



THE BOARD OF PENSIONS
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

LIVING BY THE GOSPEL

A Guide to Structuring Ministers' Terms
of Call as Authorized by the 223rd General
Assembly (2018)

UPDATED 2024



*In the same way, the Lord commanded
that those who proclaim the Gospel should
get their living by the Gospel.*

1 Corinthians 9:14

INTRODUCTION

Friends in Christ:

Living by the Gospel details the offerings of the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), effective January 1, 2025. This is a reference document to use in structuring ministers' terms of call. The appendices include information on effective salary by job code, geography, congregation size, gender, and minister age. Living by the Gospel was authorized by the 223rd General Assembly (2018), which asked that we update it annually.

The pages that follow include an outline of the Board's assistance and education programs, which, together with plan benefits, promote wholeness in those who serve the Church. You will also find information on how we are encouraging innovation in ministry through dues subsidies.

When the Board introduced Living by the Gospel six years ago, we had just updated the Benefits Plan to add flexibility and choice around benefits for employees who were not ministers. Those amendments helped attract PC(USA)-affiliated employers — including educational institutions, camps and conference centers, retirement and senior housing communities, and human services organizations. Since then, participation by affiliate employers in the Church's plan has increased, driving overall membership growth and bolstering the plan overall.

We hope to see membership growth with the 2025 plan. It provides choice and flexibility as well, this time for congregations. Today, the pastoral leaders of our congregations include ministers in positions that are not installed and commissioned pastors. Too many of them lack access to the Board's assistance and education programs, which promote the continued growth and well-being of pastoral leaders.

The Board of Pensions is the agency through which the Church raises up leaders to God's people so that they may spread the hope that lies at the heart of the Gospel. Living by the Gospel is the guide to getting that done.

Grace and peace,



The Reverend Dr. Frank Clark Spencer
President

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



The 223rd General Assembly (2018) authorized the Living by the Gospel document, and requested that the Board of Pensions update the document annually and distribute it to all:

1. mid councils
2. Committees on Ministry
3. Committees on Preparation for Ministry, and
4. Pastor Nominating Committees

To promote awareness of gender disparity in clergy benefit and salary packages, the 223rd General Assembly further urged Committees on Ministry, within 12 months of the close of General Assembly, to:

1. study and adopt A Theology of Benefits, included in Living by the Gospel
2. review the last five years of salary and benefit statistics by gender in their own context and share the findings with Clerks of Session, Committees on Preparation for Ministry, and candidates for ministry
3. provide a copy of Living by the Gospel to Pastor Nominating Committees and incoming committee members, and
4. in situations where a minister is not receiving benefits, or when salary is below minimum, require the session to provide a full, written explanation to the Committee on Ministry

A THEOLOGY OF BENEFITS

The Church's provision of benefits for its employees is holy work, giving expression to the creative activity of the Trinitarian God to whom Holy Scripture bears witness: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him."¹ Scripture reveals One who cares about the health of body and soul.

God's desire is that all people experience shalom — the flourishing of life. This desire is reflected in the repeated refrain of the creation narrative: "God saw that it was good."² The ensuing portrayal of life in the Garden of Eden illustrates an ideal in which humanity dwells in mutual care and well-being.

Jesus extends the promise, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."³ The desire for health and wholeness are at the heart of the gospel call, which implores followers of Christ to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner.⁴ In the celebrated parable of the Good Samaritan, itself a story of healing and wellness, Jesus extends the charge: "Go and do likewise."⁵

The Holy Spirit gathers the Church and shapes its life through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the sign and seal of new birth, new life, and a new way of living. Shaped by these sacraments and empowered by the Spirit, we, the Church, live in caring community with one another in all that we are, all that we have, and all that we do. The Church, as the Body of Christ, is rightly committed to a ministry of wholeness and compassionate care.

The very character of God as revealed in the Scriptures compels those who worship and serve God to "maintain justice, and do what is right."⁶ Hence, from its inception the Church has affirmed just compensation for its servants.⁷ The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has

¹ John 1:1-3

² Genesis 1:12,18,21,25,31

³ John 10:10

⁴ Matthew 25:35-36

⁵ Luke 10:30-37

⁶ Isaiah 56:1

⁷ Luke 10:7-9; 1 Corinthians 9:9-12; 1 Timothy 5:18; "The Second Helvetic Confession," *Book of Confessions*, 5.168

repeatedly confirmed this commitment to support its servants with compensation that includes salary, benefits, vacation, and opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal.⁸

These concrete expressions of care extend God's desire for shalom and well-being, helping church servants flourish in the holy and human endeavor of ministry. As the body of Christ, we demonstrate abundant life to the world as a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.⁹ We call people to varied forms of service and covenant to support them so they may devote their best gifts and energies to the work of God's kingdom.

