



Northwestern Ohio Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**2025/26**

**Compensation Guidelines**

**for Rostered Ministers of the**

**Northwestern Ohio Synod**

*"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12)*

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## **Introduction**

Doing God's work in the world calls for leaders who bring a variety of training, skills, interests and life experiences to the work they do in congregations, communities and partner organizations. Many of these leaders are called to serve as ministers on one of the rosters of the ELCA: Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service.

- **Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament.** Ordained Pastors serve with active, courageous faith to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and offer the hope of the sacraments in congregations and other ministry settings. Some pastors are called to specialized ministries such as chaplaincy and campus ministry.
- **Rostered Ministers of Word and Service.** Deacons serve in congregations and other ministries of the ELCA, including family ministries, youth, administration, volunteer ministry, social services, music, or parish nursing. Deacons connect the church with the needs of the world and work to equip others to lead a living, active and caring Christian life.

Every rostered minister goes through theological training and a candidacy process. The candidacy process raises up, prepares, certifies, and approves public leaders in the ELCA. Family, friends, congregations, ministry organizations, synods, seminaries, and staff from the churchwide organization all play important roles in this process

These compensation guidelines will apply to both types of rostered ministers, however, there are some areas where they will differ, and every attempt has been made to clearly mark these areas. Please contact the synod office should you have questions about which sections apply to which roster.

### ***Base Salary Adjustments- Word and Sacrament***

The base salary guidelines for Ministers of Word and Sacrament have been reviewed and adjusted to be in line with our neighboring synods to provide more equitable compensation. Adjustments to base salary started with the number for zero years of ordination. From that number, there was a 10% increase from the 2024 guidelines to be more in-line with neighboring synods, plus a 3% cost of living adjustment for 2025. For each year of ordination, a consistent increment of \$600 will be added to the base salary.

### ***Base Salary Adjustments- Word and Service***

Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Service are currently more in line with our neighboring synods in an equitable way. For the purpose of adjustment, a 5.5% increase on the base salary with zero years of ordination was applied to account for recent cost of living increases. As with the Word and Sacrament recommendation, \$600 per year of ordination is then added to this base salary number.

### **Future Salary Adjustments**

Starting with the 2026 guidelines, base salary adjustments will be based on a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the base salary for zero years of ordination. The Social Security Administration releases this percentage in the Fall of each year. At a minimum, a 3% increase is recommended for 2026. After the base salary is calculated, a \$600 increase per year of ordination will be added on for future compensation guideline charts.

Synod Council may take action to increase, but not decrease, the COLA as needed in years when there is no synod assembly.

### **Housing Allowance**

Starting in 2025 there is only one method for calculating housing allowance for Ministers of Word and Sacrament who do not live in a parsonage. The 35% of base salary model has been removed from the guidelines in favor of calculating based on median home values. This method provides a more realistic housing valuation considering the actual costs of housing in the area being served by the congregation/parish. This method is also better for part-time pastors, as the cost of housing is not dependent on the number of hours worked.

Recognizing that this change of method can result in a large immediate increase if a congregation is currently using the 35% method, it is recommended that this change be phased in over the course of several years.

### **Housing Equity Allowance**

Congregations may provide a parsonage for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, which is an advantage to both congregation and pastor in some housing markets. However, a pastor living in a parsonage does not have the opportunity to accrue equity in a home. A housing equity allowance is designed to address this situation, so that when a pastor moves from a parsonage and either retires or moves to a new call, he/she will have the equity they might have accrued while owning a home. For Ministers of Word and Sacrament who live in a parsonage, the method for calculating Housing Equity Allowance has been adjusted to be more in line with the calculation method based on median home value.

### **Congregation Recommendations**

It is recommended that congregations follow the suggested salary guidelines for rostered ministers which reflect years of experience and education as indicated in the *2025-26 Base Salary Guidelines*.

However, these are guidelines and not requirements. Congregations and ministers are encouraged to negotiate compensation packages that are mutually beneficial while addressing the unique circumstances of congregation and minister. Compensation

includes more than mere cash compensation – it also entails health benefits, pension contributions, vacation, professional expenses, continuing education, housing and parsonage, or even student debt assistance. Congregations and ministers are encouraged to explore the breadth of compensation elements, being creative and flexible in creating compensation packages that work for both parties and address specific contexts. You may also want to visit the ELCA website ([www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)) for further compensatory information; and the Portico Benefit services website ([www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org)) for health benefits rate information.

These compensation guidelines serve to guide conversations in budgeting for the rostered minister's compensation and to give insight into what is a fair and reasonable compensation package for trained, approved, and called leaders of our church. We often think of ministry in terms of a rostered minister's efforts on behalf of the members of a congregation. In the same way, the ministry of the laity includes the care of the rostered minister and family. This mutual concern for one another is a witness to what we believe and practice in the life of the church.

