

# 2019 COMPENSATION GUIDELINES for DEACONS of the GREATER MILWAUKEE SYNOD - ELCA

*Approved by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Council on September 20, 2018*

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## **Introduction to Compensation Guidelines**

The Greater Milwaukee Synod provides compensation guidelines for deacons in order to assist congregations and staff persons in the process of providing fair and equitable compensation within our synod. Congregations<sup>1</sup> 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 pastor 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 have meant significant adjustment in health care coverage, including in the plans offered by Portico.

### ***Rationale***

The 2019 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 of the other synods of Region 5. These synods are striving for uniformity in guidelines, although the dollar amounts may vary.

There are differences between ordained clergy (Word and Sacrament) and 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.

### **Cost of Living Adjustment**

For 2019, we are recommending a 2.0% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for rostered ministers. This is based on forecasts that US Consumer Price Index for 2019 will be between 2-3%.

### **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

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

in conversation with the individual about what is fair and appropriate compensation. Other options to financial compensation may be things like:

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

### **Health Care Benefits**

Portico continues to offer four different-priced ELCA-Primary health benefit options — platinum, gold, silver, or bronze — and sponsoring employers continue to pay different health contribution rates based on defined compensation, a member's age, and employer's geographical location.

We continue to recommend that sponsoring employers provide their plan members with the Gold+ option

Please contact Portico to determine the best level of coverage for your staff, [www.porticobenefits.org](http://www.porticobenefits.org).

Information on 2019 Portico changes can be found at [https://www.porticobenefits.org/NewsEvents/News/2018\\_08\\_06\\_TrusteesApprove2019ContributionRateChanges](https://www.porticobenefits.org/NewsEvents/News/2018_08_06_TrusteesApprove2019ContributionRateChanges)

## **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.

### **A. 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 employee. 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 Appendix B – Minimum Compensation Guidelines for 2019 include a cost of living increase for each category, though one which increases most for beginning and early career employees, and less for experienced employees. This is in recognition of external factors, including comparisons with nearby synods and the impact of a revised healthcare premium structure through Portico. Appendix B gives guidelines for base salary. Historical data on actual practice in synod congregations is not available at this time.

#### **1. Factors to use in determining a proposed increase include:**

##### **a. Responsibilities**

- i. Level of responsibility of the position
- ii. Time demands of the position
- iii. The size of the congregation

##### **b. Proficiency**

- i. Level of responsibility of the position
- ii. Time demands of the position
- iii. The size of the congregation
- iv. Abilities of the employee as shepherd, teacher, counselor, administrator
- v. Years of experience as an AIM, Diaconal Minister or lay professional
- vi. Administrative ability
- vii. Continuing Education beyond consecration requirements

##### **c. Goals and objectives**

- i. Local Congregation
- ii. Professional Development
- iii. Synod Participation
- iv. Personal

##### **d. Cost of Living adjustment for inflation**

##### **e. Increase Based on Additional Year of Service**

### **B. Tax Sheltered Annuity**

The use of a TSA allowance is a way that additional savings fund may be established on the initiative of the congregation as a supplement to the retirement benefits, or by redirecting monies from the Base Salary on the initiative of the employee. (This can also be done through the ELCA Portico Benefits Plan.)

## **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/home>) or by calling 800-352-2876.

Under the ELCA Regular 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 Regular Retirement Plan or the ELCA Optional Retirement Plan. In deciding whether to make contributions to either of these two plans, the parish should consider the differences between the plans.

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**

With the advent of the Affordable Care Act, changes were made to plan offerings by Portico Benefit Services. Information provided in versions of this document prior to 2014 has been updated, especially with regard to the creation of multiple plan options and age-based premiums, as Portico continues to prepare the ELCA health plan options for the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Congregations should keep in mind that there are four plan options from Portico, with differing levels of coverage and out-of-pocket expenditure requirements. The Portico website and representatives of Portico can provide you more detail about these plan options.

The decision to recommend the Gold+ Plan was endorsed both by the Church Council of the ELCA in April 2013 and by the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly in May 2013.

Leaders are encouraged to review the ELCA "Philosophy of Benefits" document, which is passed by the ELCA Church Council and used by Portico to shape their benefits. It's available at <https://goo.gl/BAM9jM>. This document states that "although employers are expected to pay the majority of benefit costs through plan contributions, plan members are expected to participate in the benefit costs through plan design and features." While congregations are expected to pay the entire premium costs for their employees and family members, plan members generally pay approximately 20% of their health care costs through various deductibles and co-payments in the Gold+ plan.

Calculate benefit costs by using Portico calculator found at <https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Resources/Calculators/BenefitsCostCalculator.aspx>.

Participating in the plan is not optional, except that Portico Benefit Services provides for waiver of medical-dental coverage if proof is given of coverage under a spouse's plan. When a Health Benefit waiver is granted (or if costs are reduced because the pastor is part of a clergy couple and costs are shared with another congregation), it is strongly recommended that the congregation not simply absorb the saved dollars into the church budget. Doing so would cause difficulty when the congregation again needs to provide such coverage. Rather, it is recommended that the savings be used for their intended purposes (providing benefits to church staff leadership) either by providing an offset for any additional costs, particularly premium costs, incurred by the spouse to have family medical coverage or by implementing Supplemental Benefits of Medical and Dental Reimbursement.

