2027 COMPENSATION GUIDELINES for DEACONS of the GREATER MILWAUKEE SYNOD – ELCA

Approved by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council on September 17, 2026

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Introduction to Compensation Guidelines

The Greater Milwaukee Synod provides compensation guidelines by deacons and congregations[1] to assist in determining levels of compensation. They are offered as minimum guidelines. Congregations should decide on an annual basis the level of compensation for their leaders after a period of discussion, research, and evaluation. The following materials are provided to assist the congregation and the rostered minister in that process.

For purposes of definition, deacons are Associates in Ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers who are on the Word and Service roster of the ELCA, which was created at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. These persons have a prescribed amount of education, supervised field experience, and/or other specified training. These individuals have also been examined and certified by a Candidacy Committee.

The full-time deacon's base salary guidelines are included in Appendix B. These figures are based on comparison with other synods. Other applicable areas of compensation, including benefits, are included for your consideration. Due to a wide range of experience and responsibility, some latitude must be exercised in defining base salary ranges.

It is also important to note that the implementation of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act has meant significant adjustment in health care coverage, including in the plans offered by Portico.

Rationale

The 2027 Salary Guidelines for Deacons in the Greater Milwaukee Synod are provided by the synod to assist in establishing appropriate salary packages. These guidelines are developed with awareness of both urban, suburban, and rural circumstances in our synod and the other synods of Region 5.

There are differences between ordained clergy (Word and Sacrament) and ordained deacons (Word and Service): Tax rules for ordained ministers tend to create the remaining difference in compensation between these two groups. Base compensation, for rostered ordained ministers, includes a housing allowance of 30% of base salary, while minimum guidelines here do not include that for Word and Service ministers. The ELCA does not take any position on whether deacons qualify for the clergy housing allowance. That is between the employer, the employee, their tax preparer, and the IRS. Congregations who wish to explore whether a deacon qualifies as a member of the clergy for tax purposes should consult with legal and tax professionals. IRS Publication 517 (found here: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p517.pdf) contains helpful guidance on this issue.

Cost of Living Adjustment

For 2027, we are recommending a 3.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for ministers of word and service. This increase is based on a review of a variety of projections of the impact of inflation on wages and prices in the US economy. Please see Appendix B for the recommended minimum guidelines for 2027.

Being Compensated Below Guidelines

If your congregation's deacon is paid below guidelines, a concerted effort should be made to increase their compensation to meet guidelines within three years or less or come to an agreement

in conversation with the individual about what is fair and appropriate compensation. Other options to

[1] Wherever the term "congregation" is used in this document it can also be assumed that this applies to all ELCA affiliated organizations.

financial compensation may be things like:

- Additional vacation days
- Increasing retirement contributions by 1-2%

Health Care Benefits

Portico offers four different-priced ELCA-Primary health benefit options and sponsoring employers continue to pay different health contribution rates based on defined compensation, a member's age, level of coverage needed (member, member and spouse, member and children, member and family or waived) and the employer's geographical location. (See Medical and Dental Benefits Contribution for a more detailed description.)

PART I - Determining Compensation

Compensation includes a salary and the consideration of additional funds designated for tax-deferred annuities, etc. Benefits and professional expenses are covered in Parts II and III of this manual.

Base Salary

The number of variables involved that define the needs of the rostered minister and congregations makes it unreasonable to recommend one salary figure to apply to every deacon. These guidelines present a process that will aid your annual deliberations to arrive at a budget recommendation that best serves all parties concerned. Hopefully, each parish has a Staff Support Committee (or equivalent) to assist in this process.

The synod's Minimum Compensation Guidelines for 2027, found in Appendix B, gives guidelines for base salary.