### ***A Note on Clergy Couples***

Each member of a clergy couple is seen as their own entity which should be compensated fully by their calling congregation. Base salary, housing allowance, and other benefits should be calculated for each member of the couple individually when filling out a compensation worksheet. A congregation is responsible for the health insurance of the Rostered Minister and family. Health Insurance costs might be adjusted or shared through Portico when calling a member of a sponsored couple. However, there should be wording in compensation worksheets to assure health insurance coverage in the case that the call status of either spouse changes.

### ***Annual Review of Compensation for Rostered Minister***

The compensation package of each rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) under call should be reviewed annually by the congregation's executive committee, congregational council, or other finance team. The congregational council can then make recommendations to the congregation. Updated compensation agreements should be written and recorded in the congregation's personnel files on an annual basis.

The key task of the executive committee (or other team) is to discuss annually with the rostered minister a fair, honorable, and equitable compensation package. Since the rostered minister depends on the congregational council and the congregation to make adequate provision for her or his financial needs, the rostered minister should have an opportunity to discuss those needs in an open and supportive forum. The team can receive data from the rostered minister about his or her financial needs and subsequently make recommendations to the congregational council for a compensation package.

At the same time, the minister should recognize the financial realities of the congregation and should make reasonable and realistic requests. If desired compensation is beyond the current means of the congregation, the minister and congregational leaders should formulate a plan to address giving and financial resources.

Both congregation and minister should evaluate their expectations of each other and seek to communicate these clearly so that the compensation package reflects those expectations reasonably. At all times, both congregation and minister should be prepared to and seek to compromise.

Items included in the yearly compensation adjustments (may be different for ordained pastor vs deacon):

1. Base Salary based on years of experience
2. Social Security Allowance (ordained pastors)
3. Housing Allowance (for ordained pastors without a parsonage) or Furnishing Allowance and Housing Equity Allowance (for ordained pastors with a parsonage)
4. Health and Medical Benefit adjustments consistent with Portico Benefit Services. Each congregation will need to use the Calculators found at [www.PorticoBenefits.org](http://www.PorticoBenefits.org) to determine the amount of the rostered minister's benefits. You will need to have your rostered minister's birth date to calculate Portico Benefits.

A congregation that finds it cannot meet the compensation amount called for in these guidelines and thus cannot compensate its rostered minister fairly and adequately, should consider alternatives such as shared ministry with neighboring congregations, a shared rostered minister, a part-time rostered minister, or other arrangement. It should be noted that cutting back a full-time rostered minister's hours to part-time hours invalidates the original letter of call and requires negotiating a new call. Congregations facing any of these situations should contact the Office of the Bishop for advice and assistance.

**Base Salary Guidelines – Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament**  
**2025** **2026\***

<i>Years Ordained</i>	<i>Year of ordination</i>	<i>Base Salary</i>		<i>Years Ordained</i>	<i>Year of ordination</i>	<i>Base Salary</i>
0	2025	\$45,000.00		0	2026	\$46,350.00
1	2024	\$45,600.00		1	2025	\$46,950.00
2	2023	\$46,200.00		2	2024	\$47,550.00
3	2022	\$46,800.00		3	2023	\$48,150.00
4	2021	\$47,400.00		4	2022	\$48,750.00
5	2020	\$48,000.00		5	2021	\$49,350.00
6	2019	\$48,600.00		6	2020	\$49,950.00
7	2018	\$49,200.00		7	2019	\$50,550.00
8	2017	\$49,800.00		8	2018	\$51,150.00
9	2016	\$50,400.00		9	2017	\$51,750.00
10	2015	\$51,000.00		10	2016	\$52,350.00
11	2014	\$51,600.00		11	2015	\$52,950.00
12	2013	\$52,200.00		12	2014	\$53,550.00
13	2012	\$52,800.00		13	2013	\$54,150.00
14	2011	\$53,400.00		14	2012	\$54,750.00
15	2010	\$54,000.00		15	2011	\$55,350.00
16	2009	\$54,600.00		16	2010	\$55,950.00
17	2008	\$55,200.00		17	2009	\$56,550.00
18	2007	\$55,800.00		18	2008	\$57,150.00
19	2006	\$56,400.00		19	2007	\$57,750.00
20	2005	\$57,000.00		20	2006	\$58,350.00
21	2004	\$57,600.00		21	2005	\$58,950.00
22	2003	\$58,200.00		22	2004	\$59,550.00
23	2002	\$58,800.00		23	2003	\$60,150.00
24	2001	\$59,400.00		24	2002	\$60,750.00
25	2000	\$60,000.00		25	2001	\$61,350.00

**For each year of ordination above 25, \$600 should be added.**

\*2026 base salaries in this chart reflect a minimum 3% increase on the base with 0 years of ordination, but it is recommended that the COLA for 2026 be used when it is released.