⁸ *Book of Order*, W-4.0404i(5)c; "Elements of Compensation," *Report of the Compensation Committee* [approved by the 188th General Assembly (1976) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America]; *A Theology of Compensation: A Study Paper* [approved by the 195th General Assembly (1983), from the General Assembly Mission Council]; "Theological Concepts" and "Basic Principles," *Report of the Task Force on the United Presbyterian Compensation Plan* [approved by the 195th General Assembly (1983), from the Vocation Agency]; "The Presbyterian Church as Employer," *Life Abundant: Values, Choices and Health Care — The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* [approved by the 200th General Assembly (1988)]

⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:27-28; *Book of Order* F-1.0301

A COMMITMENT TO SERVE MORE

The Board of Pensions has amended the dues structure in the Benefits Plan for 2025 to enable more congregations to enroll their pastoral leaders. The plan also provides parity, regardless of ordination status, and expands access to benefits. The new dues design replaces a dues structure introduced 40 years ago for a different type of pastoral leadership and a different family structure. The dues structure is outdated and no longer supports congregations.

Increasingly, congregations are unable to afford to install a pastor. This is partly due to the cost of Pastor’s Participation, which is required for installed positions and provides family medical coverage fully paid for by the congregation. More than 75% of our congregations have 150 or fewer members and resources are a concern. In 2023, for the first time ever, fewer than half of our congregations had installed pastors. At the same time, more than 50% of the ministers in Pastor’s Participation did not enroll a spouse and dependents for medical coverage. Yet, their congregations still had to pay for it.

Ministers being excluded from the plan are women, communities of color, and those serving small congregations. In 2007-2022, women made up 63% of those not covered through the plan, even though the PC(USA) had ordained more women than men every one of those years since 2010. Only 28% of churches with 150 or fewer members had an installed pastor, and only 20% of African American congregations had installed pastoral leadership, regardless of membership size.

Congregation by size as of Jan. 1, 2023

Membership Size	Number of Congregations	Congregation Distribution	Total Members	Membership Distribution	Average Number of Members by Congregation	Congregations with Pastor's Participation	Percent of Membership Size with Pastor's Participation
0-25	1,836	21.1%	27,545	2.4%	15	88	4.8%
26-50	1,916	22%	71,532	6.2%	37	267	13.9%
51-100	2,024	23.3%	146,569	12.7%	72	852	42.1%
101-150	992	11.4%	121,322	10.5%	122	659	66.4%
151-300	1,128	13%	235,840	20.5%	209	903	80.1%
301-800	639	7.3%	297,470	25.8%	466	639	100%
801-1,600	129	1.5%	146,569	12.7%	1,136	129	100%
1,601+	41	0.5%	103,997	9%	2,537	41	100%
TOTAL	8,705	100%	1,150,844	100%	132	3,578	41.1%

Parity

Before 2025, the Benefits Plan, as written, distinguished between ministers of the Word and Sacrament and other employees. The Board of Pensions has moved, instead, to recognize a distinction between members who are pastoral leaders of congregations and all other members. This shift supports congregations while also providing parity among plan membership.

For the first time, commissioned pastors who are serving PC(USA) congregations will be eligible for the dues package that is required for installed pastors and open to ministers serving congregations 20 or more hours a week: the Congregational Pastors Package. Commissioned pastors must also meet the 20-hour minimum of employment with a congregation.

MINISTERS OUTSIDE CONGREGATIONS

Under the 2025 Benefits Plan, ministers who do not serve congregations are to elect benefits from the selection their employer offers, as other employees do, establishing parity among members outside of congregational settings. Any minister who is enrolled in Pastor's Participation as of December 31, 2024, will also be eligible for enrollment in Transitional Pastor's Participation through 2027, when this transition option sunsets.

A SINGLE MEDIAN EFFECTIVE SALARY

The plan provides parity by setting a single median effective salary, based on the annual effective salaries of minister members who serve congregations. Previously, in addition to the congregational ministers' median, there was a second median based on annual effective salaries of members who were not ministers and were enrolled in the Defined Benefit Pension Plan and/or the Death and Disability Plan. This second median has been lower than the congregational ministers' median. To understand the significance of this change, see the *Community Nature* section.

ACCESS

The plan introduces the Covenant Package, a bundle of income protection plans previously available only to ministers that includes access to the Board's assistance and education programs as well as the Employee Assistance Plan. All employees working at least 20 hours a week are now eligible for the bundle, regardless of ordination status. The value of this package far exceeds its cost — 10% of effective salary, fully paid by the congregation or employer — and is unmatched in the commercial marketplace.