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 parish provides total defined compensation including housing for the first two months of disability on a self-insured basis. The parish 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, child care 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 employee(s) 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 2018 the IRS allows deductions of \$0.545 per miles for a car used for business purposes. This information is available at [www.irs.gov](http://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 his/her ministry, each deacon should be encouraged to enroll in courses of Continuing Education. Such activities improve ministry and are not vacations. The best way to encourage continuing growth is to provide the time and money that make Continuing Education activities possible. The recommended congregation's share is \$700 or more per year. The deacon contributes \$300 on his/her own each year. Up to two weeks should be available for continuing education. 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 may be mandated for some employees. If so, 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 deacons to keep abreast of developments in his/her/their profession and the rapidly evolving nature of the church.

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 remain with the congregation or be purchased at current market value by the employee at the time the employee leaves the congregation.

### **E. Conference Expenses**

The deacon's attendance at 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 each professional staff member.

### **F. Fall Theological Conference**

Fees and time for the Fall Theological 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 professional staff 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 pastor 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 he/she/they is 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 employee's check.)

### **B. Weekly Time Off (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 personal time. A minimum of one day per week is necessary. 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 emergency pastoral care 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 work week 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 pastors being the national standard in the ELCA, the nature of pastoral 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 "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**

According to the ELCA call document, sick leave is up to eight (8) weeks per year with full salary and benefits. This is not a cumulative benefit. Sick leave is thus coordinated with the ELCA disability plan. When there is extended illness, contact should be made with the synod office to coordinate benefits.

**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**

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 and benefits.

**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. A 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.

### 2019 Greater Milwaukee Synod Minimum Guidelines

| <b>Comp Chart # 1<br/>Items</b>   | <b>Annual total compensation and benefits for<br/>at 2019 Portico rates and<br/>GMS minimum guidelines</b> | <b>Annual total compensation and benefits for<br/>as proposed for 2019,<br/>if different from column 2</b> |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Total Defined Compensation- Salary</b><br><i>(from column 2 of chart in Appendix B)</i>  |  |  |
| <b>Total Portico Benefits</b><br><i>(retirement at 10%, medical at Gold+, see link to Portico calculator below)</i>   |  |  |
| <b>Total of Comp and Benefits</b><br><i>(first two rows together)</i>   |  |  |
| <b>Automobile Mileage</b><br><i>(reimbursable at current IRS rate for business miles, not commuting miles)</i>  | <b>\$1200 estimate</b>   |  |
| <b>Continuing Education</b><br><i>(up to two weeks available)</i>   | <b>\$1000 recommended<br/>(\$700 minimum)</b>  |  |
| <b>Fall Theological Conference</b><br><i>(congregation should cover all registration, lodging, and travel if rostered minister chooses to attend. This is in addition to Cont. Ed.)</i> | <b>\$300 estimate</b>  |  |
| <b>Synod Assembly</b><br><i>(annually in June – required attendance for all rostered ministers)</i>   | <b>\$200 estimate</b>  |  |
| <b>(First Call Theological Education)</b><br><i>(required for three years)</i>  | <b>\$300 estimate<br/>(if applicable)</b>  |  |
| <b>Books/Subscriptions/Phone</b>  | <b>as negotiated<br/>(e.g.: \$420 for phone/year)</b>  |  |
| <b>Vacation</b><br><i>(four weeks is standard regardless of FT or PT)</i>   | <b>4 weeks - including<br/>Sundays</b>   |  |
| <b>Total Package Estimate:</b>  | <b>Total Estimate of</b>   | <b>Total Estimate of</b>   |

## Appendix B – Minimum Compensation Guidelines for 2019

### Deacon/Lay Compensation Guideline for 2019

| Years Experience | 2019 Min Compensation |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 0                | \$38,800              |
| 1                | \$40,000              |
| 2                | \$41,010              |
| 3                | \$42,000              |
| 4                | \$42,990              |
| 5                | \$43,960              |
| 6                | \$44,920              |
| 7                | \$45,870              |
| 8                | \$46,810              |
| 9                | \$47,740              |
| 10               | \$48,670              |
| 11               | \$49,570              |
| 12               | \$50,470              |
| 13               | \$51,350              |
| 14               | \$52,230              |
| 15               | \$53,100              |
| 16               | \$53,950              |
| 17               | \$54,800              |
| 18               | \$55,640              |
| 19               | \$56,460              |
| 20               | \$57,280              |
| 21               | \$58,070              |
| 22               | \$58,820              |
| 23               | \$59,630              |
| 24               | \$60,390              |
| 25               | \$61,150              |
| 26               | \$61,890              |
| 27               | \$62,630              |
| 28               | \$63,370              |
| 29               | \$64,080              |
| 30               | \$64,790              |
| 31               | \$65,300              |
| 32               | \$65,810              |
| 33               | \$66,320              |
| 34               | \$66,830              |
| 35               | \$67,340              |

\*For additional years beyond thirty-five add \$510 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<sup>2</sup> and the congregation<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

### **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, housing allowance, retirement and insurance coverage). Car allowance, a ministry expense, is normally not paid during sabbatical time.**
- 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 staff to consider a sabbatical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Staff 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.<sup>4</sup>
- \_\_\_\_\_ Staff or Council consults with the synod office regarding pastoral assistance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ All arrangements with persons involved should be in place three months in advance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Staff makes all necessary arrangements for his/her course of study, travel, etc.

*Please call the synod office if you have questions.*

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<sup>4</sup> 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.?