



**Southeastern Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# **CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCES COMPENSATION & BENEFITS**

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## **Introduction**

Our Guidelines Team of rostered ministers and lay congregational leaders worked together to change our 2021 compensation guidelines to better serve the needs of our congregations. Some of the topics that used to be included in the guidelines have been taken out and given their own space. This congregation resource have been prepared by the Guidelines Team (Compensation & Benefits Guidelines Committee). Members include: Ms. Sabra Black (Holy Trinity, Marietta, GA), Chair; Mr. Mark Ritter (Holy Trinity, Marietta, GA), Mr. Richard Bates (Advent, Murfreesboro, TN), Dr. Tim Settlerlund (Faith Lutheran, Lebanon, TN) and the Rev. Michelle Kuhlman (Grace, Carrollton, GA), and the Rev. Karen Boda (Synod Staff Liaison)

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## **Guidelines for Sabbaticals for Rostered Ministers**

1. The following guidelines are provided to assist rostered ministers and calling bodies in the provision of sabbatical leave.
2. Letters of call for rostered ministers should include the calling bodies' intention to provide a sabbatical at the appropriate time.
3. Rostered ministers and calling bodies ideally should begin planning sabbatical leave at least a year in advance of the proposed leave, and are asked to consult with the bishop's office as planning begins.
4. Sabbatical leave normally will be for a minimum of three months. Durations beyond the minimum three month guidelines should be mutually determined and agreed to in the sabbatical covenant between congregation/agency/Synod and rostered minister.
5. Rostered ministers who have a minimum of seven years in rostered, full-time ministry are eligible for a sabbatical leave every five years of continuous service in their current call.
6. A rostered minister shall agree to serve the calling body for a minimum of one year following the completion of sabbatical leave. Exceptions to this policy because of unusual circumstances must be discussed by the rostered minister with the calling body and the bishop.
7. The base salary, housing allowance or housing equity allowance (if applicable), Social security offset, retirement contribution, and health care coverage should be maintained at the current level, with the rostered minister assuming responsibilities for all other personal and family expenses. Continuing education funds may be used for seminars, workshops, retreat time, etc. in accordance with the guidelines for continuing education.
8. During the time when the rostered minister and calling body are apart from each other, both the congregation/agency/Synod and the rostered minister will be blessed by new experiences. Those experiences will bring about change in the relationship between the rostered minister and calling body. It can be helpful for both to anticipate this, plan for it, and prepare to celebrate the growth in discipleship which can occur.
  - a. It is suggested that mutual sabbatical goals for both the rostered minister and for the calling body be discussed, set, worked toward during the sabbatical, and reviewed when the sabbatical leave is concluded.

- b. These goals should be established at least three months before the sabbatical leave begins, in consultation with the bishop's office, and should be approved by the rostered minister, the congregation/agency/Synod council or supervisory group, and should be shared with the bishop.
9. When the calling body begins to make plans for having others assume the normal responsibilities of the rostered minister during the sabbatical leave, the bishop's office may be consulted for suggestions and ideas. During the rostered minister's sabbatical leave, a member of the bishop's staff may be present for a worship service or other occasion to represent the synod's support for this program.
10. Rostered ministers on sabbatical leave are not expected to return to their calling body for pastoral or other responsibilities that others can assume, e.g. baptisms, weddings, funerals, youth retreats, council or board meetings, etc.
11. When the sabbatical leave is over, the rostered minister and calling body will prepare a report summarizing goal accomplishment and re-entry challenges, and present that report to the council, board, or supervisor in the calling body, and to the bishop's office. This report should be completed no longer than six weeks after the conclusion of sabbatical leave. A time of communal celebration should accompany both the beginning and the end of this time apart.
12. An excellent resource for sabbatical planning is *Clergy Renewal – The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*, by A. Richard Bullock & Richard J. Bruesehoff.

## Flexible Ministry Considerations

Various settings including multi-staff congregations and agencies, as well as smaller congregations and other settings, may warrant flexible ministry calls as an ideal stewardship and resource solution for ministry. Interim ministry may be another suitable opportunity to consider a flexible ministry call, particularly if the predecessor rostered minister was less than full-time and/or if resource limitations need to be considered.