Factors to use in determining a proposed increase include:

1. **Responsibilities**
    a. Level of responsibility of the position
    b. Time demands of the position
    c. The size of the congregation
2. **Proficiency**
    a. Level of responsibility of the position
    b. Time demands of the position
    c. The size of the congregation
    d. Abilities of the employee as shepherd, teacher, counselor, administrator
    e. Years of experience as a deacon
    f. Administrative ability
    g. Continuing Education beyond consecration requirements
3. **Goals and objectives**
    a. Local Congregation
    b. Professional Development
    c. Synod Participation
    d. Personal
4. **Cost of Living adjustment for inflation**
5. **Step Increase for an additional year of experience and service**

PART II – Determining Cost of Benefits

A. ELCA Retirement and Other Benefit Plans

The employer/congregation contributes required contributions for each eligible employee whom the employer enrolls in the plans. Participation in the Other Benefit Plans is mandated for the deacon (member) if he/she/they participates in the ELCA Retirement Plan. An ELCA congregation may enroll any or all of its employees. The amount of the required contributions is determined as a percent of defined compensation.

Detailed information about calculating defined compensation and required contributions are available through the EmployerLink section of the Portico Benefit Services website (https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/resources/calculators/benefit-costs-calculator#/) or by calling 800-352-2876.

Under the ELCA Retirement Plan, the congregation is required to pay the minimum retirement contribution. The supplemental contribution (i.e., the difference, if any, between the recommended and minimum required contribution rates by the congregation) may be deposited in the ELCA Retirement Plan.

The required contribution rate for all rostered ministers (clergy and deacons) is 10% of defined compensation, which will be billed directly by Portico. Additional retirement contributions may be made.

B. Medical and Dental Benefits Contribution

Portico Benefit Services, the nonprofit benefit ministry of the ELCA, provides the benefit program for rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families. Portico provides health benefits that also include dental and prescription drugs, as well as retirement, disability, and survivor benefits in one bundled program.* This program is designed to address the needs of rostered ministers and provide seamless benefits during change of call, leave from call, and other events unique to ministry. Our bundled approach is designed to help ensure rostered ministers and lay employees are protected against significant financial loss from a variety of risks. Through Portico, congregations** in this synod and across the country pool their collective purchasing power to provide benefits in a cost-effective manner.

Congregations and plan members share the cost of benefits. Congregations are expected to support the well-being of their covered plan members by paying all or a significant portion of the contributions for benefits (i.e., monthly premiums for the health plan). Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing their health benefits through out-of-pocket costs when they receive care (e.g., deductibles, copays, and coinsurance).

The ELCA Church Council endorses a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members; the cost-sharing is reflected in all the ELCA-Primary health benefit options offered by Portico, effective Jan. 1, 2027. Each fall, congregations should engage in conversation with their sponsored plan member(s) to determine the option that best fits their needs and then make their selection during Portico's annual enrollment. Current contribution rates are available at EmployerLink.PorticoBenefits.org or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.

*A plan member may waive health coverage if they have access to valid medical insurance coverage through their spouse or another employer, or if they qualify for a subsidy due to income level when purchasing health coverage through the exchange.

**"Congregations" may also refer to multi-point parishes or other non-parish ministry agencies such as Bible camps, long-term care facilities, hospitals, campus ministries, etc.

In order to participate in the above Benefits Program, an individual must be enrolled in all of the plans. The program is available to deacons who are scheduled to work 15 hours or more per week for at least six months during the year.

C. Disability Insurance

As a benefit of participation in the ELCA Benefits Plan, your deacon has Disability Insurance. Plan details are available through Portico. The congregation provides total defined compensation including housing for the first two months of disability on a self-insured basis. The congregation is also expected to pay the medical, dental, and survivors insurance contributions during the first two months of disability. After the first 60 days of disability, the ELCA disability plan becomes effective and will pay 2/3 or 66.67% of the monthly defined compensation.

D. Supplemental Benefits

Consult Portico to explore supplemental benefits related to medical, dental, and disability coverage.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If the deacon requests that a portion of their salary be sent to a non-taxed benefit account (additional retirement contributions, Flexible Spending Account, Health Savings Account, childcare account, etc.) care must be taken to ensure that the appropriate amount is deducted from the pastor's paycheck. It is the responsibility of both the deacon and the congregation council to make sure that all deductions and contributions are done correctly.

PART III – Professional Expenses

It is recommended that the congregation adopt the policy that all professional expenses incurred by the rostered minister(s) and other employees be reimbursed in full. Adequate allowances, in addition to salaries, should be provided in the church budget to cover anticipated costs. The IRS insists that for these allowances to be non-taxable, they must be fully documented and appropriately paid. The congregation council should frequently review the allowances and their use to be certain that the professional staff are submitting reimbursement requests on a timely basis and are being fully reimbursed.

