

September 22, 2025

Greater Milwaukee Synod Congregations and Leaders,

We continue to be grateful for all the ways that God remains faithful through the work of our ministries in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Thank you to our rostered ministers and lay leaders who have engaged in the challenges and opportunities of life and ministry with compassion and hope.

As we move toward 2026, your Synod Council has approved the 2026 compensation guidelines for clergy and deacons for your review and consideration as you enter the season of ministry budget planning for the coming year. We recognize that in many congregations, budgets have become tighter, and important, missional choices will be required.

One of the factors we consider when reviewing these guidelines is how they compare with our neighboring ELCA synods. We have noticed that the compensation levels recommended in our synod have become increasingly out of line with our neighbors, and the differences were greater at the higher end of the experience grid. We are, therefore, not incorporating a standard percentage for a Cost-of-Living Adjustment across the board. This does not mean that we are recommending that rostered ministers do not receive an increase in their compensation level, simply that the recommended increases are lower for those who have higher levels of experience. We encourage all congregations to review these guidelines with the rostered minister(s) on staff, look at the recommended compensation level for their years of experience, and determine the 2026 compensation level most appropriate for your circumstances.

Please also note that there are significant changes in how Portico Benefit Services are structuring the various health plans available to plan members. All four benefit levels are recommended, and we encourage plan members and congregational leaders to engage in conversations about the most appropriate level of coverage for their sponsored members.

We recognize that some congregations may find it difficult to provide the level of financial compensation they would like, and we invite you to be in conversation with your rostered minister and, as needed, with synod staff to explore creative options.

We are grateful for all the ways you show support and appreciation for your rostered minister. Please continue to encourage them to take their days off and to use their full vacation and continuing education time, and we strongly encourage all congregations and ministries to adopt a sabbatical policy for their rostered ministers. This is critical time for rest and renewal that is so needed and deserved.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued partnership in the Gospel.