When reviewing and discerning flexible ministry options, be aware that not one model will work for every situation. Congregations need to be aware that utilizing a flexible ministry call is a different model of ministry, which may require a different level of lay leadership. All of this needs to be negotiated between the congregation leadership and the rostered ministers, and then communicated continually with the congregation.

Specificity is also paramount when considering the creation of a new flexible call. In multi-staff settings, clarity of expectations is essential for 1. The specific duty area(s) of ministry to be covered, 2. Details of any general ministry also to be covered, and 3. Overall ministry *not* expected to be covered. In flexible positions, specificity and clarity of teamwork is also essential. Clearly discern the primary top areas of focus for the new call, and plan as a congregation or agency to invest considerable time and energy in other areas of ministry. For example, if preaching and worship are top priorities, perhaps invest as a congregation in helping coordinate much of the visitation. If visitation is a primary focus for the rostered minister, perhaps invest as a congregation in helping with teaching, leading retreats, etc. For the sake of a healthy call and for long-term success, don't expect the rostered minister to do "everything." Even in full-time ministry settings, it's truly a shared ministry together. This is all the more essential in the planning and living out of part-time ministry together.

What are the hours for this ministry? 45 hours per week is the suggested norm. With this model,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time would be approximately between 30-35 hours and  $\frac{1}{2}$  time would be approximately 20-25 hours. Any percentage of time is theoretically possible, though please note that if you consider anything less than 15 hours, this ministry is generally considered contractual rather than a call, and is typically paid specifically by the hour with ELCA benefits not included.

What about salary and benefits? To be within the compensation guidelines, simply pro-rate the full-time amount. For example, a half-time call of 20-25 hours a week should include half of the suggested salary guidelines as a minimum amount. *Percentages* such as Social Security offset and Pension should stay the same, since they will be based on the lower (half-time) dollar amount. Vacation minimums, etc. should be the same as well, since they will be essentially pro-rated. For example, if a full-time rostered minister receives 5 weeks' vacation, the same should be true for half-time. Simply account for the difference in time. If a half-time rostered minister works 3 days per week, a "week" of vacation would be those 3 days off. One exception to note is Portico, for ELCA health benefits. Their rates won't necessarily be half for a half-time rostered minister. However, since they base their rates in part on defined compensation, the rate for a congregation to pay for a half-time rostered minister should generally be significantly lower than a full-time rostered minister. See [porticobenefits.org](http://porticobenefits.org) for details.

### Flexible Model 1: More Days a Week Off

This is currently the most common part-time model. The part-time rostered minister working in this model should receive the full-time number of Sundays off (vacation), which is often 4 Sundays per year. (Note: Otherwise part-time rostered ministers will be working more Sundays than full-time rostered ministers.) In addition to this, a part-time rostered minister will have more than one day completely off, when no work is expected. At a minimum, this will mean that the congregation will need lay visitation people and some lay assistance with office tasks (phone messages, etc.), so that the part-time rostered minister truly is off those days, including being free to work at another job

For example – For  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, 2 days per week will be off (plus standard 4 weeks of vacation)

### Flexible Model 2: Weeks (Including Sundays) Off Per Month

This model allows for a congregation to have a true picture of what part-time ministry looks like on a Sunday, and many rostered ministers who have worked part-time consider a model that includes proportionate Sundays off the only fair model for rostered ministers, who are otherwise simply expected to do a full-time job at a lower salary. This approach would give a part-time rostered minister the benefit of being able to have some full weekends with family who are often on more traditional work and school schedules. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would be proportional as well ( $\frac{3}{4}$  time rostered ministers would have 3 weeks,  $\frac{1}{2}$  time rostered ministers would have 2 weeks).

For example – for  $\frac{1}{2}$  time, 2 weeks (including Sundays) per month will be off (plus 2 weeks of vacation)

### Flexible Model 3: Months Off Per Year

This model is a variation of Model 2. This model might make part-time ministry an attractive option (rather than just a lower paying option) for rostered ministers who are parents of school-aged children or spouses of teachers/ school staff. This could involve either the summer months off, and/or January, for example. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would be proportional as well ( $\frac{3}{4}$  time rostered ministers would have 3 weeks,  $\frac{1}{2}$  time rostered ministers would have 2 weeks, etc.).

