

## Salary

There is no better place to begin this topic of a minister's compensation than the Bible. In 1 Timothy 5:17–18 (ESV), Paul states clearly that a minister should be paid for his work and quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Leviticus 19:13 to make his point from Old Testament Scripture. This teaching is repeated in 1 Corinthians 9:7–12 where he argues that those who serve the church are workers who are deserving of their wages. Jesus as well taught his disciples in Luke 10:7–8 and Matthew 10:10 that they should expect to be cared for by those whom they came to serve. While this is not an exhaustive exegesis of the topic, it is abundantly clear from Scripture that a minister should be fairly paid for his labors to the church.

The subject of a minister's compensation has the potential to set off alarm bells. One alarm might be an effort to set minister salaries from a denominational mandate instead of a complex set of reasonable factors (i.e. actual cost of living, experience, credentials, scope of responsibilities, unusual circumstances, etc.). Setting salary levels for ministers in the PCA is not the purpose of this portion of the Guidelines. Our desire is to help churches thoughtfully reflect on these complex issues. Determining an appropriate salary level is truly challenging, but it is a necessary consideration for every minister. As you study these issues, please carefully consider the following principles.

At a minimum, a minister should be paid at least enough to live at the accepted standard of living of the congregation or the Session which he is serving. It is all too tempting for some to say (or think), "I don't understand why we have to pay Pastor Joe so much! In my day I was able to get by on half of that with four children." Because of inflation over the past 20 years, the costs associated with maintaining a household have risen dramatically. It would serve the church well to complete a thorough personal budget analysis for an incoming minister before he is hired and to give him an opportunity to review and to point out weaknesses in that analysis before issuing a call. When a minister does point out a weakness in a proposed budget or call package (or even in his

current call package), his comments should always be viewed graciously as an evidence of faithful concern for his family, and not as an indication that he is "in the ministry for the money."

Care should be taken to avoid extremes. A minister serving in Palm Beach, Florida doesn't need a chauffeured limo, nor should he be required to live in grinding poverty if he serves in Haiti. The PCA Book of Church Order (BCO) provides an excellent standard for the financial care of a minister and his family. BCO 20-6 states, we (the church) "do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation, promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of..." If a minister living conservatively is unable to make ends meet on the salary provided, then he is not free of worldly cares and avocations. In fact the stress created by the financial pressure he is under may significantly erode his ability to minister effectively to his congregation.

Paying a minister a competitive salary involves evaluating several other important factors. Just as the secular world pays higher salaries for certain professional capabilities, so should a minister's extensive educational background, technical abilities, and experience be reflected in his remuneration. Moreover, specific pastoral responsibilities, church budget limitations, and other unique circumstances are also an important part of this larger and more complex compensation equation. In view of these issues, churches should carefully weigh each element, including the specific needs of their minister and his family, the cost of living in your particular area, and the salaries of similarly qualified individuals. Specific information from salary surveys might also be helpful; they may be acquired from the following resources:

- PCA Administrative Committee (678)825-1000 (to request a copy of the PCA Pastors Compensation Study)

•National Association of Church Business Administrators [www.ministrypay.com](http://www.ministrypay.com)

•Compensation Handbook for Church Staff [www.yourchurchresources.com](http://www.yourchurchresources.com)

Once a call has been issued to a minister, every church should schedule at least an annual reevaluation of the minister's compensation. This job is best accomplished by a committee of the Session having the authority to talk directly to the minister. Church leaders should understand that most ministers are naturally uncomfortable talking about money and many will not press the issue. But church leaders should take very seriously their promise to properly support a minister and his family by keeping him free from worldly cares and avocations. A private meeting between a trusted member of the Session and the minister is often a perfect time to ask "Pastor, how are things going financially for you and your family... really?" If an annual review of a minister's compensation is not done, then inflation will erode the purchasing power of his compensation over time. All too often a minister and his family will suffer in silence and begin to accumulate debt. With such a burden hanging over his head, it is hard to imagine a minister in this circumstance experiencing maximum effectiveness in his labors.

Frequently, hard choices must be made when it comes to the church budget, and staff salaries are a large part of any church budget. Given the PCA's high biblical priority on the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, all churches must give high priority to this portion of the budget. For instance, , if there is a choice between giving the minister a needed raise or making improvements to the church building infrastructure, choosing to support the preaching of the Word is the right choice. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a church should never pay a minister using the "Lump Sum" Methodology .