

**MINIMUM COMPENSATION GUIDELINES  
for  
Ministers of Word and Service**

**2018**

**SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

*These Guidelines, established by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly,  
are provided to assist congregations develop and maintain a financial compensation package for  
Ministers of Word and Service of our synod that is both fair and competitive.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ministers of Word and Service serve the church in a variety of settings and bring diverse skills and training to the calls in which they serve. Congregations and agencies utilize the gifts of Deacons in many different ways under various time arrangements. Thus it is difficult to set a common standard for all Ministers of Word and Service. Therefore, each congregation or agency that is calling a Deacon will need to develop a compensation package that is fair to the person with all of these factors in mind.

### **I. CASH SALARY**

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Minimum Compensation Guidelines for Ministers of Word and Service are based on full-time (defined as a 40-hour work week), a bachelor's degree, and twenty semester hours of theological study. The minimum salary for persons with a master's degree should be 20% higher than the base amount listed below. Ministers of Word and Sacrament working less than 40 hours a week should be compensated proportionately.

The minimum base salary for a new Minister of Word and Service (0 years of experience as a consecrated Deacon) **\$30,780**. For all Ministers of Word and Service with years of experience, **\$400 for each year of experience** should be added to the minimum base cash salary to determine the appropriate cash salary. An additional amount may be added to reflect factors such as scope of responsibilities, exceptional proficiency, and/or attainment of additional education.

### **II. SOCIAL SECURITY**

By law the congregation must pay the employer's share of the Social Security tax for the Deacon. Therefore, it is not included in the cash salary. The Deacon pays the employee's share of the Social Security tax.

### **III. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES**

The following expenses should be paid by the congregation in full regardless of whether the Deacon is under call full-time or part-time.

**Auto** – Deacons should be reimbursed according to the current IRS standard for 2018 for work-related mileage. It is also appropriate for the congregation to reimburse the Deacon for tolls, parking and other travel-related expenses when such expenses are incurred during call-related travel (not commuting to/from work). Congregations that are currently providing an auto allowance should be aware that an auto allowance is taxable income for which the recipient must account.

**Continuing Education** – In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, congregations and Ministers of Word and Service are expected to contribute annually to a continuing education fund or to maintain an annual budget line from which the Deacon draws continuing education expenses. The establishment of a fund enables money to be carried between years so that the Deacon will be able to participate in a broader scope of continuing education events. Congregations are to contribute **\$700**; the Deacon is to contribute **\$300**. Registration fees, materials, lodging, meals, and travel expenses may be drawn from this fund. Two full weeks, including Sundays, of continuing education per year is expected. We especially encourage congregations to support the Deacon's attendance at the theological convocation held each October.

**First Call Theological Education (FCTE)** – All persons newly consecrated as Deacons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are expected to participate in FCTE for three years. A congregation served by a Deacon in FCTE is sent an invoice by Region 8 for the congregation's share of support for the annual retreat and colleague groups. The synod contributes an equal amount for each person. It is intended that

the FCTE fee be taken from the Deacon's Continuing Education fund leaving the remaining amount for participation in other educational activities.

**Publications and Media Resources** – It is recommended that the congregation pay for books, journals, software, etc., directly or as a direct expense reimbursement so that these expenses will not be taxable for the Deacon. An annual allowance of at least **\$200** is recommended.

**Professional Expenses** – Congregations should be aware that Deacons are often required or asked to attend church or community events which cost additional money (i.e., synod ministries, community ministries, a school function in which youth of the church are performing, etc.). It is appropriate that the Deacon receive reimbursement for expenses related to carrying out her/his call. It is also the responsibility of the congregation to provide the financial support necessary for the Deacon to attend the Synod Assembly.

**Technology** – In our current environment, computers, and other technological items are often considered essential to ministry. Congregations are encouraged to discuss the needs of the particular context. Congregations should assume the costs of a computer, cell phone service, or other needed items in accordance with IRS guidelines. Tax policy concerning technology reimbursements changes rapidly; please consult a tax professional to ensure compliance with the law.

#### **IV. BENEFITS**

A Minister of Word and Service should be enrolled by the congregation in the ELCA Pension and Health, Dental, Disability and Survivor plans. If not enrolled in the ELCA Plan, the Deacon should be provided with a retirement plan and health insurance. *Congregations in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod are urged to provide a minimum contribution (based on cash salary) of 12% per year to the pension plan of the Deacon.*

The Board of Directors for Portico Benefit Services establishes annually the contribution amounts required to fund the Health and Dental, Disability, and Survivor Plans. Contribution rates for the next year are normally available in the fall. Since the contribution rates vary for health and dental according to geographical location and age, you should contact Portico Benefit Services directly for rate information. Phone: 800-352-2876; E-mail: [mail@porticobenefits.org](mailto:mail@porticobenefits.org) Website: <https://porticobenefits.org>

#### **Portico Health Plan – 2018**

To maintain the current level of health benefits for our Ministers, their families, and lay church workers, it is recommended that the congregations of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod offer to provide the Gold+ ELCA health plan option in 2018 for their Ministers and lay church workers. In some cases, Platinum, Silver+ and Bronze+ plans (with Health Savings Account contributions) may be more beneficial for Ministers and their families. Please be in conversation about these options and consult a Portico Representative for assistance in weighing options, especially for part-time Ministers.

For Deacons with less than a full-time call, it is recommended that congregations provide health, dental, disability and survivor insurance to be proportionately funded by the congregation and the Deacon. This is especially encouraged if the Deacon has no other health insurance. The cash salary could be appropriately adjusted to cover the insured's share of health insurance costs including the addition of family coverage.

## V. CONDITIONS

**Vacation:** Four weeks, including Sundays, paid vacation is recommended.

**Continuing Education:** Two weeks, including Sundays, per year is expected. An agreement to allow these two weeks to be carried over in a three-year period allows the Minister of Word and Service the opportunity for a more extended study leave.

**Leave at Birth, Adoption or Foster Care, Sick Leave, Bereavement, and Family Illness:**

Please refer to the “Family Leave Policy of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod.” For a copy of the “Family Leave Policy” call the synod office at 412-367-8222 or download directly from the “For Congregations” section of the synod’s website <http://www.swpasynod.org>

**Sabbatical Leave:** Please refer to the “Sabbatical Leave Policy which can be downloaded directly from the “For Congregations” section of the synod’s website <http://www.swpasynod.org>

**ELCA Rostered Couples:** When a rostered couple both receive separate calls within the synod, the synodical bishop will assist the congregations in establishing equitable considerations to the rostered couple. Congregations should note, however, that 1) Portico Benefit Services establishes the annual rates for benefits (which considers rostered couple plan members) outside the control of local synods, and 2) a congregation or combined parish is expected to provide all parts of the established minimum compensation guidelines to extend an independent call to a rostered ELCA person.