The primary areas for professional expenses are shown below. There may be additional professional expenses unique to your parish situation. This matter should be discussed with your professional staff.

A. Automobile Expenses

The largest single church-related expense for the deacon is the cost of transportation, which includes fuel, repairs, insurance, tolls, etc. Transportation expenses throughout the business world are commonly covered by the employer.

It is recommended that the congregation reimburse the deacon's mileage at the current IRS rate. For 2026 the IRS allows deductions of $0.76 per mile for a car used for business purposes. This information is available at www.irs.gov, search phrase—standard mileage rates. This figure is usually adjusted annually (rarely, twice a year). Reimbursed this way, the mileage reimbursement is not taxable income.

While congregations could instead simply offer a flat rate allowance, the congregation and deacon must be careful about this. The deacon must be able to demonstrate to the IRS that reimbursed mileage was driven for professional purposes. A daily log is normally kept for this option. This reimbursement is taxable as income.

When extensive driving is required, a parish-owned or leased vehicle may be the most cost-effective approach. Any personal miles must be reimbursed to the congregation or claimed as taxable income.

B. Continuing Education

In order to update skills and thereby strengthen their ministry, deacons are encouraged to enroll in courses of Continuing Education. Such activities improve ministry and are not vacations. The best way to encourage your deacon's continuing growth is to provide the time and money that make Continuing Education activities possible. The recommended congregation's share is $1000 or more per year. The deacon contributes $400 on their own each year. Up to two weeks should be available for continuing education, which may include Sundays. Congregations should consider allowing the deacon to accumulate continuing education dollars and time up to a maximum of 3 years may provide for a more structured study opportunity.

C. Synod Assembly Expenses

Attendance at the Synod Assembly is constitutionally mandated for rostered ministers. Expenses for registration, lodging, meals, travel, and other fees are the responsibility of the congregation.

D. Technology, Cell Phones, and Ministry Resources

Your congregation may choose to provide an allowance for the purchase of, or subscription to, books, periodicals, and/or web services, enabling the deacon to keep abreast of developments in their profession and the rapidly evolving nature of the church.

The use of technology enhances the effectiveness of ministry by providing for better use of time and by making church staff more accessible. Legitimate expenses incurred by staff for church-related activities should be equitably reimbursed. Examples include cell phones, email/internet for prayer groups, and computers. Unless otherwise agreed to, it is the expectation that the equipment remains with the congregation or be purchased at the current market value by the employee at the time the employee leaves the congregation.

E. Conference Expenses

Your deacon's attendance at synod conferences is a professional expense and should be supported by the congregation or agency by payment of registration fees and other expenses. Discuss anticipated expenses in connection with conferences in the coming year with your rostered minister(s).

F. Fall Leadership Conference

Fees and time for the Fall Leadership Conference will be covered by the congregation separate from continuing education support.

PART IV – Other Benefits and Considerations

This section discusses the types of time off periods that are granted to the rostered minister as a condition of employment. Time-off may be mandated by the call document, mandated or implied by law or by ELCA policy, or established by agreement between the deacon and the congregation. While this type of benefit does not involve additional compensation, it does require that monies be provided in the budget to provide for services required while they are absent.

A. Employer Social Security Contribution

Deacons are regular salaried employees. Thus, the congregation is required to pay the required employer's portion of the Social Security Tax (7.65%). (This is in addition to the 7.65% that is withheld from the deacon's check.)

B. Weekly Sabbath Time (as part of defined work week)

Because of the "on-call" nature of church work, the great deal of evening and weekend involvement, serious consideration needs to be given to the deacon's self-care. It is recommended that they are encouraged to set aside 1-2 days a week for sabbath[2] and personal time. A minimum of one day per week is a necessity. It is suggested that at least once per month they are encouraged to arrange to have two (2) consecutive days off. Arrangements should be flexible for the deacon and the congregation but should also provide for emergencies when the deacon is unavailable. Clearly defined expectations of time off are important for the deacons and the congregation.

