recommended that pension and health care benefits be offered by the parish on a negotiated basis.

Travel Expense Reimbursement

If the SAM is expected to travel on behalf of the parish for activities related to its ministry, and/or for education and professional development, they should be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS mileage rate.

Professional Expense Reimbursement

It is recommended that the SAM be reimbursed for reasonable expenses such as vestments, books/ periodicals, on-line subscriptions, professional dues, hospitality costs, and other costs incurred in the performance of the duties of the position. Parishes are encouraged to offer an allowance for this.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is regarded as an essential ongoing process for the SAM to retain authorization to serve. Currently, SAMs are required to enroll in a prescribed series of Growing in Faith (Diakonia) classes offered for a fee. The parish should bear the expense of Growing in Faith (Diakonia) classes and textbook fees. Additionally, it is recommended that the parish offers continuing education allowance for other learning opportunities. Growing in Faith fees are approximately \$500/year, so it is suggested that \$700-\$1,000 be designated for Continuing Education each year of the SAM's Compensation Agreement.

Intangible Benefits

Weekly Time Off: The parish should ensure that the SAM has two full days off per week, with their weekly schedule to be negotiated as necessary.

Vacation: Parishes should allow for the SAM to have a minimum of ten workdays of vacation time per year, if Part-time; and 3 weeks per year if Full-time, or more as negotiated.