

SOUTH WISCONSIN DISTRICT

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



2026

Salary & Benefits

Guidelines & Considerations

Pastors, Teachers, and Professional Church Workers

For implementation during the 2026 Calendar Year

When it comes to salary, benefits, and general human resources, the South Wisconsin District staff works to keep abreast of the changes and challenges, to offer advice where appropriate, and in all cases to be a worthwhile resource to our employers and their employees alike.

The guidelines and salary suggestions contained herein are offered as a service to the congregations and schools of the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Congregations and schools are neither instructed nor required to use them or the salary figures generated by them.

These guidelines were created as a result of historical experiences, extensive research, and continued collaboration with other LCMS districts and should be considered best practices. But they, like any collection of guidelines, are based on informed assumptions which may or may not be true for every congregation and school. It is the responsibility of each congregation and school to use this guide or other appropriate resources to create a fair and equitable plan of compensation and benefits for their employees be they called, contracted, or at-will. It is also best practice that employee handbooks, standing agreements, and contracts of employment be regularly reviewed and updated, and in consultation with a legal professional where applicable.

New for 2026

The headlines are hard to ignore... **“Wage growth flat for 2026 amid economic jitters”**¹

The suggested base salary herein (the keystone of by which all other salaries are calculated) is updated annually based on a sampling of public school salaries and a review of the annual pay raise for federal employees, the Social Security Administration’s Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) from the previous October, as well as Employment Cost Index (ECI) data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And this year, these metrics remain mostly unmoved (with some even decreasing!) since last year.

After several years of significant base salary increases (3.2% in 2025, 4.1% in 2024, 4.15% in 2023, and 3% in 2022), wage growth was bound to taper following recent periods of rapid growth now paired with leveling inflation and broader economic uncertainty.

As such, the suggested base for Option A remains unchanged from the previous year, while Option B actually sees decrease ranging from 0.36% to 1.89% as local markets dictate. Please know that I am NOT advocating for decreased wages; I am presenting the same data for your consideration as I have in the past.

Rather than accept decreases, I hope that you will challenge yourself as one article suggests, “Employers are planning to stay flat with salaries — or decrease them — in the next year, leaving organizations to rely on engaging employees and keeping them happy in other ways.”²

- If you pay anything less than 100% of District scale, I urge you to take this opportunity to step up and do more for your workers.
- Review these guidelines and suggestions and consider adding a benefit you don’t currently offer or increase ones you do offer (e.g., 403b match, health savings account contribution, SECA offset, create a housing equity policy, etc.).
- Finally, if your employees are enrolled in the Concordia Plans, educate yourself *and* your employees about the many benefits available to them by exploring the [Employer Benefits Administration Toolkit](#) on their web site. I would argue that the physical, mental, and financial health of our church workers has a direct impact on the health of our churches and schools.

Paul Reske, *Business Manager*

[October 2025]

¹ <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/wage-growth-flat-2026-economic-jitters-payscale/757124/>

² <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/benefits-compensation/employer-salary-increase-predictions-2026>

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1. Purpose

Pastors, teachers, and other church workers are gifts from God to the people and congregations of our District (Ephesians 4:11). Our care of these workers reflects our own high regard for the divinely instituted Office of the Holy Ministry (Galatians 6:6). All professional church workers (ordained or commissioned) should be due a salary comparable to their professional peers, along with health, retirement, and survivor benefits (I Timothy 5:18). Those who have demonstrated unusual faithfulness in their labors certainly deserve additional consideration (I Timothy 5:7).

But proper care for our workers means more than just financial compensation (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). We also want our workers to devote time to their personal lives, lest in tending the household of God they neglect their own families (I Timothy 3:4-5). Therefore, it is meet, right and salutary that the congregation, through its responsible officers, should ensure adequate vacation and weekly rest.

We also desire emotional support for our workers, their spouses, and children, as they conduct their ministries, to encourage a radiant and joyful sharing of the Gospel. So, we remind each other to pray for them, to encourage them by our words and actions and to appreciate their need to gather frequently with other peers and professionals.

Finally, continuing education is also important. Our workers need to relate to the issues of the day in order that, through their understanding, our witness to the world might be winsome and persuasive. The congregation will want to make time and funds available for the worker's continuing education (II Timothy 2:15).

2. Before Implementation

The establishment of a permanent Salary Committee is recommended for each congregation. This committee should be convened annually. The membership of the committee could include the Chairman of the Board of Elders, Chairman of the Board of Christian Education, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and members at large. Your pastor(s) and principal might also serve as advisory members of this committee. The purpose of this committee would be to (re)evaluate all wages and benefits and conduct a complete survey as the economic situation warrants.

Please recognize that there may be substantial differences between present wages and these recommendations. It may not be feasible to make up this difference at one time. The congregation should study the proposed salary schedule, set a timetable for achieving these goals, and perhaps raise salaries some each year until these levels are reached.

Congregations adopting this compensation guide may find they have workers paid in excess of these guidelines. Care should be taken in adjusting salaries for such workers. A congregation may choose to grandfather those workers at their current salary, allowing only cost of living adjustments until the new scale catches up, or determine another reasonable method to handle the situation.

