

Blackhawk Presbytery Minimum Terms of Call Policy (Approved Feb. 8, 2022)

Pastors are called by congregations to preach, teach, and care for a congregation and community. Being a pastor is a tough job with long hours and heavy responsibility.

As the Holy Scripture teaches, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double compensation (or honor), especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves to be paid.’” (1 Timothy 5:17-18 and Luke 10:7)

Following scriptural guidance, the minimum salary recommendation for an ordained minister and a commissioned pastor comes from the Commission on Ministry (COM) and is approved by the Presbytery Assembly, each year. It is important to remember that a presbytery is a representative council of the church and is comprised of ordained pastors and elders from your church. A presbytery is not an “us” verses “them” organization. A presbytery is an “all of us” organization.

One of our goals is to make certain that pastors are paid fairly for the important work they do relative to their education and experience. This is why the presbytery sets minimum terms of call, which include salary and benefits. (The Minimum Terms of Call with the Minimum Effective Salary are updated annually and can be found on the Blackhawk Presbytery website under the “Resources” tab at the top of the home page, and then click on the “Resources for Pastoral Leadership” tab on the drop-down list.)

In addition, the COM compares our minimum compensation package with other presbyteries in our Synod which have similar demographics. Blackhawk Presbytery has the lowest compensation minimums of any other presbytery in our Synod. If we, as a presbytery, wish to attract ministers to our churches, a livable and sustainable compensation package has to be presented. Therefore, all congregations are expected to pay at least the minimum terms of call for full-time pastors or a proportionate amount for part-time pastors.

For an exception to this policy:

Blackhawk Presbytery also recognizes the fact that there may be situations when a congregation is unable to provide compensation at the minimum terms of call. Presbytery leadership, through the COM, wants to work with these congregations to understand their particular situation. The presbytery requests that any congregation paying their pastor below the minimum salary send a letter to the Moderator of COM, a copy to the General Presbyter and to the pastor who would be impacted by this decision, explaining why they are requesting an exception. The presbytery may ask for supporting documentation, such as financial statements, before approving an exception. COM will review and approve exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis.

The Commission on Ministry will work with struggling congregations and your COM liaison can help struggling congregations explore other pastoral leadership options that may be more appropriate. These could include moving to a part-time pastor, moving from a Minister of the Word and Sacrament to a Commissioned Pastor, or more creative solutions like yoking two congregations, and other options.

Because the presbytery is an equal partner in approving a pastoral covenant with a congregation, congregations seeking an exception to the minimum terms of call are urged to talk with their assigned COM liaison, the Moderator (or Vice Moderator) of COM, or the General Presbyter. We are all here to work with you to help you be the best congregation you can be as you continue the presence and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.