

BLACKHAWK PRESBYTERY MINIMUM COMPENSATION REQUIREMENTS

Overview

The relationship between pastor and congregation, whether involving a minister of the Word and Sacrament or a commissioned pastor, is a unique employment situation. Presbyterian calls occur between pastors and congregations who have discerned God's direction in creating a relationship of mutual ministry, and who have had that call validated and affirmed by the Presbytery. The presbytery is a representative council of the church and is comprised of ordained ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders from all our churches. The connectional nature of Presbyterian call, and its initiation by God, preclude a purely economic or marketplace approach to the topic of compensation for pastors.

Like other members of the Body of Christ, pastors are called to be servants of God. God calls pastors into service in a variety of settings each of which, when faithfully discerned, ought to be honored regardless of size or wealth of the congregation or specialized ministry. At the same time, faithful discernment of a call includes a practice of good stewardship of the resources of the whole of the denomination. As the Holy Scripture teaches, "Elders who lead well should be paid double, especially those who work with public speaking and teaching. ... *'Don't put a muzzle on an ox while it treads grain,'* and *'Workers deserve their pay.'*" (1 Timothy 5:17-18, Common English Bible.)

The minimum effective salary for ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioned pastors, based on a full time work week of 40 hours, is determined by the Commission on Ministry (COM) and is approved by the Presbytery Assembly each year. Effective salary is only part of the overall compensation requirement for pastors. These overall minimum requirements apply to both installed and contractually hired ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioned pastors, and include:

- effective salary, including housing allowance; as approved by the Presbytery;
- self-employment contributions (SECA);
- pension, death and disability coverage, as described below;
- medical coverage, as described below;
- vouchered allowances for
 - professional expense reimbursement, including mileage at the current IRS rate;
 - study leave; and
 - health reimbursement per Blackhawk's Health Reimbursement Arrangement policy; and
- where applicable, sabbatical leave;
- where applicable, family leave;
- a minimum of four weeks vacation and two weeks study leave; and
- state and federal holidays.

Comment: Pastoral salaries, like all salaries, are subject to taxation. Bonuses, for example, can be treated by the IRS as income and taxed accordingly. For that reason, bonuses are discouraged, housing allowances should comply with IRS expectations, and all other allowances shall be vouchered. Any questions about tax issues, including SECA (self-employment), should be referred to COM.

Medical Coverage

The Board of Pensions (BOP) is transitioning its medical coverage from providing full coverage for a pastor and their spouse and dependents (family coverage), to providing less-expensive coverage only for pastors, though family coverage will still be available at a fixed and higher price. The situation is in flux. Presbyteries across the country are experimenting with ways of adapting to the new and evolving BOP insurance coverage options. Blackhawk Presbytery is in close communication with other presbyteries, and will update its guidance as the transition process proceeds.

Prior to 2024, all pastors were covered under the old BOP system, which automatically included family coverage. Pastors whose current call began prior to 2024 must continue to receive full BOP family coverage from the BOP without any reduction in the pastor's effective salary. Pastors whose calls began after 2024 have other options. If an installed pastor does not have a spouse or dependents, or if the pastor's family has alternate coverage (as may be the case if the pastor's spouse is employed), then the congregation need only provide BOP coverage for the pastor. If the pastor and their family require family coverage, such coverage should be provided by the congregation. However, family coverage may be sought from outside the BOP, and coverage for pastors who are not installed is not required to be provided by the BOP. If a pastor who is not installed does not require medical coverage, COM can approve a call that does not include medical coverage.

Minimum Compensation Requirements

In the past, Blackhawk Presbytery has approved calls that do not meet Presbytery minimum. Blackhawk Presbytery shall no longer approve such calls. Not only does the Book of Order not allow exceptions to minimum terms of call (G-2.0804), calls that do not meet Presbytery minimums are unfair to pastors and to congregations that do meet minimum standards.

God does not call anyone to discipleship beyond his or her abilities and resources. Therefore, any congregation that cannot meet the Presbytery minimum as its pastoral leadership is currently structured, is presumably called to an alternate form of pastoral leadership. Discernment is surely needed. Therefore, any congregation that cannot meet Presbytery minimum may apply to the Presbytery for short-term assistance in meeting minimum terms of call. Such assistance shall only be granted on a short-term basis and on the condition that the congregation enters a period of discernment about how God is calling it to mission under its current circumstances.