Flexible Model 4: Combination Models Some rostered ministers have chosen a compromise model between Model 1, 2 and 3 in an effort to make the part-time position workable for the small congregation and also a benefit for the rostered minister. In this model, the rostered minister might take extra days or partial days off a week, and additional Sundays off, with less official vacation; OR work full-time most of the year, take full 4 weeks of vacation, and take more Sundays off. These off Sundays can be Sundays not crucial liturgically, but important for families (Thanksgiving, Spring Break, and some during summer vacation months). This could look like one of the following scenarios:

For  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, work full-time hours/days and 6 Sundays off per year (plus 4 weeks of vacation)

### Flexible Model 5: Job Share

This model fills a full-time position with two-part time rostered ministers. As with a corporate job share, the rostered ministers are responsible for the entire role of rostered minister, but they share the job and are interchangeable. Both rostered ministers are not expected to attend every event, including worship. One day of the week is an overlap day, where the rostered ministers catch each other up and do planning. The other days are covered by one rostered minister. The rostered minister “in” the office will cover whatever comes up, is scheduled, and needs continuation, even if started by the other. Outstanding communication skills are essential for the two rostered ministers, as information is continually passed from one to the other. The advantage for the congregation is the wealth of experience and skill sets brought by two rostered ministers plus two voices from the pulpit. The advantage for the rostered ministers is that they can hold a part time position, likely in a larger congregation, work closely with another rostered minister, and are energized and fresher for the role. The ability for rostered ministers to share ministry with another should not be underestimated. This model may be attractive for parents, those with caregiving responsibilities, those winding down their career and those who want to share ministry.

### Flexible Model 6: Job Split

In this model, two rostered ministers fill a full-time position, but the role of rostered minister is split, not shared. Splits could be based on needs of the congregation or skills sets of the rostered ministers. For example, one rostered minister could do children and youth ministry, another adult education. One could be responsible for outreach, another stewardship and evangelism. The advantage for the congregation is a wealth of experience and skill sets by having two rostered ministers, as well as two voices from the pulpit. The rostered ministers would rotate Sunday responsibilities. The advantage for the rostered ministers is that they can have a part time flexible position in what would likely be a larger congregation and also focus on their gifts. The ability for rostered ministers to share ministry with another should also not be underestimated.

## **The role of the Mutual Ministry Committee and Personnel Committee**

To support rostered ministers, each calling body is expected to have a Mutual Ministry Committee as specified in the Model Constitution for Congregations, C13.04. According to this document, the committee members should be “appointed jointly by president and the rostered minister.” Terms of office shall be two years, with three members to be appointed each successive year. It is recommended that Mutual Ministry Committee members hold no other office in the calling body during their term. It is recommended that there be a line of communication between Mutual Ministry and the calling body.

The role of a Mutual Ministry Committee is to support and nurture a healthy relationship between rostered minister(s) and people. It does so by 1) encouraging and holding rostered ministers accountable for the care of their spiritual, emotional and physical well-being; 2) working with rostered ministers to plan and hold them accountable for continuing education that is based on the needs of the calling body as well as the professional development needs of the individual; 3) providing a forum of mutuality and trust in which rostered ministers can reflect on the work they are doing and their role in providing leadership and direction.

Although the Mutual Ministry Committee can advocate for adequate financial compensation for rostered ministers, it is recommended that compensation matters be addressed by a Personnel Committee or Church Council.

A Personnel Committee exists to make recommendations to the Council that enable the calling body to carry out obligations as an employer. As supervisor of staff, the rostered minister may be a member of this committee. Personnel Committees provide an evaluation system and ensure that rostered ministers receive regular evaluations of their performance. They also annually review the compensation of rostered ministers and make recommendations to the Budget Committee or Council about merit increases or suggested changes to compensation. Personnel Committees develop, publish and maintain the Personnel policies of the calling body. The Southeastern Synod has a model personnel policy for their calling bodies. It is available on the synod web site or by contacting the synod office.