C. Vacation - Deacons with Work Schedules Similar to Clergy Positions

The congregation is to provide a minimum of four (4) weeks of vacation (encompassing four Sundays) per year with full pay. Vacation should be proportional to the contracted workweek of these certain positions. For example, a full- time deacon would work 48 full-time weeks and have four full-time weeks of vacation in a year; a half-time deacon would work 48 half-time weeks and receive four half-time weeks of vacation in a year. **The congregation should consider granting additional vacation time based on the length of service in the ministry.**

The length of vacation, the number of Sundays, and when vacation is to be taken are all matters which need to be discussed openly with your deacon and should be considered an important part of compensation.

(A word of rationale: In addition to four weeks of vacation for entry-level rostered ministers being the national standard in the ELCA, the nature of ministerial work should be considered in granting vacation. Deacons are also encouraged to take vacation in increments of at least a week. Certain deacons do not work a five-day workweek as most laypersons do. These certain positions work six days plus evenings. They are on call 24 hours a day and do not have the same sense of a

[2] "Sabbath" is a term used in scripture to describe a day of rest with/in God. Heeding the 3rd commandment of God, full-time rostered ministers are expected to observe at least one day of sabbath each week. As people of faith, we claim sabbath as more than just a "day off," but as God's command and, even more importantly, as God's gift. Author and pastor Eugene Peterson, describes Sabbath rest as follows: "At regular intervals we all need to quit *our* work and contemplate [*God's* work], quit talking to each other and listen to [*God*.] God knows we need this and has given us a means in Sabbath a day for praying and playing, simply enjoying what [God] is. One of my tasks [as pastor] is to lead you in the celebrative keeping of Sabbath each Sunday. But that is not a Sabbath for me. I wake up on Sunday morning with the adrenaline flowing. It is a workday for me. Monday is my Sabbath, and I need your help to observe it" (from *Working with Angels: That Shape of Pastoral Integrity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] pg. 82). Sabbath rest takes many forms of rejuvenation, and we encourage congregations to discuss with their rostered leader(s) what sabbath looks like for them.

"break" for a weekend. The busiest times of the year are often those most lay people consider holidays - namely, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.)

D. Holidays

Appropriate time off for general holidays should be provided. If the actual day cannot be taken, another day should be given as compensation.

E. Disability Leave

When there is a disability, full salary and benefits are to be paid by the congregation until the ELCA Disability Benefit Plan takes effect. See Part II of these guidelines and the Portico website.

F. Sick Leave

We recommend that congregations develop their own guidelines that include language on how employees, including rostered ministers, earn and make use of sick leave. A standard practice is for employees to earn one sick day per month, cumulative up to 40-45 days. We also recommend that unused accumulated sick leave not be compensated at the end of a call.

G. Other Leave Considerations

1. Family Leave

Family leave is paid time off to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, or parent, or time off for the funeral of a family member. Congregations should carefully consider developing a family leave policy.

2. Parental Leave

Per the resolution passed at the 2019 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly, “congregations of the Greater Milwaukee Synod are encouraged to adopt policies providing eight weeks of parental leave with full salary, housing, and benefits.” Additionally, the assembly directed that a model policy for Parental Leave be developed for use in congregations. This model policy was approved by Synod Council on November 19, 2019, and is included as Appendix E at the end of this document.

3. Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical leaves are granted to provide an opportunity for the employee to take an extended period of time for personal enrichment, study, spiritual growth, travel, skill development, research, and/or experimentation. Leave should be approved based upon a specific proposal that indicates how the planned activities will benefit the employee, the congregation, and/or the wider church. All provisions should be negotiated well in advance of the sabbatical and clearly stated in writing. The proposal/agreement should define how the congregational ministry is to be handled during the absence. The Synod Council has adopted a policy of “Sabbatical Guidelines” for use by congregations in considering such sabbatical leaves. It appears in this document as Appendix C.

H. Loans

Caution is urged in the practice of congregations making loans for down payments on homes or other purposes to staff members. It is suggested that prior to entering into any such agreement it be discussed with appropriate members of the synod staff

Appendix A – Compensation Worksheet for Deacons

This worksheet is designed to help build a compensation package for deacons using the synod's guidelines.