BENEFITS FOR THOSE WHO SERVE THE CHURCH

The Board of Pensions is the national agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) charged with designing and administering the Church's Benefits Plan. Congregations, as the employers, select benefits from the plan to offer their ministers and employees and pay dues to the Board to cover the costs of what they offer. Anyone enrolled for plan benefits also receives access to the Board's need-based assistance grants and its education programs.

Our mission — making available comprehensive benefits and programming that support holistic well-being — is grounded in A Theology of Benefits. Scripturally based, A Theology of Benefits recognizes that God's desire for all creation is expressed in the biblical themes of shalom and abundant life, *wholeness*. The Church's benefits and the Board's programs promote wholeness by providing support in four areas — spiritual, health, financial, and vocational. Together, the benefits and programs help to sustain those who are called to serve, enabling them to devote their best gifts and energies to the work of God's kingdom.

Community Nature

Congregations rely on the denomination to help make it possible for them to provide benefits. Community nature is central to bringing this about. Community nature is the idea that those with more contribute more so that those with less can pay less, and all can receive a baseline of protection. Effective salary and median effective salary are key to community nature.

Effective salary, unique to the Board of Pensions, includes various types of compensation and/or reimbursements that congregations pay to ministers and employees. Each year, the Board uses the effective salaries of minister members of the Benefits Plan who serve congregations to determine the median effective salary. The median effective salary for 2025 is \$70,000. Effective salary is used to calculate employer dues and member benefits — unless a member's effective salary falls below the median. Then, the higher, median salary is used to calculate the member's benefits.

The Benefits Plan, as well as the Board's assistance programs, reflect community nature in the following ways:

1. Dues for the Congregational Pastors Package are based on effective salary, so the largest congregations, which tend to pay the higher salaries, subsidize smaller congregations, which tend to pay the lower salaries.

2. The annual deductible and out-of-pocket maximums for the Medical Plan's preferred provider organization (PPO) are tied to effective salary, so members with the greatest resources help support those with the least.
3. Pension credits accrue at the median effective salary for those earning below the median, helping to enable a secure retirement for those who devote their ministries to smaller congregations with limited resources.
4. Members receive disability benefits based on the median effective salary if their salary is less than the median.
5. Assistance programs are based on need, serving lower-paid ministers, employees, and retirees.

Dues Packages

Effective January 1, 2025, the Benefits Plan includes two dues packages: the Covenant Package and the Congregational Pastors Package. Both packages provide access to Board of Pensions assistance and education programs, which support wholeness and nurture ministries, working to keep congregations vital. They are fully paid for by the congregation.

The plan also offers an option for moving from the current dues structure to the new one, introduced in the 2025 Benefits Plan. Transitional Pastor's Participation, fully paid for by the congregation or employer, is available through 2027.

The 2025 Benefits Plan provides congregations flexibility and choice so they can structure packages that meet their context of ministry. Presbyteries and congregations are encouraged to have conversations about benefits needs with each congregational pastoral leader.

Board of Pensions Church Consultants are available to guide faithful decision-making throughout these conversations. We urge you to speak with them or call us at 800-PRESPLAN (800-773-7752) (TTY: 711) so we can guide you. Visit seasonofrebuilding.pensions.org for additional information on the 2025 Benefits Plan and the Decision Guide for Minister Benefits, which can help determine eligibility and costs for the dues packages.

COVENANT PACKAGE

The Board of Pensions hopes that the Covenant Package, which provides extensive income protection, becomes our denomination's minimum commitment to every minister the Church ordains. The package is available to ministers and employees working at least 20 hours weekly, regardless of ordination status. With dues at 10% of effective salary, this income protection package is without equal on the commercial market:

1. Defined Benefit Pension Plan (8.5%)
2. Death and Disability Plan (1%)
3. Temporary Disability Plan (.5%)
4. Employee Assistance Plan (no cost)

The Covenant Package does not include medical coverage. Congregations may offer ministers and employees working 20 or more hours weekly one or more of the three Medical Plan options: preferred provider organization (PPO), exclusive provider organization (EPO), and qualified high deductible health plan (HDHP). Members may also secure coverage in another way, as through a spouse or on the Health Insurance Marketplace.