Organize

Collect materials, resources, and statistics that may include:

- Updated South Wisconsin District Salary Guidelines & Considerations
- Updated Concordia Plans [Compensation Decision Support Tool](#)
- Your congregation's present salary and benefit schedules and policies
- Local public school salary and benefit information
- Other statistical information about your community (available at such locations as your local public or college libraries, city hall, county courthouse, chamber of commerce, public utilities)

Consider

What is the purpose and mission of your congregation and its ministries including the Christian day school where one exists?

Have you given a careful and honest evaluation of present salaries and benefits offered to your workers?

Have you made a comprehensive study of job descriptions, responsibilities, expectations, and division of tasks among staff?

Have you made a thorough comparison of community statistical information including salaries and benefits paid in your local public schools and other professional personnel?

Do your congregation's financial resources, funding patterns, and currently capabilities need to be (re)assessed?

Have you made a study of alternative funding sources (i.e., tuition, third source funding, establishing a foundation, fraternal agencies, or other opportunities which may be unique to your congregation and community)?

Act

Create a salary scale that is equitable and financially sound either using these guidelines, the Concordia Plans tools, or your own.

Adopt a plan for implementation which will effectively install your guidelines over a period of time (for example 85% of goal in the first year, 90% in the second year and 95% in the third year).

Share the specifics of their personal salary and benefit packages with each of your workers. A sample form is included at the end of this document as Appendix C.

Continue to pray for God's blessings on the pastoral, educational, and outreach ministries to congregation and community.

3. Base Salary & Considerations

A base salary should be sufficient to allow the professional church worker and his/her family to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Specific needs that should be met include food and clothing, durable goods, a reasonable amount for savings, etc. Basically, this should be adequate to provide normal essentials.

While these guidelines and recommendations are not binding upon any congregation, the document presented is a guide for evaluating present levels of compensation.

Because the District covers a diverse geographic area and economic conditions vary from area to area, our guidelines include two options for setting a base salary.

Option A: The base salary is established from a table which is updated annually based on a sampling of public school salaries and a review of the annual pay raise for federal employees as well as Employment Cost Index (ECI) data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Option B: The base salary is the current 50th percentile salary in the local public school (by County Seat) for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and less than one year experience.

Since the guidelines are just that, guidelines, and do not take into consideration all factors relevant to a worker's value in a given ministry, much is left to the determination of each individual congregation. However, the following factors ought to be taken into consideration in every situation:

- Formal education
- Years of experience
- Leadership or level of responsibility

To determine the suggested salary for any worker, the base salary is multiplied by various add-on factors, which are the sum of points or percentages assigned to the individual according to the scale. Other factors (many of which are listed below) may also be included based on your situation.

Degree

It is assumed that most positions herein require a minimum degree earned for which the worker should be compensated appropriately. In some cases, an advanced or additional degree is valued and also considered; in other cases, it may be unrelated or not germane to the position.

Experience

Years of experience refer to total years in church and school ministry (not just those in the current congregation). The experience factor adds more to the value of the salary in the first years, and thus, the step increments are larger. Over time the additional experience has less value to the performance of the duties of the position, and consequently, the percentage increase per step is less.

If the professional church worker has entered the ministry after having served for some period in another profession, the congregation may wish to recognize that an entry salary into the ministry may be inadequate compensation. In such a case, some provision is made to recognize the experience, skills, and maturity such a person brings to the ministry.

The years of experience for teachers are generally understood to be the period of time workers have been employed in their profession, including years of service in public schools and other Lutheran schools.

Leadership

A congregation may choose to recognize a professional church worker's leadership or administrative responsibility as a factor in the determination of his/her salary. Generally, as leadership and administrative responsibilities grow, so should the salary.

Additional Responsibilities

As you determine the add-on factors to use for each staff member, it is important that you carefully examine the role that each person holds. The scope of the extra responsibility, the amount of time necessary to complete the tasks, and the amount of experience and training are usually taken into consideration. It is expected that the nature and scope of the task will vary from place to place. Congregations are encouraged to adjust the various salary situations based on unique local situations.

Housing

Church-Owned Housing

Professional church workers who are categorized as "Ministers of the Gospel" (ordained or commissioned) are eligible to receive a housing allowance or parsonage/teacherage that is excluded from income tax. The congregation must designate a portion of the compensation calculated as Housing Allowance and a resolution designating the amount allowed should be entered into the congregation's minutes before the calendar year in which it is to be effective. The amount of money designated as Housing Allowance is not considered income for federal income tax but is considered income when computing self-employment tax. The federal income tax exclusion for a Housing Allowance is limited to the lesser of the authorized Housing Allowance, actual expenditures for housing or the fair rental value of the home, furnished, plus utilities. The federal income tax exclusion for a parsonage means that the fair rental value of the parsonage, including any employer-paid utilities, is not included in taxable income.

Where housing is provided by the congregation, it is recommended that the congregation assume full responsibility for all housing-related costs, including general maintenance and repair, decorating, utilities and telephone. The personal choices of the residents should be considered when changes are being made to the decorating.

A worker living in a parsonage or teacherage may also receive a housing allowance to cover the cost of such items as garbage removal, lawn care, home furnishings, repairs, and maintenance, if any of these are paid for directly by the worker.

If the congregation prefers to have the worker pay utilities, it should carefully determine the actual costs and provide an allowance adequate to cover the total cost.