2027 Greater Milwaukee Synod Minimum Guidelines

Comp Chart # 1 Items	**Annual total compensation and benefits for _____ at 2027 Portico rates and GMS minimum guidelines**	**Annual total compensation and benefits for _____ as proposed for 2027, if different from column 2**
Total Defined Compensation-Salary *(from column 2 of chart in Appendix B)*		
Total Portico Benefits *(retirement at 10%, medical at _____(plan), see link to Portico calculator below)*		
Total of Comp and Benefits *(first two rows together)*		
Automobile Mileage *(reimbursable at current IRS rate for business miles, not commuting miles)*	**$1200 estimate**	
Continuing Education *(up to two weeks available)*	**$1400 recommended ($1000 minimum)**	
Fall Leadership Conference *(congregation should cover all registration, lodging, and travel if rostered minister chooses to attend. This is in addition to Cont. Ed.)*	**$300 estimate**	
Synod Assembly *(annually in May/June – required attendance for all rostered ministers)*	**$300 estimate**	
First Call Theological Education *(required for three years)*	**$300 estimate (if applicable)**	
Books/Subscriptions/Phone	**as negotiated (e.g.: $600 for phone/year)**	
Vacation *(four weeks is standard regardless of FT or PT)*	**4 weeks – including Sundays**	
Total Package Estimate:	**Total Estimate of**	**Total Estimate of**

Appendix B – Minimum Compensation Guidelines for 2027

Deacon Compensation Guidelines for 2027

Years Experience	2027 Min Compensation
0	$49,850
1	$51,392
2	$52,689
3	$53,961
4	$55,234
5	$56,479
6	$57,713
7	$58,934
8	$60,141
9	$61,337
10	$62,531
11	$63,688
12	$64,844
13	$65,974
14	$67,105
15	$68,223
16	$69,315
17	$70,407
18	$71,487
19	$72,539
20	$73,593
21	$74,608
22	$75,572
23	$76,612
24	$77,589
25	$78,565
26	$79,516
27	$80,467
28	$81,418
29	$82,329
30	$83,242
31	$83,897
32	$84,552
33	$85,208
34	$85,863
35	$86,519

*For additional years beyond thirty-five add $450 per year.

Appendix C – Sabbatical Guideline Recommendations

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA
Approved as a Guideline at Synod Council Meeting January 15, 1998

Introduction

It is important for both rostered ministers[3] and the congregation[4] to realize the importance of the minister's life-long continuing education through workshops, seminary courses, and personal study. Congregations of the ELCA have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to enable ministers to maintain and improve their skills. From time to time, however, ministers need and require an extended period of time for study, personal growth, reflection, and renewal without the demands of one's regular employment -- a sabbatical leave. Experience has shown that the congregation's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal. Long-term ministry is revitalized and stimulated. All parties benefit.

These guidelines are provided to assist ministers and congregations in the contemplation and implementation of such sabbatical leaves.

Purpose

Sabbatical leaves are granted to provide an opportunity for the minister to take an extended period of time for renewal, enrichment, study, spiritual growth, travel, skill development, research, and/or experimentation.

Eligibility

A. Full-time deacons. Part-time deacons will also benefit from a sabbatical and each congregation can consider what length or terms of such a sabbatical may be appropriate for their minister.

B. A sabbatical may be taken after every sixth full year of service in a given parish. Years cannot accumulate between calls (unless agreed at the time of call)

C. Planning should begin the calendar year before the sabbatical so the congregation and minister can plan for financial and ministry adjustments involved.

Duration

A sabbatical will normally be for 12 weeks (including the two continuing education weeks normally granted). Vacation should not be included as sabbatical time. The sabbatical leave may be split into two blocks of time, which do not have to be consecutive but shall be taken within a twelve-month period from the beginning of the first block of time.

Cost to the congregation

A. The congregation will continue to pay full salary and benefits (base salary, retirement, and insurance coverage). Car allowance, a ministry expense, is normally not paid during sabbatical time.

[3] The terms "rostered ministers" or "ministers", for the purpose of these guidelines, refer to those persons on the ELCA's roster of ordained pastors, Associates in Ministry, or Diaconal Ministers.