CONGREGATIONAL PASTORS PACKAGE

The Congregational Pastors Package is required for installed pastors. It also may be offered to ministers and commissioned pastors who serve congregations at least 20 hours weekly. Dues are 16% of effective salary for Member-only PPO medical coverage (subject to minimum and maximum dues amounts), plus 10% of effective salary for the income protection benefits:

1. Defined Benefit Pension Plan (8.5%)
2. Death and Disability Plan (1%)
3. Temporary Disability Plan (.5%)

Medical coverage for family members is available in three tiers; congregations may choose to pay all, some, or none of the costs. The coverage costs for child(ren), spouse, and eligible family are established as national, community-rated, fixed pricing. The costs are the same regardless of the number of children enrolled. In 2025, the mutually exclusive annual costs are:

1. Child(ren) \$8,950
2. Spouse \$11,000
3. Family \$20,600

TRANSITIONAL PASTOR'S PARTICIPATION

Transitional Pastor's Participation is available to congregations and employers who have a minister in Pastor's Participation as of December 31, 2024. This package continues the noncontributory dues structure of Pastor's Participation. Transitional Pastor's Participation will sunset December 31, 2027, and is not transferable if a minister changes positions.

Dues are a percentage of effective salary for medical coverage, plus 10% of effective salary for pension and death and disability benefits. For 2025, medical coverage dues are 33% of effective salary, with a minimum of \$15,000 and a maximum of \$43,000. For 2026, medical dues will increase to *no less than 37%*, with an \$18,000 minimum and a \$50,000 maximum. And for 2027, medical dues will increase to *no less than 41%*, with a \$21,600 minimum and a \$57,000 maximum. The 2026 and 2027 rates are not final; they are subject to approval by the agency's Board of Directors.

OTHER PACKAGE BENEFITS

Members enrolled in the Covenant Package or the Congregational Pastors Package are eligible for additional benefits, which appear in the chart below. The chart indicates whether a benefit is included in a package and also where cost-sharing is an option.

Benefit	Covenant Packages	Congregational Pastor's Package
RETIREMENT PLANS		
Defined Benefit Pension Plan	✓	✓
Retirement Savings Plan	+	\$
DEATH, DISABILITY & LIFE PLANS		
Death and Disability Plan	✓	✓
Temporary Disability Plan	✓	✓
Supplemental Death	\$	\$
HEALTH AND WELLNESS PLANS		
Medical Plan	+	✓
Employee Assistance Plan	✓	✓
Dental Plan	+	\$
Vision Eyewear Plan	+	\$

✓	In package.
\$	Required to offer; cost may be shared.
+	May be offered; cost may be shared.

Benefits Plan Offerings

Congregations and employers can offer combinations of the full range of Benefits Plan options to ministers and employees, regardless of ordination status. Offerings included in the 2025 Benefits Plan are described below. Eligibility for most benefits requires a minimum 20-hour workweek. However, several do not, and those are noted.

RETIREMENT PLANS

Defined Benefit Pension Plan

Provides a guaranteed monthly income throughout retirement. Congregations and employers pay the dues, 8.5% of effective salary. Participants do not contribute. Vesting is after three years' employment or upon seminary graduation.

Retirement Savings Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A qualified, 403(b)(9) defined contribution church plan including both tax-deferred and Roth after-tax contribution features. There is **no hourly work requirement** for participation. Congregations may, but are not required to, contribute to a participant's account.

DEATH, DISABILITY & LIFE PLANS

Death and Disability Plan

Provides members with peace of mind and financial security in the event of total disability or death. Congregations and employers pay the full coverage cost: 1% of effective salary if the plan is offered with Defined Benefit Pension Plan or 2.5% of effective salary if offered without.

1. When disability keeps a member out of work for an extended period, this coverage provides a monthly payment generally equal to 70% of the member's effective salary.
2. In the event of disability, pension credit accrual continues for pension plan enrollees until the normal retirement age of 65, and medical coverage continues until age 65 for those enrolled for medical coverage through the Board.
3. In the event of a member's death, this coverage provides a salary continuation benefit to beneficiaries for 12 months, a lump-sum payment to eligible survivors or the estate, and an education benefit for dependent children under age 25 for the first four years of study beyond high school.
4. For members who become terminally ill, it provides a living needs benefit, the option to receive a portion of death benefits to help pay expenses during the final stage of illness.

Term Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Plan

Provides security for members who are not enrolled in the Death and Disability Plan. The plan provides term life, accidental death, accidental dismemberment, and children's education benefits when a member dies or sustains certain accidental injuries. Congregations and employers pay the full cost of coverage, which is available in incremental amounts or at one or two times the member's salary, to a maximum of \$200,000.

Temporary Disability Plan

Provides 70% of effective salary to members during a disability, for up to 90 days, after a seven-day waiting period. The monthly cost is \$0.45 per \$10 of weekly salary, paid by the congregation or employer or by the minister or employee.