**Base Salary Guidelines – Rostered Ministers of Word and Service**  
**2025** **2026\***

<i>Years Ordained</i>	<i>Year of ordination</i>	<i>Base Salary</i>		<i>Years Ordained</i>	<i>Year of ordination</i>	<i>Base Salary</i>
0	2025	\$50,000.00		0	2026	\$51,500.00
1	2024	\$50,600.00		1	2025	\$52,100.00
2	2023	\$51,200.00		2	2024	\$52,700.00
3	2022	\$51,800.00		3	2023	\$53,300.00
4	2021	\$52,400.00		4	2022	\$53,900.00
5	2020	\$53,000.00		5	2021	\$54,500.00
6	2019	\$53,600.00		6	2020	\$55,100.00
7	2018	\$54,200.00		7	2019	\$55,700.00
8	2017	\$54,800.00		8	2018	\$56,300.00
9	2016	\$55,400.00		9	2017	\$56,900.00
10	2015	\$56,000.00		10	2016	\$57,500.00
11	2014	\$56,600.00		11	2015	\$58,100.00
12	2013	\$57,200.00		12	2014	\$58,700.00
13	2012	\$57,800.00		13	2013	\$59,300.00
14	2011	\$58,400.00		14	2012	\$59,900.00
15	2010	\$59,000.00		15	2011	\$60,500.00
16	2009	\$59,600.00		16	2010	\$61,100.00
17	2008	\$60,200.00		17	2009	\$61,700.00
18	2007	\$60,800.00		18	2008	\$62,300.00
19	2006	\$61,400.00		19	2007	\$62,900.00
20	2005	\$62,000.00		20	2006	\$63,500.00
21	2004	\$62,600.00		21	2005	\$64,100.00
22	2003	\$63,200.00		22	2004	\$64,700.00
23	2002	\$63,800.00		23	2003	\$65,300.00
24	2001	\$64,400.00		24	2002	\$65,900.00
25	2000	\$65,000.00		25	2001	\$66,500.00

**For each year of ordination above 25, \$600 should be added.**

\*2026 base salaries in this chart reflect a minimum 3% increase on the base with 0 years of ordination, but it is recommended that the COLA for 2026 be used when it is released.

## **Compensation Spreadsheet and Worksheet**

Below is an in-depth explanation of our Compensation Worksheet steps. For an easy tool to help determine compensation numbers, you can find an Excel document at this link: <https://nwos-elca.church/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

You can use the spreadsheet to fill out the final compensation worksheet, which can be found at this link: <https://nwos-elca.church/resources/compensation-guidelines/>

Please be sure to determine if you need the worksheet for a Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament WITHOUT a parsonage or WITH a parsonage or for a Rostered Minister of Word and Service, as those documents are adjusted accordingly to each situation.

### **Step 1: Determining Salary Compensation**

A rostered minister's (ordained pastor or deacon) salary compensation is made up of two components: base salary and additional/merit compensation.

#### ***Base Salary***

Congregations are encouraged to utilize this synod's recommended base salary guidelines as a starting place in determining base salary. These guidelines can be found on pages 9 and 10 of these guidelines.

This figure will be entered on **Line A** of the Compensation Worksheet.

#### ***Additional/Merit Compensation***

Other factors may be taken into consideration when determining additional / merit compensation for the rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon). These factors may include:

1. Additional relevant education, certifications, or degrees
2. Relevant prior work experience (ie second career ministers)
3. Additional job expectations
4. Size of the congregation/multiple congregations
5. Expected supervision of staff
6. Length of service to the parish
7. Merit and performance
8. Educational debt load
9. Other

This figure will be entered on **Line B** of the Compensation Worksheet.

#### ***Total Salary***

To arrive at Total Salary Compensation (**Line C**), add together **Line A** and **Line B**

**Honoraria and Other Fees**

Honoraria or other fees received for weddings, funerals, outside speaking engagements, or from any other source should *not* be taken into account when setting the base salary or additional/merit compensation, nor should any income received by the spouse be a consideration.

## **Step 2: Determining Housing Allowance**

Congregations should provide *Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament* (pastors) housing through a parsonage, and/or a housing allowance.

If a congregation provides a parsonage, this number is still calculated to help calculate the Housing Equity Allowance placed later on the worksheet. If a congregation does not provide a parsonage, the congregation should provide a housing allowance which can be calculated as shown below

### ***Calculating Housing Allowance***

Median Home Value  
x 1.35% to 1.75%  
x 12 months  
= Housing Allowance (E)

Housing allowance is based on the median home value of where the majority of parishioners are based. To find this value you can use the zip code at the Zillow link below, use the county value from the National Realtors Association link below or ask a local realtor that is familiar with the housing costs where you are located. That number is then multiplied by a rate between 1.35-1.75 that is chosen by your congregation.