[4] These guidelines are written for congregations, recognizing that a rostered minister serving in another setting is guided by the policies of that employing body. These other agencies and institutions are also encouraged to consider sabbatical policies.

B. Accrued continuing education dollars can be used for the educational costs of the sabbatical. Continuing education dollars can only be accrued for three years.

C. The congregation will need to provide for their ministry needs to be covered during the sabbatical time. In most cases, these needs are met in ways other than finding full-time replacement during the sabbatical. Considerations involve:

1. Sunday worship/preaching. Normally done by a pastor engaged at the normal supply preaching rate of reimbursement (see page 10 of the Guidebook).
2. Teaching, visitation, occasional services (funerals, weddings, etc.). The minister, congregational leadership, and the synod office can work together to arrange for these needs to be met during the sabbatical time. Another minister can be contracted for certain responsibilities, other staff may adjust responsibilities, and/or neighboring ministers may agree to cover certain responsibilities.

D. The congregation is not responsible to fund the sabbatical in any other way. However, it may choose to provide additional financial assistance.

Planning

A. Planning should begin at least a year before the sabbatical is to take place.

B. A congregational sabbatical policy should be in place before any other planning begins. This policy may be this synod guideline or a locally adapted version.

C. Normally the minister provides an outline of the planned use of time to the Council or responsible committee before the sabbatical is approved.

Commitments following the sabbatical

A. The minister will submit a report of the sabbatical time, and find occasion to share with congregational members reactions, learnings, insights, etc.

B. The minister is expected to remain at least one year in the parish following a sabbatical.

An illustrative checklist

_____Mutual Ministry Committee or its equivalent encourages rostered minister to consider a sabbatical.

_____Rostered minister determines interest and what he/she might like to do with the three months.

_____Council receives request/proposal, approves sabbatical leave.

_____Council or committee adjusts budget to allow for additional staff coverage.[5]

_____Rostered minister or Council consults with the synod office regarding pastoral assistance.

_____All arrangements with persons involved should be in place three months in advance.

_____Rostered minister makes all necessary arrangements for his/her/their course of study, travel, etc.

Please call the synod office if you have any questions.

[5] How much time will the interim need to work? Full time? Part-time? Will regular office hours need to be kept? Who will be responsible for pastoral needs that arise - crisis counseling, weddings, funerals, etc.?

Appendix D – Parental Leave Policy

These guidelines are provided to rostered ministers and congregations in the planning and implementation of parental leave.

Introduction

The birth, adoption, placement, or call to guardianship of a child is usually a cause for celebration but always a cause of substantial changes in the normal routine of life.

Birth is unpredictable and can bring about health concerns for parents or child(ren). While an adoption, placement, or call to guardianship may not present the same health stressors, it can present greater emotional and psychological needs in the family.

Either way, time for the family to begin its life together is essential, especially in a time- consuming calling such as ministry in the church. All members of the family need time to adjust and bond, regardless of the means by which a new child or children enter the family.

"God creates human beings as whole persons - each one a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit .....Health is good for its own sake; it also is good for living abundantly in relationship with God and in loving service to our neighbor in the vocations to which God has called us."

The Department for Studies, Division of Church in Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:
Caring for our Health: Our Shared Endeavor (November 2003).

Purpose

Parental leave is granted to provide an opportunity for a parent, who is called as a rostered minister, to bond and care for the children that are new to their home and learn to find a healthy family and work balance. The needs and demands of ministry create a unique and challenging calling, replete with shifting demands, unpredictable schedules, and the emotional burden of compassion and care which are part of the office. Having a well-rested, healthy pastor or deacon and their family reflects respect for both the individuals and their gifts, enabling the leader to better serve the congregation. By granting just, compassionate, and generous parental leave, the Body of Christ seeks to create stronger and more supportive relationships and longer and stronger ministries.

Eligibility

This applies to any full or part-time rostered minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - both those called to be ministers of Word and Sacrament and those called to be ministers of Word and Service. In situations where both parents are serving in the same setting, each parent receives eight weeks for parental leave, with no more than two weeks overlapping.