NOTE: When congregational pastoral leaders receive paid family leave for pregnancy, required by the Book of Order for installed positions, this benefit can result in savings to the congregation that could be used to offset pulpit supply costs.

Long-Term Disability Plan

Provides financial protection for members who are not enrolled in the Death and Disability Plan and their families. The plan provides a monthly income to members who are unable to work due to a physical or mental illness or injury that lasts longer than 90 days. The monthly cost is \$0.35 per \$100 of monthly salary, paid by the congregation or employer.

Supplemental Death Benefits

Provide additional protection, above what is available in the Death and Disability Plan and Term Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Plan. Spouses and dependent children may also be enrolled. The congregation may contribute to the costs of supplemental death benefits for members. Members pay for coverage of spouses and children. Costs are based on member age at time of enrollment, coverage level, and tobacco-use status.

Health and Wellness Plans

MEDICAL PLAN

Provides three coverage options (PPO, EPO, and HDHP), personalized support for navigating healthcare, generous preventive care and prescription drug benefits, an employee assistance plan, telemedicine, and an online well-being program. Congregations and employers may offer as many options as they want. They must contribute at least 50% of the cost of Member-only coverage in the lowest-cost option offered — regardless of the option the minister or employee elects. Ministers and employees may be required to pay up to 100% of the coverage cost for family members.

1. The preferred provider organization (PPO) provides the highest level of coverage and offers the most flexibility. Members enrolled in the PPO may seek care from both network and out-of-network providers.
2. The exclusive provider organization (EPO) provides comprehensive coverage for care from the same providers at a lower monthly cost than the PPO because no out-of-network costs are covered.
3. The high deductible health plan (HDHP), the lowest-cost medical coverage option available through the Board of Pensions, is a higher-quality version of the typical HDHP in the commercial market, uses the same network as the EPO, and would be considered a bronze plan in the Health Insurance Marketplace.

VISION PLAN

Includes an annual eye exam and the opportunity for members to save hundreds of dollars every year on the cost of eyeglasses, contacts, and more. There is **no hourly work requirement** to participate. Congregations and employers choose whether to share in the costs.

DENTAL PLAN

Provides coverage for a wide range of basic and major services and orthodontic treatment for children under age 22. There is **no hourly work requirement** for participation. Congregations choose whether to share in the costs, which vary geographically.

Tax-Advantaged Accounts

DEPENDENT CARE FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT

Allows for pretax dollars to be used to pay for eligible child and elder care expenses. There is **no hourly work requirement** for participation. Congregations may contribute to these accounts but are not required to.

HEALTHCARE FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT

Allows for pretax dollars to be used to pay for eligible healthcare expenses, such as deductibles, copays, and prescription drugs.

HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Offered with the high deductible health plan (HDHP) to pay for eligible healthcare expenses; contributions, investment growth, and withdrawals for qualified expenses are tax-free.

Assistance and Education Programs

Any member enrolled in the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), regardless of ordination status, has access to assistance and education programs. Additional programs are available to ministers of the Word and Sacrament. With the change in the dues structure, we are hopeful more congregational pastoral leaders will be enrolled in the Benefits Plan, which will open access to our assistance and education programs.

CREDO: AN INVESTMENT IN THE CONGREGATION AND THE MINISTER

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament enrolled in the Medical Plan and/or the Defined Benefit Pension Plan may attend CREDO conferences. There are three types of CREDO conferences, led by expert faculty and designed to support ministers in a different phase of life and ministry. All foster spiritual, vocational, health, and financial well-being. Beginning in 2025, ministers working outside of congregations are eligible for these conferences.

The conference for members ordained in the PC(USA) fewer than five years is designed to be a kickoff to fruitful ministry. It comprises an initial weeklong conference dedicated to discernment and goal setting, followed by a year of one-on-one coaching and a concluding weeklong conference. Another weeklong conference serves mid-career ministers, who often need the gift of time to renew a passion for ministry. And late-career ministers may

attend a weeklong conference that focuses on finishing a career of ministry with personal satisfaction and, ultimately, a plan for retirement.

Each CREDO cohort is limited to 28 to 30 participants to foster the flourishing of small cohort communities. The gatherings are by invitation only, but all eligible ministers receive invitations to the conference type for which they are eligible. At least 10 CREDO conferences are offered each year, throughout the spring and fall. Over 3,200 PC(USA) ministers have participated. The cost to the Board is substantial, more than \$5,000 per participant per conference, but it is a critical investment, as healthy and secure ministers promote healthy congregations.

ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are enrolled in the Covenant Package, the Congregational Pastors Package, or Transitional Pastor's Participation may apply for four grant programs designed specifically to support their well-being:

1. MINISTER DEBT RELIEF

Helps ministers pay down debt — and achieve greater financial well-being — through individual, debt-specific financial planning and a grant of up to \$10,000.

2. MINISTER EDUCATIONAL DEBT ASSISTANCE

Helps ministers repay educational debt through student loan debt coaching and grants of up to \$25,000. This assistance is designed to make it easier for ministers to accept a wide range of positions and wholly commit their best gifts to ministry.

3. CLERGY WELLNESS SUPPORT

Assists ministers with respite and vocational support, providing up to \$5,000 for program and travel fees.

4. SABBATH SABBATICAL SUPPORT

Provides ministers with a portion of the support they need — up to \$5,000 — to engage in planned activities for personal and professional renewal.

In addition to the grants designed for ministers enrolled in the dues packages, the Assistance Program provides other grants that are open to anyone enrolled in the Benefits Plan, regardless of ordination status, and including retirees and surviving spouses. These are Adoption Assistance, Emergency Assistance, and Transition-to-College Assistance. Retirees and surviving spouses may apply for Housing and Income supplements, Emergency Assistance, and medical grants.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Membership in the Benefits Plan provides access to offerings that support lifelong learning. These include seminars, webinars, and e-learning as well as other resources on financial and retirement planning and tax issues specific to ministers and congregations. A talented team of educational professionals develops and staffs the programs, which provide guidance toward wholeness with learning opportunities throughout the stages of ministry and life.

Innovative Ministries

As the PC(USA) grows in diversity alongside our culture, innovative ministries are vital to the flourishing of the changing Church. Over the last six years, the Board of Pensions has been exploring ways to support ministers and innovation in ministry through dues incentive programs. Moving forward, this continues, with the agency also setting aside funding for as-yet-unidentified new concepts as it works with the changing Church to meet new needs.

The Board's Pathways to Renewal, which was sunset in 2023, and its Benefits Grants for Organizing Pastors and Evangelists, which continues, have resulted in more than 140 new calls being created. The agency's newest program, the Shared Ministry Program, encourages congregations, through benefits dues subsidies, to covenant to create sustainable pastoral positions.

BENEFITS GRANTS FOR ORGANIZING PASTORS AND EVANGELISTS

Benefits Grants for Organizing Pastors and Evangelists (church job code 301) support presbyteries in planting churches and cultivating new ministries by assisting with the minister's enrollment in the Benefits Plan.

Many communities served by organizing pastors and evangelists face economic challenges, and providing benefits through the plan may not be feasible. Yet, without the well-being support available to ministers through the plan, a minister may not be able to devote their best gifts to ministry. These grants help provide benefits support as ministers work to spread the Gospel and develop new congregations.

SHARED MINISTRY PROGRAM

The Shared Ministry Program encourages congregations, through benefits dues subsidies, to covenant to provide full-time employment to a minister of the Word and Sacrament. Positions created through this program may be installed or not and ideally will be full-time.

Once a covenant with the Board of Pensions is signed, the agency will provide a dues subsidy of 50% of the cost of benefits, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year, per call, for three years. This program expands nationally the shared ministry model developed for a pilot program in the Pittsburgh Presbytery.

THE VALUE OF COST-EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

The Board of Pensions relies on the power of large numbers in managing the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It does this through its leadership in the Church Benefits Association (CBA), generations of stewardship by Presbyterian congregations, and decades of strong investment management by the agency.

CBA includes an overwhelming majority of all denominational benefits plans. Over 200,000 faith communities are represented, with CBA members serving more than 300,000 members of the clergy and other church-related employees in the U.S. and Canada. The association's buying coalition for healthcare is collectively the largest national customer of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Healthcare Cost Control

The size of the CBA buying coalition enables the negotiation of favorable rates and provides Benefits Plan members with access to the largest healthcare network in the U.S. As a result, the Board provides healthcare coverage with an administrative cost that is substantially less than the combined administrative and profit margin of the healthcare industry as a whole.

Compared to total dues/revenue, 87.5% of every dollar the Board collects goes to pay medical claims; commercial competitors may pay as little as 80% of premiums toward claims. That is a 7.5% cost advantage for congregations and employers participating in the Benefits Plan.

Congregations and employers who participate in the plan also benefit from large risk pool numbers. Most small employers suffer with the highest per capita costs for what is often less than comprehensive coverage. The PC(USA) plans have a large risk pool and are self-funded, so the average costs per covered life are better controlled.

