



## **Compensation Guidelines for Ministers and Certified Christian Educators - 2025**

### **To All Pastors, Associate Pastors, Clerks of Session, Educators, and Church Treasurers:**

The Presbytery of Chicago approves minimum annual compensation amounts for ordained ministers serving in congregations. The minimum compensation for Certified Christian Educators is 85% of the minimum for ordained ministers. These guidelines will be helpful in planning your 2025 salaries for pastors, associate pastors, and education staff members. For further information, contact Stated Clerk Ken Hockenberry - [khockenberry@chicagopresbytery.org](mailto:khockenberry@chicagopresbytery.org)

### **Minimum Amounts for Compensation and other benefits / expenses.**

1. **Salary / Housing Allowance** - minimum for full-time (40 hours / week) pastors/associate pastors: **\$59,000** (increased from \$57,000 for 2023 and 2024). Part time Pastors / Associate Pastors should receive at least a proportionate amount of the full time minimum.
2. Full cost of participation in the **Benefits Plan of the PC(USA)**, administered by the Board of Pensions of the PCUSA. **Note:** Questions regarding this should be directed to Rev. Ken Green, Church Consultant, Synods of Lincoln Trails and Lakes and Prairies, Board of Pension; email [kgreen@pensions.org](mailto:kgreen@pensions.org).
3. **Vacation:** minimum of 4 full weeks, including Sundays.
4. **Study Leave:** minimum of 2 weeks, including Sundays. Study Leave time may be accumulated up to three years, with the concurrence of the pastor and session.
4. **Continuing Education Minimum:** \$700. Continuing Education funds may be accumulated up to three years, with concurrence of the pastor and session.
5. **Travel Allowance and Business Expenses:** Business miles to be reimbursed at current IRS rate – see <https://www.irs.gov> to find current rate. Suggested minimum \$3,000/year.
6. **Family Medical Leave:** minimum of 12 weeks (new provision added in July 2023).

### **Compensation Guidelines for Pulpit Supply and Moderator Service**

**Pulpit Supply:** minimum of \$200 for first service plus \$50 for each additional service per occasion and reimbursement for mileage at current IRS - see <https://www.irs.gov/> . The updated Pulpit Supply List can be found in the Online Directory – contact [mhendrickson@chicagopresbytery.org](mailto:mhendrickson@chicagopresbytery.org) or [khockenberry@chicagopresbytery.org](mailto:khockenberry@chicagopresbytery.org)

**Moderator Service:** minimum of \$100 plus reimbursement for mileage at current IRS rate – see this link to obtain the up-to-date rate: <https://www.irs.gov/>



## Worksheet for Determining Salaries:

### 1. Checklist for Salary Review

#### Annual Compensation Amounts

- A. Cash Salary \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Housing costs/Value of Manse  
Manse ( ) or Housing Allowance ( ) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Other Housing and Utilities expenses (if any) (3-B) \_\_\_\_\_
- D. **Total Cash plus Housing Allowance** (A through C) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must meet or exceed 2024 minimum cash/housing amount)
- E. Tax Sheltered Contributions (i.e. 403b) (if any) \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Individual insurance premiums in addition to the BoP Dues \_\_\_\_\_
- H. **Total Effective Salary (D through F) {\*see footnote}** \_\_\_\_\_
- I. Pension/medical plan dues – Employer cost: \_\_\_\_\_  
**see Board of Pensions website for calculations: <https://www.pensions.org/>**

#### Annual Reimbursable Expenses

- J. Study allowance - (\$700 minimum) \_\_\_\_\_  
Recommended: may be accumulated up to 3 years.
- K. Auto/Travel/ Business Expenses (reimbursed on voucher at the  
current IRS approved rate up to max. approved by congregation.) \_\_\_\_\_
- L. Other Expenses (if any) \_\_\_\_\_
- M. Social Security Supplement (**if 50% or less- see below**) \_\_\_\_\_
- N. **Total Cost of Church as Employer (H through M)** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Other Annual Terms of Call Items

- O. Vacation (minimum 4 weeks) \_\_\_\_\_
- P. Study Leave (minimum 2 weeks: accumulated up to 6 weeks.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Q. Family Medical Leave (minimum 12 weeks) \_\_\_\_\_



## Additional Information / Recommendations

- A. Minimum Annual Cash Salary and Housing Allowance is \$ 59,000.00 for 2025:**  
This figure is based on a full-time ministry of approximately 40 hours per week. The guidelines apply to all installed pastoral staff. Other staff including temporary pastoral relationships (interims, temporary supplies) generally require the same compensation. Part-time pastors shall receive at least a proportionate amount of the recommended full time minimum cash/housing amount. Beyond the minimum cash/housing amount of \$59,000, the Commission on Ministry recommends years of experience and size of congregation be considered in compensation.
- B. Housing and Utility Costs** (Please see [www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org) for “Tax Guide for Ministers and Churches”) **Important!** Certified Christian Educators who are not also ordained ministers may not claim housing as a deduction for Federal Income Tax.

**Housing allowances must be designated by a vote of the Session or the Congregation by December 31 of the year prior to the year in which the housing allowance will be used.** The housing allowance **cannot** be declared retroactively. Federal law allows housing costs to be declared non-taxable for clergy. Social Security tax is levied on the amount. If a housing allowance is offered, it should be based on the actual cost of housing for the pastor. It is the pastor's responsibility to determine what portion of the total cash plus housing amount is to be designated as housing and to justify that amount to the IRS. Amounts spent on mortgage payments, homeowners' insurance, taxes, upkeep may be included. The Commission on Ministry or the Board of Pensions may be helpful in determining other allowable costs.

