# Northwest Washington Synod 2022 Compensation Guidelines

October 7, 2021

TO: Northwest Washington Synod Councils and Financial Teams

FROM: Northwest Washington Synod Personnel Committee:  
Fred Row, Chair; Debbie Boyce, Ivar Hillesland, David Johnson, and Cathy Wood

As we propose our 2022 NWWA Synod Compensation Guidelines, we would like to express our gratitude for both the work of all our rostered ministers and all the congregations in our Synod. This has been a difficult year in many respects but we are hoping, even with these guidelines, that we might continue to work together for the sake of Christ and the good news we share.

In that spirit, our guidelines this year tries to address several pieces in our particular context:

* We have a wide range of congregations in various sizes and stages of ministry—with then a wide range of capacities to compensate as we should, can, or is just.
* This past year of the pandemic has been a financial hardship on many congregations.
* The housing prices in Northwest Washington have continued to increase significantly—magnified in particular for those new to the Synod and coming in from other places.
* More and more congregations prefer that their ministers live in the communities where their congregations are located.
* The cost of living increased significantly even during this pandemic year.
* Deacons are now a part of our ordained rosters.

When you add into the mix this year of us trying to move to one way of figuring out compensation from three ways last year, we would probably be fooling ourselves to think that we could come up with guidelines that will satisfy everybody. So, particularly for this year, we invite you to remember these points:

* **“Guidelines.”** This worksheet is not an exact science. Let’s not have this worksheet take away some of our best gifts like *conversation* and real *listening*, inviting all to bring to the table both our needs and capacities, and working together towards a common mission.
* Mission starts might need to compensate lower than what the worksheet calculates.
* We encourage congregations to be creative in helping their ministers afford housing when housing adjustments in the worksheet may not be enough.
* Remember to let the Spirit blow in your space and your conversations together.
* **Consumer Price Index.** Since this time last year, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Seattle increased 5.5% and 5% in the Western Region. As is our usual Synod procedure, the 2022 base salary reflects this increase.
* **Creative Compensation.** We recognize that some congregations will not be able to meet recommended guidelines. Some creative and alternative ways to compensate ministers are still offered ([Resources/Compensation Guidelines](https://www.lutheransnw.org/resources/compensation-guidelines): “Compensation Policies- 2021”). This might also give ministers with higher years of experience a way to serve in our changing landscape.
* **General Comparisons.** School district administrator salary schedules with similar education levels may be consulted: MA+45 (MDiv / two MA’s) and MA+90 (DMin or PhD.) Congregations may also consider consulting school principals salaries.
* **Full time salary out of reach?** If a part time call is negotiated with a continuing rostered leader, this is still *a change in call* and must be reported to the Synod Office.
* **Portico Benefits.** For part time rostered leaders under call, full medical and retirement benefits must be paid by the congregation unless the call is *less than* .5 (half time).
* **Changes in compensation** must be by mutual agreement between congregational leaders and rostered leaders and should be communicated to the Synod Office using one of these forms:

1. [**Definition of Compensation, Benefits & Responsibilities for Minister of Word & Sacrament**](https://www.lutheransnw.org/df_media/W1siZiIsIjIwMjIvMDEvMTIvMTUvMDEvNDUvNmE3MTQ4NmUtMDZiYi00MjIwLThmYzItMTFlNWUwNzY5NDg5L0NvbXBlbnNhdGlvbl9hbmRfQmVuZWZpdHNfZm9yX2FfV29yZCBhbmQgU2FjcmFtZW50X0Zvcm0gLSB3IGhlbHBzLnBkZiJdXQ/Compensation_and_Benefits_for_a_Word%20and%20Sacrament_Form%20-%20w%20helps.pdf?sha=0987fe1126c7fafa)
2. [**Definition of Compensation, Benefits & Responsibilities for Minister of Word and Service**](https://www.lutheransnw.org/df_media/W1siZiIsIjIwMjIvMDEvMTIvMTUvMDEvNDUvMGYwMzdhODQtMDI4MS00ZTc4LTgyNmUtMTY3Mzk2MTIxZDZkL0NvbXBlbnNhdGlvbl9hbmRfQmVuZWZpdHNfZm9yX2FfV29yZCBhbmQgU2VydmljZV9Gb3JtIC0gdyBoZWxwcy5wZGYiXV0/Compensation_and_Benefits_for_a_Word%20and%20Service_Form%20-%20w%20helps.pdf?sha=9e1ca39b1c13474a). (Guidance at end of each form on how to complete.)