## Review of Ministry Performance

In addition to working with a Mutual Ministry Committee, regular reviews of rostered ministers can provide an opportunity for both the rostered minister and the calling body to identify and develop ministry and leadership needs for the calling body. This review of ministry should be a mutual rather than one-way process. As such, time should be taken to review *both* the rostered minister's role in the effectiveness of ministry *and* the congregation's role in the effectiveness of ministry, as well as the effectiveness of the rostered minister and calling body working together. The goal is to foster mutual accountability, investment, and growth, for the sake of successful overall ministry together in Christ. It is suggested that a rostered minister participate in a ministry review at least once a year. Where a Personnel Committee exists, it should have responsibility for oversight of this process. Where there is more than one rostered minister serving in a calling body, the senior minister and Personnel Committee should together determine a fair process of evaluation for all members of the rostered staff. Where there is no Personnel Committee, the Executive Committee (officers of Council) typically serves in this role.

While an annual review may be regarded as sufficient, it may not provide the best overall assessment of an individual's ministry or of the employer's ministry. More frequent reviews can aid in further development of positive leadership qualities as well as pinpointing potential areas of conflict. Early identification can lead to more effective ministry.

Good evaluations start with good job descriptions and goals. Rostered ministers start out with job descriptions when they are hired, but these need to be updated each year, as necessary, in the evaluation process. There also need to be goals established to guide the rostered minister so that the most important things can be the highest priority of his/her time and effort, and these change over time and need to be updated in the evaluation process also.

The evaluation process needs to be non-adversarial. It needs to be an open forum where all issues can be put on the table. Start with your constitution – it should lay out the responsibilities of the rostered minister. The following is taken from the ELCA website:

Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

- a. Every minister of Word and Sacrament shall:
  - 1) preach the Word;
  - 2) administer the sacraments;
  - 3) conduct public worship;
  - 4) provide pastoral care;
  - 5) seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;
  - 6) impart knowledge of this church and its wider ministry through available channels of effective communication;
  - 7) witness to the Kingdom of God in the community, in the nation, and abroad; and
  - 8) speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.

- b. Each pastor with a congregational call shall, within the congregation:
  - 1) offer instruction, confirm, marry, visit the sick and distressed, and bury the dead;
  - 2) relate to all schools and organizations of this congregation;
  - 3) install regularly elected members of the Congregation Council;
  - 4) with the council, administer discipline;
  - 5) endeavor to increase the support given by the congregation to the work of the churchwide organization and of the *(insert name of synod)* ; and
  - 6) encourage adherence to covenantal relationship with this church as expressed in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

There are several resources that are available for evaluating a rostered minister.

<https://alban.org/archive/ask-alban-evaluating-our-pastor/>  
<https://alban.org/archive/beyond-the-church-parking-lot-finding-better-ways-to-evaluate-clergy/>  
<https://www.congregationalconsulting.org/five-pitfalls-to-avoid-when-evaluating-the-senior-minister/>

**To help facilitate this process, we strongly encourage the appropriate leadership within the congregation (council president, personnel committee, mutual ministry committee, etc.) to complete the “Definition of Compensation, Benefits, and Responsibilities of the Rostered Minister” form on a yearly basis. All pages are necessary as they promote review and assessment of shared ministry goals and expectations.**

## **Health Benefits Coverage**

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, dental, prescription drug, retirement, disability, and group life insurance benefits in one bundled program.

A bundled approach helps 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. For more information, see the ELCA Philosophy of Benefits at [PorticoBenefits.org/philosophy](http://PorticoBenefits.org/philosophy).

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. Plan members are expected to participate in the cost of utilizing the benefits (e.g., deductibles, coinsurance, and copays).

For example, health care plans with higher deductibles generally charge a lower premium while plans with lower deductibles generally charge a higher premium. Because the congregation generally pays the premiums and the rostered ministers (and other employees) pay the deductibles, the choice of plan coverage allocates the relative, overall cost of health care between the congregation and the rostered clergy.

The ELCA Church Council has approved a balance of cost-sharing between congregations and plan members. Portico offers a choice of ELCA-Primary health benefit options that fit this approved balance. Each fall, congregations in this synod should select one of these approved options to offer their sponsored plan members for the following year. During annual enrollment, Portico will notify congregations which options fit within the range that the ELCA Church Council has approved. Congregations should engage in conversation with their rostered minister to determine the option that best fits their needs. Current contribution rates are available on at [EmployerLink/PorticoBenefits.org](http://EmployerLink/PorticoBenefits.org) or by calling Portico at 800.352.2876.