By not owning a home, a worker does not enjoy the opportunity to build equity in a home, which presents challenges to the worker upon retirement or upon acceptance of a call to a congregation that does not provide a parsonage or teacherage. The congregation may wish to help alleviate this disadvantage by creating or participating in a "housing equity program," so long as it is a tax compliant plan. Alternately, the home equity allowance could be paid to the worker through a tax deferred 403(b) plan (which may only be available to the worker after the age of 55), through regular taxable cash payments that the worker would invest himself, or other means compliant with tax law.

The salary scales which follow assume individually owned housing.

Individually Owned or Rented Housing

Ministers of the Gospel (ordained or commissioned) who are eligible for a tax-excluded housing allowance will need to fulfill the basic requirements set by the IRS. The congregation must designate a portion of the total compensation as a "Housing Allowance", and a resolution designating the amount allowed must be entered in the Congregation's minutes in December (or earlier) before the calendar year in which it is to be effective.

The congregation needs only to designate the housing allowance. It is the worker's responsibility to document the actual amount spent and the fair market value of the dwelling and to adjust his or her income accordingly, if applicable. This action may be amended at any time but is applicable to future payments (not retroactive). Once the amount of the allowance has been properly designated, it need not be paid to the worker separately. It can be included in one check covering both the allowance and salary.

The housing exclusion is intended to cover the expenses the worker spends which are directly related to renting or providing a home. For this purpose, the term "home" not only means a dwelling place, but also includes other related structures such as a garage. Expenditures directly related to renting or providing a home include rental payments and mortgage installment payments on a home and such related expenditures as real estate commissions, attorney fees, escrow fees, mortgage interest, real estate taxes and special assessments, utilities, garbage removal, repairs and maintenance, home furnishings and the cost of insurance coverage for fire, theft, and liability.

The amount of money designated as "housing allowance" is not considered income for federal income tax but is considered income when computing self-employment tax. (See FICA/SECA below.)

(See Appendix A as a guideline sheet for declaration of items included in a housing allowance and see Appendix B for sample resolutions for establishing housing allowances.)

FICA / SECA Reimbursement

Ministers of the Gospel (ordained or commissioned) are considered to be self-employed for Social Security tax purposes. Unlike its lay employees, the congregation does not pay the employer's half of the minister's FICA tax. The professional church worker is instead obligated to pay his/her entire SECA tax (the self-employed equivalent of FICA) on both "salary" and "housing." The current tax rate is 15.3% (12.4 component for old-age, survivors, and disability insurance (OASDI) and a 2.9% component for Medicare).

A congregation may compensate their professional church worker the amount the congregation would normally pay in FICA tax to use in payment of his/her SECA tax. Please note that if this amount is provided as compensation, it is subject to income tax and additional SECA tax.

Dual Parish

When a professional church worker serves more than one congregation, the congregations may want to make an adjustment in his/her compensation to reflect the extra workload and challenges that come with that work, for example, a 10% base increase.

Merit / Performance

Performance or effectiveness should play a significant role in the compensation decision process. Best practices suggest that a performance appraisal performed by the professional church worker's supervisor should form the basis for such decisions. Since performance evaluation is difficult, a good suggestion is that congregations develop a position description for their workers indicating areas of responsibility and expected performance levels.

Second Career Pastor

When calling a second-career pastor, a congregation may want to make an adjustment to the starting salary to give credit for secular work experience. Some Districts recommend that these men be allowed an experience factor of one-half of the years spent in a secular position. Others recommend a one-to-one ratio of secular work experience to credited experience.

Multiple Advanced Degrees

When a professional church worker has earned multiple applicable advanced degrees (masters or doctorates), a typical increase in compensation is between five and eight percent. This percentage represents best practices but is not a requirement.

Proration of Base Salary

We are committed to equal pay for equal work for both men and women. However, it is worth noting that these guidelines are based on assumed full-time employment. When appropriate, prorations of the base salary may be made for part-time or seasonal positions.

4. Allowances

Moving Expenses

When a congregation calls a professional church worker, the general accepted practice is to pay all necessary and reasonable moving expenses for the worker and his/her family. However, for 2018 – 2025, such reimbursements are taxable, and the deduction for moving expenses also has been suspended.

Auto

Car and travel expenses should be regarded as “business expenses” of the congregation. Reimbursement should cover actual miles traveled. (Most agencies and businesses allow the standard IRS rate which includes gas and oil, depreciation, maintenance, and insurance.) A year-end review of actual expenses should be conducted to assure that total travel expenses are covered. Congregations may also wish to purchase or lease a car for their workers.

Professional church workers are required to account to the IRS for auto allowance income as well as any personal use of a congregation-owned auto. Because of changing tax laws concerning a church worker's tax liability for auto allowance, it is recommended that congregations seek advice from a tax consultant and from the IRS.

Generally, to minimize tax impact to the worker, a direct accountability program is the best. This means that the congregation requires that the worker keep and submit exact expense records according to IRS regulations for monthly or bimonthly reimbursement. There are tax ramifications for both “unaccountable” cash allowances and personal use of congregation-owned vehicles.

Books / Periodicals

A sum should be identified in the congregation budget for these purposes. This amount is not added to the worker's compensation but is made available when needed.

Professional Development / Continuing Education

All professional church workers should be encouraged to have an annual plan for professional development and continuing education for his/her personal benefit and for the benefit of those whom he/she serves. This allowance is placed in the budget to be used, when needed. The amount should not be a “token” amount but should be sufficient to permit the worker to avail him/herself of a meaningful development opportunity.