Defined Benefit Pension Plan

The asset-based plans benefit from scale as well. Stewardship by Presbyterian congregations and expert investment management by the Board of Pensions have yielded sufficient resources to meet plan obligations and provide all members with benefits at a relatively low cost. Dues for the Defined Benefit Pension Plan have never gone above 11% of effective salary. And after its 2019 Asset Liability Study, the Board was able to reduce pension dues to 8.5% of effective salary, without reducing benefits. By comparison, the Episcopal Church levies 18% of ministers' effective salary for participation in its pension plan.

The PC(USA) pension plan provides for a 50% benefit for surviving spouses, based on the member's original pension calculation and without reduction. This is unheard of in other pension plans. Each member's pension accrues at the greater of actual compensation or the annual median effective salary. This commitment to community nature costs the plan about 1% annually, but honors those in lower-paying positions without unduly restricting the ability of all members to receive increases through experience apportionments, granted by the agency's Board of Directors.

Experience apportionments are the pension plan vehicle for sharing investment success. Apportionments increase the pension credits of active members and vested but terminated members and the pension benefits of retirees and surviving spouses. The latest apportionment of 4.5%, effective in July 2024, was the 12th consecutive and yielded a cumulative increase of 46.6% since 2013. The apportionment provision is unique in the pension world but explicitly reflects the PC(USA) value of generational equity. No one benefits disproportionately due to the year in which they retire.

Death and Disability Plan

Dues for the Death and Disability Plan have remained at 1% of effective salary for a generation, when offered with the pension plan, even though the commercial value is approximately 2.5% of effective salary. The commercial value is derived not only from the income replacement feature for disability, which is common in commercial plans, but also from other features unique to the PC(USA). The Board pays for medical coverage if the member is enrolled for medical coverage through the Board at the time the disability occurs and pension accruals on behalf of disabled members until they reach Medicare eligibility. Included in the death benefits is up to \$40,000 per child for the first four years of accredited study beyond high school.

Every offering provided through the Board is designed to bring greater value at a lower cost than what is available on the commercial market. More importantly, we structure the plans and programs to reflect the values of the PC(USA).

HOW MAY WE SERVE YOU?

Service excellence, hospitality, and grace run through the fabric of the Board of Pensions. Our Church Consultants, located throughout the country, and our Plan Operations teams are available for guidance and simply to answer questions.

CHURCH CONSULTANTS

Sessions, session committees, and other church leaders are urged to call their Church Consultant before making benefits decisions. Ways in which consultants provide support include:

1. providing guidance in discussions on benefits needs among presbyteries, congregations, and ministers
2. keeping presbyteries informed on innovative ministries programs
3. helping to expand awareness of the assistance program.

Consultants, their regions, and contact information are available on [pensions.org](https://www.pensions.org), at <https://www.pensions.org/our-role-and-purpose/the-connectional-church/church-consultants>, or by calling 800-PRESPLAN (800-773-7752) (TTY: 711).

Visit seasonofrebuilding.pensions.org for additional information on the 2025 Benefits Plan.

APPENDIX 1: Salaries in the Parish Ministry (2024 Salary Study)

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) annually tabulates the median and average annual effective salary information reported to it for minister members of the Benefits Plan who are serving PC(USA) congregations. The median salary is generally considered more representative than the average salary because it is less influenced by very high and very low salaries. The Board uses salary information reported to it as of May each year to set the median effective salary for the next year. The median effective salary applies to all Benefits Plan members for purposes of calculating pension credits and pension and disability benefits.

The median annual effective salary for 2025 is \$70,000, an increase of 4.3% from the 2024 median of \$67,100. The average annual effective salary of these ministers for 2024 is \$77,109, a 3.6% increase from the 2023 average of \$74,438.

The table below shows a five-year comparison of average annual effective salaries received by the minister members of the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) serving local congregations as of the date shown. These averages exclude salaries paid to chaplains, foreign missionaries, pensioners serving churches, and personnel at the Board of Pensions and other church agencies. The averages are based on the annual effective salaries, on which benefits dues are calculated, and include cash salary, manse or housing allowances, and deferred compensation as reported by the churches.