Duration

Eight weeks parental leave is to be available for both parents for a period of twelve months following the birth, adoption, placement, or call to guardianship of a child. This time may be taken as either block leave (taken in one or more continuous periods of time) or intermittent leave (taken on an intermittent basis, or where the rostered minister works a reduced workweek according to a prearranged schedule. The reduced work schedule can include full or partial days of leave.)

In some situations, additional leave time (salaried or unsalaried) may be approved by the congregation council.

If a rostered minister experiences a miscarriage or stillbirth, they shall be given appropriate medical and compassion/bereavement leave.

Commitments following the leave

Should the rostered minister discern before, during, or after the completion of their leave that they need to change or end their call, they should inform congregational leadership as soon as possible so that negotiations can begin regarding this change in status. Rostered ministers will not be expected to reimburse the congregation for any portion of their compensation during their leave, but all parties should work together to provide for a smooth transition in congregational leadership.

The guiding principle here would be akin to the congregation paying the first eight weeks of disability until the Portico disability coverage kicks in.

Illustrative checklist of considerations for the rostered minister and the congregation to discuss while mutually developing their Family Leave plan prior to the leave:

_____ Who will provide emergency coverage for the rostered minister's absence(s)?

_____ What primary ministry tasks were covered by the rostered minister?

_____ Who will cover those now?

_____ Discuss whether the leave will be taken as block leave (one or more large chunks of continuous time), or intermittent leave (broken up into smaller units spread out over a longer period of time, possibly including a combination of full or partial days of leave).

_____ Intermittent leave would be discussed ahead of time between the rostered minister and congregation council. (Example: six weeks full-time leave followed by four weeks half-time, etc.) The plan can be altered upon agreement by all parties.

_____ What medium range planning will take place when the rostered minister is gone?

_____ What is the plan for how will that be handled?

_____ Does the rostered minister wish to be contacted regarding baptisms, weddings, funerals, and/or other significant events in the life of the congregation while on leave?

_____ How will any additional costs be covered by the congregation? It is suggested that congregations should, to the extent possible, set aside a separate fund to cover the costs of providing parental leave or providing sabbatical.

Resolution 4 – 2019 Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly Resolution Encouraging Parental Leave Policies in Congregations

WHEREAS, all Christians are called to care for their family members and fellow members of the Body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church name care for one's family as a Christian's first vow, with precedence over any monastic or clerical vows (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXVII:67-68); and

WHEREAS, the current Greater Milwaukee Synod Compensation Guidelines state, "Congregations are expected to provide for a paid parental leave of up to six weeks for the birth, adoption or pre-adoption placement of a child with full, salary, housing and benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The ELCA document, "Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities for Ministers of Word and Sacrament Under Call" that is to be completed when a new call is issued states, under D. Agreement, item 6. "Maternity/Paternity or Adoptive leave of_____weeks with full salary, housing, and benefits (Recommended 6 weeks; 4 weeks minimum)"' and

WHEREAS, The National Partnership on Women and Families reports that "parental leave allows new parents time to care for their children--giving them the best chance at a healthy start on life"; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA draft of the "Social Statement on Faith, Sexism, and Justice" suggests: "Finally, this church needs to offer greater support for women's ministry and leadership in policies related to pregnancy, parental leave, and breastfeeding. Improved arrangements for ELCA rostered leaders and for employees of ELCA-related organizations and institutions should support these leaders and demonstrate this church's commitment to family"; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary for all rostered ministers of the ELCA to have the support they need to respond to God's call to serve the church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the Greater Milwaukee Synod are encouraged to adopt policies providing eight weeks of parental leave with full salary, housing, and benefits for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service, such leave to be available in connection with the birth, adoption, or pre-adoption placement of a child and such leave to be available without regard to the sexual orientation or marital status of the rostered ministers eligible for the leave and without regard to the cognitive or physical abilities of a child being welcomed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod staff be intentional in talking with call committees, congregation councils, and Mission Exploration Teams to encourage congregations in the Greater Milwaukee Synod to adopt parental leave policies in place prior to issuing any call(s); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod staff shall work with the synod attorney, in consultation with rostered ministers and lay leaders, to develop a model policy for

Adopted by Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly Action **SA19.06.24.** on **June 1, 2019.**