The worker should not be expected to use his/her vacation or days off to attend opportunities for continuing education.

Convention and Conference Attendance

Attendance by a professional church worker at Synod and District approved conventions, retreats, conferences, and workshops are sometimes required and considered to be part of the business of the congregation. The professional church worker should not be required to utilize vacation time or personal funds to attend these events.

Education Debts

Many professional church workers are graduating from college or seminary with significant educational debts. They have undertaken these debts in order to be equipped to serve. A congregation may consider assisting these workers in the repayment of these debts. Such assistance is regular income for the worker and subject to IRS taxation.

5. Time off Considerations

Vacation

Vacation and days off each week are necessary if the worker is going to avoid overwork and “burnout.” The amount of time will perhaps vary with each situation so this must be determined locally. Each congregation should adopt a vacation schedule for its workers. The vacation schedule should be reviewed annually, and necessary allowances made if the workload has been exceptionally heavy for any period of time. Full-time church workers should receive vacation during their first year in ministry and should be encouraged to take some vacation each year. One suggestion might be the following:

Years of Service	Weeks of Vacation per Year
0-4	1 to 2 weeks
5-9	3 weeks
10+	4 weeks

The congregation should honor the worker’s day off each week. Attendance at conferences or district meetings is not to be part of day off activities. The day off is given, not only for the health of the worker, but also for the sake of the worker’s family.

Days of vacation should be in addition to normal days off. In addition to Sundays that the professional church worker is granted as part of vacation time, the congregation may also consider giving the professional church worker two to three additional Sundays off per year for personal growth and development, to attend special occasions in other congregations, to visit other churches, etc.

Personal / Sick Leave

The congregation should provide the professional church worker with personal/sick leave. Some Districts recommend a standard of one day awarded per month worked.

Sick leave, hospitalization, and disability should be granted in accordance with the benefit program(s) in which each congregation participates. These plans ensure that a worker's compensation is not disrupted.

Congregations are advised to develop policy that indicates whether unused personal and/or sick days are accumulated.

Special Leave

A congregation may grant special leave at the discretion of the board to cover special cases of emergency or death in the immediate family of the professional church worker. Special leave should not be considered vacation, sick leave, or personal leave.

Sabbatical

After a defined number of years, consideration may be given to the granting of a sabbatical (time off with pay) for a professional church worker, depending on the specific role. This is often used as a time of renewal or extended study or research. Sabbaticals are often three to six weeks off or longer.

Wellness Retreat

Consideration may be given to offering the professional church worker and his/her spouse an expenses- paid wellness retreat, designed to provide a time away for them to focus on their own physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Military Duty

If a professional church worker serves in an Armed Forces reserve unit, he/she will need to be granted a leave of absence during the time he/ she is required to serve. This is usually a two-week period. The worker should not be expected to use allotted vacation time for this purpose. The worker should receive full salary during this training period.

6. Core Benefits

Health Benefits

Congregations are encouraged to offer professional church workers the opportunity to enroll in the Concordia Health Plan (CHP). The congregation can choose the percentage of the health plan cost it will pay but must pay at least 50 percent for the member. The congregation can determine if it will contribute to the contribution cost of dependents, provide the opportunity for the worker to set aside pre-tax money to cover out of pocket expenses through a Flexible Spending Account or Health Savings Account (for use with high deductible plans), or provide additional support with a Health Reimbursement Arrangement.

Retirement Benefit

Congregations are encouraged to enroll eligible professional church workers in the Concordia Retirement Plan (CRP). Paired with the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan (CDSP), the CRP provides a defined level of income in retirement once the professional church worker is vested with at least five years of eligible work experience.

Each congregation which participates in the CRP must participate for all eligible workers. The national plan, which is qualified with the Internal Revenue Service, prohibits discrimination against any eligible employee by denying this benefit. The congregation pays the full cost of the plan.

Disability & Survivor Benefit

Congregations are encouraged to enroll eligible professional church workers in the CDSP. Paired with the CRP, the CDSP provides a benefit when a worker becomes disabled with a qualifying disability, which may include maternity leave. The Plan also provides a benefit at the time of the death of a worker or a qualifying dependent.

403(b) Savings Plan

Congregations are encouraged to provide eligible professional church workers the opportunity to save for retirement in the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan (CRSP), a 403(b) plan. Various insurance companies and investment brokers also offer 403(b) plans.

Workers can make contributions on either a pre-tax or after-tax Roth basis. Additionally, congregations can encourage their worker's preparation for retirement by providing an employer contribution, such as a match to the worker's contributions, subject to IRS limits.

7. Non-Called Staff

This compensation guide is intended to help set salaries for Called workers and other teachers of congregations in the District. Job descriptions, experience levels, and educational requirements vary greatly among the other staff within each congregation, including the secretaries, business and facility managers, and other para-ministry positions. The following suggestions may help a congregation in setting such salaries.

Administrative & Support Staff

Consider surveying your local school district for salaries of school secretaries, custodians, etc. Also check with local businesses and other churches in your area regarding pay scales. For positions that utilize an advanced degree, use the scale in this guide based on the education and experience of the applicant.

For part-time staff, consider using this guide to calculate a full-time salary and divide the 12-month salary by 2080 hours to approximate an hourly rate.

Add-on factors for these positions (assumed no degree required) may reasonably include negative factors. (See Section 8 for suggestions.)