Links to find Median Home Value:

Zillow (by zip code)  
<https://www.zillow.com/home-values/44/oh/>

National Realtors Association (by county) <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/housing-statistics/county-median-home-prices-and-monthly-mortgage-payment>

These figures will be entered on **Lines D-F** of the Compensation Worksheet for Pastors WITHOUT a parsonage.

These figures will be entered on **Lines N-P** on the Compensation Worksheet for Pastors WITH a parsonage, to aid in calculating Housing Equity Allowance (see step 4 below).

Once Housing Allowance is determined, the amount designated as Housing Allowance can be adjusted to the needs of the rostered minister (ordained pastor) so long as the *Total Defined Compensation remains the same*. In other words, the pay designated as salary on the W2 can decrease (or increase) and the part designated as Housing Allowance can increase (or decrease). This provides tax savings to the pastor at no additional cost to the congregation.

In IRS Publication 517, the IRS states that "The church or organization that employs you must officially designate the payment as a housing allowance before the payment is made. A definite amount must be designated. The amount of the housing allowance cannot be determined at a later date." (*A sample resolution for designating housing allowance is available below*). Designation of housing allowance can be made through a separate line item on the budget, or through action recorded in council minutes.

### **Sample Resolution**

The following resolution was duly adopted by the board of directors of [Name of Church] at a regularly scheduled meeting held on [Day, Month, Year], a quorum being present:

Whereas, ministers who own or rent their home do not pay federal income taxes on the compensation that their employing church designates in advance as a housing allowance, to the extent that the allowance represents compensation for ministerial services, is used to pay housing expenses, and does not exceed the fair rental value of the home (furnished, plus utilities); and

Whereas, Pastor [First and Last Name] is compensated by [Name of Church] exclusively for services as a minister of the gospel; and

Whereas, [Name of Church] does not provide Pastor [First and Last Name] with a parsonage; therefore, it is hereby

Resolved, that the total compensation paid to Pastor [First and Last Name] for calendar year 2025 shall be [\$\_\_\_\_], of which [\$\_\_\_\_] is hereby designated to be a housing allowance; and it is further

Resolved, that the designation of [\$\_\_\_\_] as a housing allowance shall apply to calendar year 2025 and all future years unless otherwise provided.

### **Parsonage Utilities and Maintenance**

A congregation that provides a parsonage is responsible for the cost of utilities (gas, water, electric, trash, internet, etc.) and maintenance, and it is strongly recommended that congregations directly pay utility companies.

### **Furnishings Allowance for Those in a Parsonage**

Ordained, rostered ministers of word and sacrament (pastors) living in parsonages may be provided with a "furnishings allowance." Even in a parsonage, every pastor has some expense in maintaining his or her home.

When the furnishings allowance is designated in advance, and to the extent it is actually used for housing expenses, it is a non-taxable source of income for the pastor.

This figure will be entered on **Line F** of the Compensation Worksheet.

### ***Total Housing Allowance***

The total housing compensation is determined by entering **line F**, whether that is an actual housing allowance or only a furnishing allowance.

### **Step 3: Determining Defined Compensation**

In order to determine Defined Compensation – which is utilized in determining benefits – you must first determine the Social Security Allowance.

#### ***Social Security Allowance***

Under most circumstances, an employer pays one half of the FICA tax (Social Security and Medicare combined), and the employee pays the other half. Clergy (ordained pastors) are in a unique situation because the Internal Revenue Code mandates that ordained pastors are classified not as 'employees', but as 'self-employed' for Social Security taxes, meaning ordained pastors pay the entire 15.3% FICA tax (employee portion plus the employer portion, known as SECA for self-employed persons).

But according to the Internal Revenue Service clergy (ordained pastors) are NOT considered self-employed, but instead viewed as employees for income tax purposes and are thereby issued a W-2 like all other employees.

Throughout the ELCA, Synods strongly recommend that all congregations pay the additional 7.65%, as a congregation would for all other employees. This additional 7.65% is termed a “**Social Security Allowance**” and is calculated as follows:

Note: the calculation is different for parsonage and non-parsonage.

Social Security Allowance for an *ordained* rostered minister (pastor) receiving a **housing allowance** (non-parsonage):

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Total Salary Compensation (C)} \\ & + \text{Housing Allowance (F)} \\ & = \text{Social Security Base} \\ & \times \text{7.65 \% (employer rate)} \\ & = \text{Social Security Allowance (G)} \end{aligned}$$

Social Security Allowance for *ordained* rostered minister (pastor) living in **parsonage**:

Total Salary Compensation (C)  
x 1.3 (Housing Equivalency Factor)  
= Subtotal  
+ Furnishings Allowance (F)  
= Social Security Base  
x 7.65 % (employer rate)  
= Social Security Allowance (G)

This figure will be entered on **Line G** of the Compensation Worksheet.