* [**Compensation Worksheet**](https://dq5pwpg1q8ru0.cloudfront.net/2022/01/02/13/09/13/07eb3ed7-5b4f-4d7a-b1e6-3c4ec96b113b/2022%20Compensation%20Worksheet%20updated.xlsx)**.** The compensation worksheet will be the only resource we will be offering this year to help guide compensation discussions—allowing personnel teams to more fully appreciate the experience and expertise that our rostered ministers bring. [**Find a Tutorial Video HERE.**](https://vimeo.com/633498651)

**Rationale for Only One Worksheet**

Many synods have begun to make the switch from salary charts to a worksheet. The reasons for this are manyfold:

1. A worksheet is more dynamic and enables both churches and rostered leaders to have more in-depth and open conversation about salaries and benefits. This helps to illumine all the facets of how pay is determined, many of which might normally go unrecognized or stay under the water line as potential points of tension. Transparency is incredibly important when it comes to church finances.
2. Housing in Concrete, WA is not the same cost as housing in Seattle, WA. We must consider the diversity of cost throughout our synod when assessing reasonable compensation. If churches want their rostered leaders to live in close proximity they must consider the financial ramifications of that desire.
3. Previous experience. A 50-year-old woman with a PhD in Management and extensive experience with decision making, managing staff, budgeting, etc. is ordained after working for 25 years in an executive level position at a prestigious non-profit company. Under the former salary scale system, all that experience would potentially be disregarded. This worksheet helps to accentuate the immense value of past experiences and wisdom for the work of ministry. We can probably all agree that seminary does not teach all the skills required to shepherd a congregation well.
4. Advanced education/language proficiency. Our churches support the continuing education of our leaders through time off and financial commitments because they know it will benefit both the individual and the community itself. Likewise, having a leader who is proficient in more than one language is a gift that our ministries should value and compensate.
5. The format of the salary chart was set up almost 20 years ago based on salary studies at the time. Year after year the amounts were increased based on cost-of-living increases. Over time, the impact of a blanket percentage increase to the chart means that salaries on the upper end of the scale are going to increase significantly more than those at the lower end. The result is that over years there is far more income disparity from the bottom and top and injustice towards those on the lower end of the spectrum. There was also a decision at some point in the past to make salary increases based on experience happen every two years instead of every year from 10 years of experience onwards.

**Some considerations:**

1. Clergy should be rewarded for longevity in their current call. It takes many years to learn the culture of a community and develop the relationships for more meaningful change. However, after a significant number of years this may no longer be an obvious benefit to the congregation. Churches also benefit from the fresh ideas of new leadership or the generational experiences a younger clergy member may bring to the context. We have attempted to factor this benefit in the bonus category of the worksheet.
2. One could argue that rostered leaders should be responsible for negotiating their salaries based on all these considerations, putting the impetus on them. We believe rostered leaders should not be punished for having poor salary negotiating tactics or for being sheepish about requesting salary changes. Our desire is to automate this process as best as possible for the sake of accountability, trust, and accuracy.
3. It is true that our economic and educational systems have produced far more student debt than ever before. Our youngest clergy often begin ministry with massive amounts of student loans, even after working while going to school and living as cheaply as they are able. Compensation should take into account this burden faced by many of our less experienced rostered leaders. This is a larger justice issue than our individual congregations can solve, but it also can’t be ignored.