Pastoral Pulpit Supply & Vacancy

Pulpit supply is defined as those times in a congregation where the pastor is temporarily absent due to illness, vacation, or other time off and a guest is brought in. In such cases, all mileage ought to be paid at the current IRS rate. If the supply pastor is to be present for worship in the morning and must travel 75 miles or more, the congregation should consider motel/hotel lodging and meals for him.

One such example might be:

Type of Service	Rate
Presiding (No sermon)	\$100
Preaching (One service)	\$150
Presiding & Preaching	\$200
Additional Services	\$50
Bible Study/Presentation	\$50

When addressing a long-term vacancy, this table may or may not work due to the specific coverage needs of individual congregations; you may consider paying an appropriate percentage of an annual salary.

Organists & Musicians

Part-time, seasonal, and guest organists or soloists/musicians should be compensated for their training, preparation, and participation in worship services whenever possible. While the hourly rate for professional musicians varies wildly by local market, a flat per-service rate is often the easiest method to maintain equity and consistency. A mid-tier example might be:

Type of Service	Rate
Organist (One service)	\$100
Additional Services	\$60
Soloist/Musician (One service)	\$50
Rehearsals or Additional Services	\$50

Childcare & Preschool Workers

Following are suggested hourly wages for childcare and preschool workers. Please note that this table gives suggested hourly wages based on position (Childcare & Assistant Preschool Teacher, Lead Childcare, and Lead Preschool Teacher), years of service, and completion of Early Childhood certification (noted as EC-I and EC-II) or a bachelor's degree.

Years of Service	Enrolled in EC-I & EC-II	EC-I & EC-II (no degree)			BA (non-Ed) plus EC-I & EC-II or 2 Years AA-EC	BA in Elementary Ed or EC
		<i>Childcare & Assistant Teacher</i>	<i>Lead Childcare</i>	<i>Lead Preschool Teacher</i>		
0	\$13.53	\$14.66	\$15.79	\$18.04	\$20.30	\$22.55
1	\$13.67	\$14.81	\$15.95	\$18.22	\$20.50	\$22.78
2	\$13.80	\$14.95	\$16.10	\$18.40	\$20.71	\$23.01
3	\$13.94	\$15.10	\$16.26	\$18.59	\$20.91	\$23.23
4	\$14.07	\$15.25	\$16.42	\$18.77	\$21.11	\$23.46
5	\$14.21	\$15.39	\$16.58	\$18.95	\$21.31	\$23.68
6		\$15.54	\$16.74	\$19.13	\$21.52	\$23.91
7		\$15.69	\$16.89	\$19.31	\$21.72	\$24.13
8		\$15.83	\$17.05	\$19.49	\$21.92	\$24.36
9		\$15.98	\$17.21	\$19.67	\$22.13	\$24.58
10		\$16.13	\$17.37	\$19.85	\$22.33	\$24.81
11				\$20.03	\$22.53	\$25.04
12				\$20.21	\$22.74	\$25.26
13				\$20.39	\$22.94	\$25.49
14				\$20.57	\$23.14	\$25.71
15				\$20.75	\$23.34	\$25.94

8. Salary Worksheet Instructions

STEP 1: The District’s guidelines include two options for setting a base salary.

- Option A:** The base salary is established from a table which is updated annually based on a sampling of public school salaries and a review of the annual pay raise for federal employees, the Social Security Administration’s Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) from the previous October, as well as Employment Cost Index (ECI) data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Year	Base Salary
2018	\$42,457
2019	\$43,306
2020	\$44,519
2021	\$45,231
2022	\$46,588

Year	Base Salary
2023	\$48,521
2024	\$50,510
2025	\$52,127
2026	\$52,127

- Option B:** The base salary is the current 50th percentile salary in the local public school (by County Seat) for a teacher with a bachelor’s degree and less than one year experience.

County	Base Salary
Adams	\$51,143
Calumet	\$51,148
Columbia	\$52,332
Dane	\$52,760
Dodge	\$52,546
Fond Du Lac	\$51,384
Grant	\$51,143
Green	\$51,746
Green Lake	\$51,384
Iowa	\$52,332
Jefferson	\$52,471
Juneau	\$51,146
Kenosha	\$51,764
La Crosse	\$50,383
Lafayette	\$52,332
Manitowoc	\$50,886

County	Base Salary
Marquette	\$52,332
Milwaukee	\$53,612
Monroe	\$50,013
Ozaukee	\$53,076
Racine	\$51,764
Richland	\$51,143
Rock	\$51,716
Sauk	\$52,332
Sheboygan	\$53,183
Vernon	\$49,981
Walworth	\$51,770
Washington	\$53,183
Waukesha	\$53,414
Waushara	\$51,384
Winnebago	\$51,347

For both Options A and B, we have created a “Percentage to Scale” field that allows organizations to adjust the guidelines to their unique situations. This factor may reflect a congregation’s need or willingness to pay below or above the standard suggested salary.

STEP 2: Since the base salary from Step 1 assumes a full-time salary, a proration may be made to reflect part-time or seasonal positions.

STEP 3: To obtain the worker’s suggested annual salary, multiply the prorated base salary from Step 2 by individual add-on factors. The total add-on factor is computed by adding together the points credited based on: (A) education/experience (see Section 10), (B) leadership, (C) responsibility, (D) performance, (E) multiple degrees, and (F) any reductions where applicable, and expressing the sum as a percentage.