**If a manse is provided**, the fair rental value of the manse must be included in effective salary. The Commission on Ministry or the Board of Pensions may be helpful in determining other allowable costs. Fair rental value can be obtained by contacting two independent realtors. **Note:** If the manse value falls below 30% of the total cash and deferred compensation amount (Items 2A plus 2E above), the Board of Pensions will determine a pension/medical dues base by including an amount that increases the housing figure to 30% of the cash plus deferred compensation amount. This results in an increase in pension/medical plan dues, but not an increase in compensation to the pastor. See also Item D, below, definition of Effective Salary. If the church pays other housing and utilities allowance to the pastor this should be included in effective salary.

- C. Social Security Supplement (SECA)**



**Ordained ministers** are considered **employees** of their congregations **in all matters except Social Security. For Social Security purposes (SECA) ministers are considered self-employed – and therefore must pay the full Social Security tax of 15.3% for 2025.** Congregations shall pay up to 50% of the Social Security as a benefit to the pastor (similar to other employers). This will result in an additional payment to the pastor of 7.65% of Item 2D (cash/housing), in 2023. If the church pays more than 7.65% of SECA, the extra amount will be considered part of the effective salary.

**It is important to note that paying a Social Security supplement has the effect of an increase in cash salary. Therefore, the amount is subject to federal and state taxes, and any amount in excess of 7.65% is subject to pension and benefits dues. Churches and pastors may want to contact the Commission on Ministry or the Presbytery Staff for additional information.**

#### **D. Effective Salary – Definition from the Board of Pensions**

"Effective salary" is the total of cash salary, manse or housing allowance and deferred compensation (such as a tax-deferred annuity or IRA contributions.) SECA allowance (up to 50%) is not included in Effective Salary. Any utility allowance, if provided, does not have to be included but may be added to the manse or housing allowance. Other allowances (i.e. auto, business expenses) are not included in effective salary, and should be vouchered by the employee and submitted for payment. The value of a church-owned manse, if provided, should equal at least 30% of the total cash salary plus deferred compensation. If a housing allowance is provided, the actual amount should be used.

**Note 1: Bonus or gifts from the employer must be included in effective salary.**

**Note 2: The Commission on Ministry strongly recommends that allowances be treated as reimbursable expenses - with vouchers submitted on a monthly basis, rather than including them as part of the effective salary. They may not be included in the minimum compensation for effective salary approved by the Presbytery.**

#### **E. Board of Pensions - Benefits Plan of the PC(USA) and Benefit Dues -**

Benefits Plan dues to the Board of Pensions are required to be paid monthly for all called and installed pastors of PC(USA) at a percentage of the effective salary that is set each year by the Board of Pensions. See [www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org)

#### **F. Reimbursable Expenses**



Because circumstances vary from church to church, the Commission on Ministry makes no recommendation of specific amounts for professional expenses such as auto or other allowances, except for the minimum study allowance. In its annual review of terms of call, each particular church should discuss these matters with its pastor(s). It is expected that automobile expenses will be reimbursed at the rate approved each year by the IRS.

The COM **strongly recommends that professional expenses incurred by a pastor be reimbursed.** Records of all professional expenses should be kept and submitted to the church for reimbursement on a regular basis. Unless such a method is employed, the pastor either may not recover total expenses incurred, or may be required to pay taxes on additional income. It is important to check with the Commission on Ministry or a tax consultant for the current year's tax rulings.

The minimum continuing education allowance is \$700 per year. It is recommended that this may be accumulated with the concurrence of the session and pastor(s).

#### **G. Other Terms of Call**

**Minimum vacation is four weeks.** **At least four full weeks including Sundays must be allowed for all calls, *part-time as well as full-time.*** It is acceptable for churches to include additional days to complete a full month or more of vacation for the pastor. However, for terms of call, vacation will be expressed in weeks or days. Ordinarily vacation should be taken in the calendar year, and should not be accumulated over a period of years.

The **study leave for continuing education** is **two full weeks per year** for all calls, **part-time as well as full-time.** It is recommended that this leave time may be accumulated up to 3 years, with the concurrence of the session and pastor.

**Sabbatical Leave** - It is recommended that a provision for Sabbatical Leave be considered after 7 years of continuing service by a pastor. Information on Sabbatical Leave can be found on the POC webpage:

<https://www.chicagopresbytery.org/commission-on-ministry/>

**Family Medical Leave** – This is a new requirement mandated by amendment to the PCUSA Constitution / Book of Order. Please refer to the Family Leave Policy of the Presbytery of Chicago – available on the presbytery website:

<https://chicagopresbytery.org/publication/family-leave-guidelines/>



## H. Salary Changes

Salary changes should be submitted to the Board of Pensions as soon as possible. The Commission on Ministry notes that any lag in reporting salary changes could impact negatively on members' or survivors' benefits.

**All minister members should review their annual statement of benefits to determine if their effective salary as recorded on the statement is correct.**

If the information needs to be reconciled, the member should contact the Board's toll-free number, 1-800-773-7752 and use the Benefits Connect webpage system to make changes: <https://logon.pensions.org/>

The Board will make the necessary changes to the member's records and sends an adjusted invoice at the beginning of the next billing cycle.

## I. Additional Information

A recommended guide for clergy and church treasurers is: *Church and Clergy Tax Guide*, by Richard R. Hammer, Christian Ministry Resources, PO Box 2301, Matthews, NC 28106. This guide is updated annually.

<https://store.churchlawandtax.com/2023-church-clergy-tax-guide-pdf/>

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