Under current law, congregations are prohibited from directly paying social security tax for clergy (Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament – Pastor). To remedy this, congregations should provide the allowance as an additional cash component that runs through the congregation's payroll system. The allowance must be considered as salary in reporting to the IRS, and is also considered income when computing pension plan contributions.

If a pastor requests it and the congregation is willing, a congregation may withhold voluntary federal and state tax contributions. Otherwise, pastors are required to make quarterly estimated tax payments.

### ***Total Defined Compensation***

Defined compensation is not synonymous with cash compensation. Defined compensation is the base amount on which benefits are calculated and is different for parsonage and non-parsonage.

For an *ordained* rostered minister (pastor) receiving a **housing allowance** (non-parsonage):

Total Salary Compensation (C)  
+ Total Housing Allowance (F)  
+ Social Security Allowance (G)  
= Total Defined Compensation (H)



For a Rostered Minister of Word and Sacrament (pastor) living in a **parsonage**:

Total Salary Compensation (C)  
+ Total Housing Allowance (F)  
+ Social Security Allowance (G)  
= Total Defined Compensation (H)

For a Rostered Minister of Word and Service (deacon), defined compensation is equal to the deacon's total salary (Line C).

This figure will be entered on **Line H** on any of the Compensation Worksheets.

## **Step 4: Determining Portico Benefits**

ELCA associated employers and those recognized by the ELCA as eligible employers may sponsor their employees in the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program offered by the ELCA – Portico Benefit Services. The program is available to rostered ministers (pastors or deacons) scheduled to work **15** or more hours per week for 6 or more consecutive months per year.

For all Portico benefits related information and questions, please contact Portico for the most up-to-date information.

### ***Pension and Health Benefits***

Because of the variety and complexity of factors involved in determining healthcare and benefit rates, please use the Portico Benefit Calculator to determine benefit figures: (<https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Home/Resources/Calculators.aspx>).

These figures will be entered into **lines I, J, K, L, and M** on the Compensation Worksheet.

### ***Housing Equity Allowance for a Parsonage***

It is recommended that congregations with a parsonage also provide for a housing equity allowance for their ordained rostered minister of word and sacrament (pastor). Housing equity should not be paid directly to the pastor, but rather invested in a Portico account for that purpose. The purpose of this allowance is to provide financial resources for a pastor to purchase housing upon retirement, when moving calls and/or as described by Portico policy or applicable law.

To find an equitable number, your congregation must first determine housing allowance for your area based on the Median Home Value of the zip code or county where the parsonage is located. The Median Home Value is then multiplied by a percentage between 1.35-1.75% and multiplied by 12 to find what annual housing allowance would be for a pastor with a housing allowance. This was covered back in step 2 in this document. The numbers for Median Home Value and chosen percentage are added into **Lines N and O** on the compensation worksheet. **Line P** is then those numbers multiplied by 12 to account for an annual number. Equity allowance is then calculated as 13% of line P.

Housing Equity allowance will be entered on **Line Q** of the Compensation Worksheet

### ***Waiving Coverage and Health Waiver Bonus***

Sometimes a rostered minister may elect to waive Portico coverage and receive coverage through their partner's health benefit plan. In these cases, the congregation is strongly encouraged to provide a Waiver Bonus to the rostered minister to help defray the cost of insurance. The rostered minister will also need to provide Portico with a signed waiver.

If applicable, this figure will be entered on **Line N** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line R** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

### **Total Benefits**

For deacons or pastors without a parsonage, add **lines I – N** to arrive at the total benefit cost, and enter this figure on **Line O**.

For pastors with a parsonage, add **lines I, J, K, L, M, Q and R** to arrive at the total benefit cost, and enter this figure on **Line S**.

### **Sick Leave, Disability, and Workers' Compensation**

Sick leave of up to two months per year with full salary, housing, and benefits should be provided by the congregation when needed. This is not accumulated and should not be abused. Congregations may desire to have conversation with their rostered minister or establish their own policies outlining how this may be used.

Unused sick days are not paid out upon separation.

### **Disability Insurance**

Portico Benefit Services Disability Benefits Plan does not pay a benefit during the first two months of disability. During the first two months the congregation/organization provides full compensation including housing. Beginning with the third month the employee is entitled to receive from Portico Benefit Services a monthly benefit equal to 2/3 of the employee's "Monthly Defined Compensation" minus any Social Security benefits to which employee and family members are deemed to be entitled based on employee's earning record (check limited Portico Benefit Services interpretation), and minus any other governmental disability program benefits payable to the employee and family members based on the employee's disability.