Leadership

Administrative (Senior) Pastor

- 1-70 Average weekly worship attendance 0
- 71-135 Average weekly worship attendance 10
- 136-265 Average weekly worship attendance 20
- 266-450 Average weekly worship attendance 30
- 451-700 Average weekly worship attendance 40
- 701-999 Average weekly worship attendance 50
- 1,000+ Average weekly worship attendance 60

Associate Pastors could be paid using one-half of the factor above.

Principal

- 1-150 Students 15
- 151-300 Students 20
- 301+ Students 25

Assistant Principals could be paid using one-half of the factor above.

Responsibility

Some broad suggestions may include the following factors:

- DCE, DCO, Lay Minister, Deaconess, etc. 5 to 15
- Director of Music 5 to 15
- Athletic Director 5 to 10
- Youth Director 5 to 10

- Receptionist -30 to -25
- Secretary -25 to -15
- Bookkeeper -15 to -10
- Custodian -10 to 0

STEP 4: If appropriate, the suggested salary can be adjusted by reducing salary for the value of church-provided housing. A worker living in church-owned housing could have deducted from his/her salary an amount equal to the fair market rental value of the housing including any utilities which are paid by the congregation. To get the fair market rental value, secure two estimates and take the average.

If using Option A or Option B, it is recommended that employers consider increasing the salary for professional church workers who are considered "Ministers of Religion" (ordained or commissioned) by 7.65% to offset SECA taxes.

9. Salary Worksheet

Name of Worker: _____
 Fiscal Year: _____
 Education Level: _____

Years of Experience: _____ Our Congregation: _____
 Prior Congregations: + _____
 Prior Secular Experience (if applicable): + _____
 Total Years of Experience: = _____

Step 1 Determine Base Salary

Option A - SWD Suggested Base Salary		52,127
<i>or</i>		
Option B - Base Salary for Public School Teachers by County Seat		_____
% to Scale	%	_____
	=	_____

Step 2 Determine Pro-rated Base Salary *(if necessary)*

Number of months required		x _____
Pro-rated base salary	=	_____

Step 3 Multiply Adjusted Base Salary by Additional Add-On Factor(s)

A. Education/Experience:			
B. Leadership:	Administrative Pastor	+	_____
	Associate Pastor	+	_____
	Dual-Point Parish?	+	_____
	Principal	+	_____
	Asst. Principal	+	_____
C. Responsibility:	_____	+	_____
D. Performance:	_____	+	_____
E. Multiple Degrees:	_____	+	_____
F. Reduction(s):	_____	-	_____
		x	_____
Suggested Salary		=	_____

Step 4 Optional Adjustments

A. Provided Housing Reduction:	Current Fair Market Value		- _____
B. SECA Tax Offset for Rostered Worker:	Yes or No	%	7.65
Final Salary		=	_____

(Visit swd.lcms.org/resources for the self-calculating version of this worksheet.)

10. Salary Table

South Wisconsin District Suggested Salary Schedule
January 1, 2026 -- December 31, 2026

Base 12-Month Salary:

\$52,127

Year	Certificate 1 Factor	Salary	BA (Non-Roster Eligible) Factor	Salary	BA (Rostered) Factor	Salary	Certificate 2 Factor	Salary	MA / MS Factor	Salary	MDiv / E/D Factor	Salary	STM / D/Min Factor	Salary	PhD / ThD Factor	Salary
0	90.0	46,914	90.0	46,914	100.0	52,127	105.0	54,733	110.0	57,340	125.0	65,159	130.0	67,765	135.0	70,371
1	94.0	48,999	94.0	48,999	104.0	54,212	109.0	56,818	114.0	59,425	129.0	67,244	134.0	69,850	139.0	72,457
2	98.0	51,084	98.0	51,084	108.0	54,697	113.0	58,904	118.0	61,510	133.0	69,329	138.0	71,935	143.0	74,542
3	102.0	53,170	102.0	53,170	112.0	58,382	117.0	60,989	122.0	63,595	137.0	71,414	142.0	74,020	147.0	76,627
4	106.0	55,255	106.0	55,255	116.0	60,467	121.0	63,074	126.0	65,680	141.0	73,499	141.0	76,105	151.0	78,712
5	110.0	57,340	110.0	57,340	120.0	62,552	125.0	65,159	130.0	67,765	145.0	75,584	150.0	78,191	155.0	80,797
6	113.0	58,904	113.0	58,904	123.0	64,116	129.0	67,244	134.0	69,850	149.0	77,669	154.0	80,276	159.0	82,882
7	116.0	60,467	116.0	60,467	126.0	65,680	133.0	69,329	138.0	71,935	153.0	79,754	158.0	82,361	163.0	84,967
8	119.0	62,031	119.0	62,031	129.0	67,244	137.0	71,414	142.0	74,020	157.0	81,839	162.0	84,446	167.0	87,052
9	122.0	63,595	122.0	63,595	132.0	68,808	141.0	73,499	146.0	76,105	161.0	83,924	166.0	86,531	171.0	89,137
10	125.0	65,159	125.0	65,159	135.0	70,371	145.0	75,584	150.0	78,191	165.0	86,010	170.0	88,616	175.0	91,222
11	127.0	66,201			137.0	71,414	148.0	77,148	153.0	79,754	168.0	87,573	173.0	90,180	178.0	92,786
12	129.0	67,244			139.0	72,457	151.0	78,712	156.0	81,318	171.0	89,137	176.0	91,744	181.0	94,350
13	131.0	68,286			141.0	73,499	154.0	80,276	159.0	82,882	174.0	90,701	179.0	93,307	184.0	95,914
14	133.0	69,329			143.0	74,542	157.0	81,839	162.0	84,446	177.0	92,265	182.0	94,871	187.0	97,477
15	135.0	70,371			145.0	75,584	160.0	83,403	165.0	86,010	180.0	93,829	185.0	96,435	190.0	99,041
16	135.6	70,684			145.6	75,897	160.6	83,716	165.6	86,322	180.6	94,141	185.6	96,748	190.6	99,354
17	136.2	70,997			146.2	76,210	161.2	84,029	166.2	86,635	181.2	94,454	186.2	97,060	191.2	99,667
18	136.8	71,310			146.8	76,522	161.8	84,341	166.8	86,948	181.8	94,767	186.8	97,373	191.8	99,980
19	137.4	71,622			147.4	76,835	162.4	84,654	167.4	87,261	182.4	95,080	187.4	97,686	192.4	100,292
20	138.0	71,935			148.0	77,148	163.0	84,967	168.0	87,573	183.0	95,392	188.0	97,999	193.0	100,605
21	138.6	72,248			148.6	77,461	163.6	85,280	168.6	87,886	183.6	95,705	188.6	98,312	193.6	100,918
22	139.2	72,561			149.2	77,773	164.2	85,593	169.2	88,199	184.2	96,018	189.2	98,624	194.2	101,231
23	139.8	72,874			149.8	78,086	164.8	85,905	169.8	88,512	184.8	96,331	189.8	98,937	194.8	101,543
24	140.4	73,186			150.4	78,399	165.4	86,218	170.4	88,824	185.4	96,643	190.4	99,250	195.4	101,856
25	141.0	73,499			151.0	78,712	166.0	86,531	171.0	89,137	186.0	96,956	191.0	99,563	196.0	102,169
26	141.6	73,812			166.6	86,844	171.6	89,450	171.6	89,450	186.6	97,269	191.6	99,875	196.6	102,482
27	142.2	74,125			167.2	87,156	172.2	89,763	172.2	89,763	187.2	97,582	192.2	100,188	197.2	102,794
28	142.8	74,437			167.8	87,469	172.8	89,075	172.8	89,075	187.8	97,895	192.8	100,501	197.8	103,107
29	143.4	74,750			168.4	87,782	173.4	90,388	173.4	90,388	188.4	98,207	193.4	100,814	198.4	103,420
30	144.0	75,063			169.0	88,095	174.0	90,701	174.0	90,701	189.0	98,520	194.0	101,126	199.0	103,733
31	Certificate 1 -- Intended for alternate route pastors <i>without</i> an existing college degree.															
32	Routes often include:															
33	Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT)															
34	Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT) Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS)															
35	BA (Non-Roster Eligible) -- Bachelor of Arts															
36	BA (Rostered) -- Bachelor of Arts or colloquy from a Synodical institution															
37	Certificate 2 -- Intended for any of the alternate route pastors listed above <i>with</i> an existing college degree.															
38	MA/MS -- Master of Arts or Master of Science															
39	MDiv/E/D -- Master of Divinity or Doctor of Education															
40	STM/D/Min -- Master of Sacred Theology or Doctor of Ministry															
41	PhD/ThD -- Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Theology															
42																
43																
44																
45																

11. Resources for LCMS Congregations & Schools

Financial Matters

The *Congregational Treasurer's Manual* is published annually by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and provides invaluable information on:

- Federal and State Taxes
- Accounting and Finance
- Insurance

This resource as well as guidance on taxes and ministers, milage rates, overtime laws, and estimated taxes are also available through the LCMS web site ([lcms.org](https://www.lcms.org)) under *Resources* → *Church & School Administration* → *Financial Matters*.

Legal Resources

Various guidelines, updates, and policy templates are available on the LCMS web site ([lcms.org](https://www.lcms.org)) under *Resources* → *Church & School Administration* → *Legal Resources*.

- Church Administration
- Facility Usage
- Schools and Education
- Sexual Misconduct
- Other Topics

Personnel Matters

Sample job descriptions for a variety of staff and officer positions and other relevant forms are available on the LCMS web site ([lcms.org](https://www.lcms.org)) under *Resources* → *Church & School Administration* → *Personnel Matters*.

- Ministry Staff Positions
- Congregational Officers
- Administrative Staff Positions
- Facilities Staff Positions

12. Concordia Plans Compensation Tools

Concordia Plans has a *Compensation Decision Support Tools* developed to assist all LCMS ministries in the process of determining salaries for various staff positions. Concordia Plans, along with CBIZ (a financial services and business consulting firm), analyzed LCMS data. They then paired that data, along with additional information from external resources, to create comprehensive salary benchmarks. It takes into consideration location, rostered status, education level and other factors to provide suggested compensations for workers.