### **Workers' Compensation**

NWOS strongly recommends that all congregations elect workers' compensation coverage for their *ordained* rostered ministers (pastors) by filing Form U-3S. Ohio requires coverage for deacons.

## **Step 5: Determining Additional Congregational Expenses**

Congregations should cover additional expenses that are integral to the job functions of the rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon).

### ***Mileage Reimbursement and Automobile Expenses***

The congregation should reimburse miles driven in carrying out duties as a rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) at the rate allowed by the IRS (Check IRS guidelines at: <http://www.irs.gov/taxpros/article/0..id=156624.00.html>).

The rostered minister should submit a signed report monthly to the responsible financial officer of the congregation. It is important that automobile expenses be paid on a reimbursement basis. as a flat sum automobile allowance will be fully taxable to the rostered minister.

This figure will be entered on **Line P** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line T** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

### ***Continuing Education***

It is the expectation of the ELCA and the Northwestern Ohio Synod that every rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) will engage in at least **50 hours** of continuing education per year. This continuing education is intended to benefit both the rostered minister and the congregation through ongoing development of biblical/theological understanding and ministry skills. Continuing education time is not to be regarded as vacation, nor should it be used by the rostered minister for vacation.

To assist the rostered minister in meeting this expectation, it is suggested that congregations provide a continuing education reimbursement of at least **\$2,000** (with expenditures verified by receipts), and at least **two weeks** (a total of 14 days including two Sundays) **accruable for up to three years**. Rostered Ministers should annually report to their council, their used and unused continuing education days. This should be maintained in the congregation's personnel records.

Continuing education may range from a single day seminar to enrollment in a formal program at an educational institution. Scheduling of continuing education opportunities should be determined by the rostered leader in consultation with the congregation's staff support team (Mutual Ministry Committee) and the congregational council.

Unused continuing education days or allowances are not paid out upon separation.

This figure will be entered on **Line Q** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line U** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

## **Professional Expenses**

Congregations may elect to provide the rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) with a professional expense reimbursement account to cover additional miscellaneous expenses such as:

- Dues to professional organizations
- Work related Books, periodicals, subscriptions
- Vestments
- Business meals

Congregations are strongly encouraged to develop written policies that outline acceptable use of a professional expense reimbursement account.

If applicable, this figure will be entered on **Line R** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line V** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

Unused professional expense allowances are not paid out upon separation.

## **Additional Covered Expenses**

Congregations and rostered ministers may negotiate that additional specific events be covered. Two examples are listed below:

**First Call Theological Education (FCTE)** is an ELCA three-year structured program designed to support and strengthen the newly rostered minister (ordained pastor and deacon) in terms of:

- (1) ministry skills,
- (2) pastoral identity; and
- (3) discernment of context.

FCTE is experiential learning designed to meet participants at their point of need as they encounter the demands and expectations of ministry. This program will consist of a portion of the needed continuing education, contact hours.

Costs for this can come out of a rostered minister's continuing education reimbursement or professional expense reimbursement account, or congregations may choose to cover this in addition to these existing reimbursements.

If applicable, this figure will be entered on **Line S** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line W** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

## **Spiritual Retreat**

Congregations may provide paid time and expenses for each rostered minister (ordained pastor and deacon) to spend at least one week a year on intentional, disciplined **spiritual retreat**. This is an addition to the continuing education time already

provided and may be covered out of a rostered minister's continuing education reimbursement, professional expense reimbursement account, or congregations may choose to cover this in addition to these existing reimbursements.

If applicable, this figure will also be entered on **Line S** (pastors with no parsonage and deacons) OR **Line W** (pastors with parsonage) of the Compensation Worksheet.

### ***Estimating Employer FICA Taxes for Deacons***

While Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastors) pay self-employment tax (outlined in Step 2: Determining Defined Compensation), rostered ministers of Word and Service (Deacons) are treated as employees for tax purposes. This means that the congregation as the employer must pay the employer side of FICA tax, which is 7.65%.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Total Salary } \textcircled{C} \\ \times 7.65\% \\ = \text{FICA cost to congregation} \end{array}$$

This figure will be entered on **Line T** of the Compensation Worksheet.

### ***Total Additional Expenses***

For **deacons**, add lines P thru T to arrive at total additional expenses. This figure will be entered on on **Line U**.

For **pastors without** a parsonage, add lines P thru S to arrive at total additional expenses. This figure will be entered on on **Line T**.

For **pastors with** a parsonage, add lines T thru W to arrive at total additional expenses. This figure will be entered on on **Line X**.

## **Step 6: Determining Total Financial Cost to Congregation**

### ***Total Compensation Package***

The total financial cost to the congregation for **deacons** can be determined as:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Total Salary Compensation (C)} \\ + \text{Total Benefits (O)} \\ + \text{Total Additional Expenses (U)} \\ = \text{Total Financial Cost (V)} \end{array}$$

This figure will be entered on **Line V** of the Compensation Worksheet.

The total financial cost to the congregation for **pastors** without a parsonage can be determined as:

Total Salary Compensation (C)  
+ Housing Allowance (F)  
+ Social Security Allowance (G)  
+ Total Benefits (O)  
+ Total Additional Expenses (T)  
= Total Financial Cost (U)

This figure will be entered on **Line U** of the Compensation Worksheet.

The total financial cost to the congregation for **pastors** with a parsonage can be determined as:

Total Salary Compensation (C)  
+ Furnishing Allowance (F)  
+ Social Security Allowance (G)  
+ Total Benefits (S)  
+ Total Additional Expenses (X)  
= Total Financial Cost (Y)

This figure will be entered on **Line Y** of the Compensation Worksheet.



## **Step 7: Determining Intangible Benefits**

Similar to many other jobs, rostered ministers receive several intangible benefits.

### ***Weekly Time Off***

Rostered ministers (ordained pastors and deacons), like anyone else, need time off from work to replenish and re-energize.

Congregations should ensure that each rostered minister has **two full days off per week**. The pastor's weekly schedule (days/hours) may be negotiated as necessary. For the well-being of the rostered minister and health of the congregation, such a schedule **should not exceed 50 hours in a work week**. This should be viewed as an upper limit for hours worked, and not an average. The work of a minister will oftentimes be variable and change in relation to the church calendar. For example, Lent and Advent may be busier times averaging 50 hours a week, while a summer schedule may average 30 hours a week.

In managing time at work and time off it might be helpful to consider each day as having three segments of 4 hours: morning, afternoon, and evening. Each week contains twenty-one such segments. Working ten of those segments, equaling approximately 40 hours, is suggested as the norm.

### ***Vacation***

It is important for rostered ministers (ordained pastor or deacon) to have a period of time away from the call-in order to refresh and recreate. Congregations ordinarily provide a minimum of **four weeks vacation** per year (28 days or 20 "work days"), including four Sundays for full-time ministers.

The accrual (or non-accrual) of unused vacation time should be set by a congregation's own personnel policies which should outline how many vacation days can be accrued and the maximum vacation days allowed in a calendar year. If allowed by personnel policies, accrued vacation days should be carefully recorded and detailed in the annually updated compensation agreement.

Regardless of accrual, the minister should annually report to the council their used and unused vacation days and a record of this should be maintained in the congregation's personnel files.

All costs and procurement of supply ministries during vacation times, including Sunday supply, are the responsibility of the congregation and the congregational council. A list of available pulpit supply may be secured from the synod web site ([www.nwos-elca.org](http://www.nwos-elca.org)).

### **Deferred Paid Holidays**

Rostered ministers ordinarily work on holidays that many secular workers have off, such as Christmas Eve or Good Friday. Congregations should provide a "deferred paid holiday" that allows the minister additional time off without depleting vacation time. These deferred holidays should be listed in the annually-updated compensation agreement.

### **Family Leave**

The church places a high value on family, and congregations should offer family leave when appropriate. These guidelines are offered to help congregations approach situations requiring family leave in a caring manner and apply for all rostered ministers (ordained pastor and deacon):

**Parental leave** following the birth or adoption of a child – Eight (8) weeks of paid parental leave should be available to parents immediately following the birth or adoption of a child. The needs of each rostered minister and congregation may vary. It is recommended that the congregation pay full salary and benefits during this time. At a minimum, full benefits for the rostered minister should be maintained during a parental leave. Some factors that may be considered in determining salary and benefits during such a leave are the rostered minister's length of service with the congregation, vacation time available, housing costs, and the hardship to the rostered minister or the congregation. In the case of adoption, the number of weeks of leave before and after the adoption should be specified in advance, and with mutual discussion with the rostered minister.

**Family leave** at other times may be granted by the congregation. There are times in our lives when leave is needed for families. Examples would be during times of severe illness, trauma, or death of a child, spouse or parent. The length of the leave and the salary and benefits which the congregation will provide the rostered minister should be negotiated by the rostered minister and the congregation. It is recommended that the congregation, at a minimum, provide full benefits for the rostered minister during any family leave granted.

In the event a sponsored member of the ELCA benefits program is unable to perform the material duties of her or his normal occupation for any employer as a direct result of injury or physical or mental disorder resulting in disability, the member is covered by disability benefits.