Overview: <https://www.concordiaplans.org/employers/resources/compensation-decision-support-tool>

The tools provide compensation suggestions for:

Pastors & Parish Professionals: <https://tc.cbiz.com/CompToolCPS/Login.aspx>

- **Pastors:** Senior Administrative, Associate, and Sole Pastors
- **Parish Professionals:** Director of Christian Education, Director of Parish Music, Director of Family Life Ministry, Director of Christian Outreach, Deaconess, Director of Church Ministries, Business Manager I, Business Manager II

Teachers & Administrators: <https://tc.cbiz.com/CompToolCPSEd/Login.aspx>

- **Childcare:** Assistant Teacher, Teacher, and Director
- **Preschool:** Assistant Teacher, Teacher, and Director
- **Elementary School:** Teacher, Head Administrator/Principal, Assistant Administrator/Principal, Director of Finance, Athletic Director, Director of Admissions, and Director of Development/Advancement
- **Middle School:** Teacher, Head Administrator/Principal, Assistant Administrator/Principal, Director of Finance, Athletic Director, Director of Admissions, and Director of Development/Advancement
- **High School:** Teacher, Head Administrator/Principal, Assistant Administrator/Principal, Director of Finance, Athletic Director, Director of Admissions, and Director of Development/Advancement

Salaries generated by the *Compensation Decision Support Tools* are only suggestions. Congregations are not instructed or required to use the figures generated by the tool.

13. Appendix A:

Housing Allowance Worksheet and Request Form

In compliance with the IRS ruling for housing allowance, that provides for advance declaration of the amount of housing allowance before receipt of payment, I/(we) make the following declarations:

ITEM	AMOUNT
Housing Payments (principal/interest or rent)	\$ _____
Real Estate Taxes	\$ _____
Property Insurance (homeowner's or renter's)	\$ _____
Utilities:	
Gas	\$ _____
Electricity	\$ _____
Water	\$ _____
Telephone (basic service)	\$ _____
Other: _____	\$ _____
Maintenance (household cleaners, light bulbs, pest control)	\$ _____
Furnishing and Appliances (purchase and repair)	\$ _____
Repairs	\$ _____
Other Allowable Expenses: _____	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____

I/(we) request that (Name and location of Congregation and Governing Body), take formal action to designate \$____ (or __%) of my 20__ remuneration as "Housing Allowance" and record same into the minutes of the Voter's Assembly of (Title of Responsible Body) meeting to be held (insert date). I also understand that it is my/(our) declaration and the "Burden of Proof" is mine/(ours) in the event I/(we) would be challenged and had to prove the amounts indicated above.

(Signature)

(Signature)

(Date)

[If you file a joint return, both husband and wife should sign.]

14. Appendix B:

Sample Housing Allowance Resolutions

Sample 1

RESOLVED, that (name of Congregation) as a Standing Resolution to remain in force and effect until such time as amended or revoked, hereby authorizes and establishes a housing allowance for each Minister of the Gospel at any time serving it in the amount of \$_____ per year.

Sample 2

RESOLVED, that (name of Congregation), as a Standing Resolution to remain in force and effect until such time as amended or revoked, hereby authorizes and establishes a housing allowance for each Minister of the Gospel at any time serving it in an amount each year equal to __% of that person's gross annual compensation.

Sample 3

RESOLVED, that (name of Congregation), as a Standing Resolution to remain in force and effect until such time as amended or revoked, here authorizes and establishes a housing allowance for (individual's name) at any time serving it in the amount of \$_____ per year.

Sample 4

RESOLVED, that (name of Congregation), as a Standing Resolution to remain in force and effect until such time as amended or revoked, hereby authorizes and establishes a housing allowance for (individual's name) at any time serving it in an amount each year equal to __% of that person's annual compensation.

Sample 5

BE IT RESOLVED that the dollar amounts noted adjacent to the names of those individuals listed below, be stipulated as rental allowance for the year 20__ in accordance with the regulations of the Internal Revenue Service. It should be noted also, that each of those individuals fully understands that the "Burden of Proof" is upon them to substantiate those amounts.

[List professional workers and amounts.]

15. Appendix C: Sample Salary and Benefits Letter

Your total compensation consists of so much more than just your paycheck. In addition to your cash compensation, which includes salary (with a portion designated for your housing expenses) and self-employment tax offset, we also invest a significant amount of money toward your benefits, such as retirement plans, health and wellness, and more.

The Board of Directors of Trinity Lutheran Church met on May 15 and adopted their operating budget for 2025-26 which goes into effect on July 1. Your compensation package for the coming fiscal year is detailed below.

Wages:	Salary & Housing Designation	\$50,000
	SECA Offset (7.65%)	\$3,825
	Total Wages	\$53,825
Benefits:	Employer-Provided Housing (rental value)	\$12,000
	Concordia Health Plan	\$11,280
	<i>Health Premiums Withheld (7.5%)</i>	<i>-\$846</i>
	Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan (1.2%)	\$600
	Concordia Retirement Plan (10.7%)	\$5,350
	Employer HSA Contribution	\$800
	Employer 403b Match (up to 2%)	\$1,077
	<u>Holiday, Vacation, and Paid Time Off</u>	<u>\$4,347</u>
Total Employer-Provided Benefits	\$34,608	

Based on current policy, you are also entitled to 80 hours of paid vacation and 40 hours of paid time off (PTO) as well as the following paid holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Please sign and return this letter to confirm that you have received, read, and understand it.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Mary Jones

Mrs. Mary Jones, *Treasurer*

(Signature)

(Date)

This statement is not a contract of employment.