### **Sabbatical**

Congregations may offer their rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) sabbatical leave for spiritual and professional renewal. Typically, rostered ministers are eligible for a sabbatical after serving a congregation for 6 years.

Usually lasting 12 weeks in length, sabbaticals are intended to sharpen the rostered minister's skills and to refresh both spiritual life and a sense of calling. The request, specific description and purpose of the sabbatical leave is ordinarily submitted to and approved by the congregational council at least six months prior to the time it begins. Congregations might want to include in the budget and accrue funds each year toward the sabbatical (so costs might be spread over several years).

Alternative sabbatical arrangements, such as a shorter sabbatical (perhaps 4 weeks after 3-4 years), may also be considered.

During sabbatical leave, the congregation continues to provide normal compensation, and pays for pulpit supply and related congregational ministerial expenses. The rostered minister is responsible for expenses related to the sabbatical such as additional living expenses, tuition, books, and supplies. Normal vacation time may be used to extend the sabbatical leave. A report of his/her sabbatical activities is to be submitted to the church council. A rostered minister taking a sabbatical is expected to continue to serve the congregation granting the sabbatical for at least one year following the leave.

### ***Churchwide and/or Synodical Commitment***

There are times when a rostered minister (ordained pastor or deacon) may be called upon to serve in ways that take her/him beyond the congregation. Examples may include church-related activities such as serving as a Bible study leader or chaplain at a church camp, on a syndical or ELCA committee or task force, or short-term teaching at a college or seminary. In any case, this "extended ministry" should be fully negotiated through the congregation's staff support team (Mutual Ministry Committee) and with the approval of the Congregation Council. Such outside ministry should not be considered as vacation time.

Rostered ministers are constitutionally required to attend the Northwestern Ohio Synod assembly when held, along with voting members from the congregation.

## **Pastoral Vacancy**

### ***Pulpit Supply***

A supply minister is one who fills in one Sunday at a time (e.g., while the pastor is on vacation).

A supply minister ordinarily receives:

1. Preaching:
  - One weekend service** – \$200 or higher
  - Each additional matching service** (Ex: 2nd service on Sunday morning, a Saturday evening/Thursday evening, etc.) – \$50
  - Weekday service** (i.e. Wednesdays in Lent) – \$200 or higher
2. Mileage is ordinarily reimbursed at the current IRS rate per mile (check the IRS website for current rates: <http://www.irs.gov/taxpros/article/0..id=156624.00.html>)
3. All reasonable hotel and meal costs may be reimbursed if needed and agreed upon.

A list of current supply ministers can be found here: <https://nwos-elca.church/resources/supply-list/>

### ***Interim Pastor***

The Northwestern Ohio Synod has the discretion to appoint an Interim Pastor when there is a pastoral vacancy and will often work with a congregation's council to determine who would best serve in that position. An Interim Pastor may serve under an agreement which can range from just a few hours on Sunday morning to full-time ministry. In some cases, the Interim Pastor may be issued a term call, but this must be done in consultation with the Northwestern Ohio Synod Bishop and approved by Synod Council.

A full-time Interim Pastor (five days per week) will ordinarily receive compensation according to their years of experience as indicated by the guidelines or comparable to the previous pastor. Either a parsonage or housing allowance is normally provided, as well as pension and medical benefits, if applicable, mileage reimbursement for performing congregational responsibilities at the current IRS rate and reimbursement for any other ministry related costs incurred (e.g. telephone, postage, meals, etc.).

Compensation for an interim pastor serving less than full-time may be determined as outlined in the traditional Rostered Minister Guidelines spreadsheet. This includes deductions for those who are not full-time interims.

Alternatively, and more applicable for sporadic interim work, an Interim pastor may be compensated on an hourly basis:

1. A minimum of \$35 per hour for visitation and other related ministry
2. Mileage reimbursement for performing congregational responsibilities at the current IRS rate (<http://www.irs.gov/taxpros/article/0..id=156624.00.html>)
3. Reimbursements for congregational expenses (e.g. telephone, postage, meals, hotel, etc.)
4. Preaching:
  - One weekend service** – \$200 or higher
  - Each additional matching service** (Ex: 2nd service on Sunday morning, a Saturday evening/Thursday evening, etc.) – \$50
  - Weekday service** (i.e. Wednesdays in Lent) – \$200 or higher

## **Separation/Severance Guidelines**

There are varied circumstances in which a minister may resign their call with a congregation: local difficulties, conflict, vocational changes, continued education, or even changes in family or other unforeseen circumstances. If these or similar events occur, ministers and congregations are encouraged to be in conversation with each other about creating separation/severance arrangements. Parties should consult with the synod regarding the Separation Guidelines approved by the Synod Council, and parties are encouraged to seek mediation if there are difficulties arriving at a separation agreement.