AVERAGE ANNUAL EFFECTIVE SALARIES						
Synod	5/1/2020	5/1/2021	5/1/2022	5/1/2023	5/1/2024	% Change Average Salary 2024 vs. 2020
Alaska – Northwest	\$71,633	\$72,072	\$75,591	\$80,020	\$83,185	16.13%
Boriquen (Puerto Rico)	\$26,433	\$25,972	\$26,792	\$28,284	\$27,957	5.77%
The Covenant	\$62,956	\$64,384	\$65,832	\$68,376	\$70,398	11.82%
Lakes and Prairies	\$61,908	\$63,435	\$65,400	\$67,470	\$69,099	11.62%
Lincoln Trails	\$65,595	\$66,208	\$69,176	\$71,281	\$73,621	12.24%
Living Waters	\$64,596	\$65,368	\$67,569	\$68,826	\$70,797	9.60%
Mid-America	\$60,832	\$62,998	\$64,760	\$67,231	\$69,088	13.57%
Mid-Atlantic	\$68,874	\$69,803	\$72,260	\$75,315	\$78,241	13.60%
The Northeast	\$71,923	\$74,014	\$77,039	\$79,281	\$81,593	13.45%
The Pacific	\$73,222	\$74,325	\$77,161	\$81,986	\$85,686	17.02%
The Rocky Mountains	\$65,594	\$67,439	\$69,218	\$72,603	\$75,766	15.51%
South Atlantic	\$72,225	\$72,892	\$76,017	\$78,402	\$82,530	14.27%
Southern California and Hawaii	\$79,697	\$81,619	\$85,765	\$88,043	\$90,797	13.93%
The Southwest	\$67,528	\$68,707	\$70,441	\$75,026	\$74,587	10.45%
The Sun	\$65,139	\$67,604	\$69,797	\$72,849	\$76,650	17.67%
The Trinity	\$64,917	\$65,547	\$68,513	\$70,670	\$73,049	12.53%
TOTAL CHURCH	\$67,872	\$69,165	\$71,784	\$74,438	\$77,109	13.61%

APPENDIX 2: Introduction

The following pages include salary study materials designed to inform benefits decisions. Included are breakdowns by gender, age, and position.

SEVERAL NOTES

Gender

A distinction persists between average salaries for men and women enrolled in the Benefits Plan, although among ministers 29 and younger, the average salary for men and women is virtually equal. Congregations are driven by their unique circumstances. As a community of faith, we need to work together to help them be the best employers they can be and ensure that local compensation practices reflect the Church's vision of wholeness.

Congregation Size

Smaller PC(USA) congregations are more likely than larger congregations not to have a minister in an installed position. (In 2023, for the first time ever, fewer than 50% of congregations had an installed pastor.)

Benefits

A Board examination of the various data indicated that Benefits Plan participation contributes to more stable service to the Church. Beginning with those ordained for five years, the agency tracked who remained in ministry or was honorably retired after 10 years. For those not enrolled in the plan, 36% were no longer in ministry. That dropped to 24% for those who had been plan members, suggesting that providing access to the benefits and programming available through the plan strengthens the ministry of the Church by supporting the well-being of those who answer a call from God.

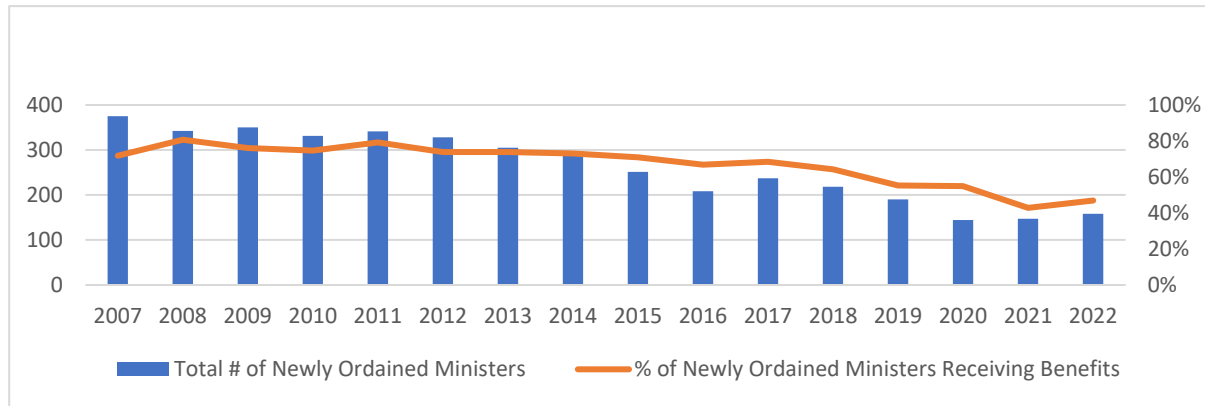
Please take note of the following in reviewing the following appendices:

1. This work focuses on church ministry, looking at the following relationships (job codes): pastor or co-pastor (101), associate pastor (103), interim pastor or interim associate (105), temporary pastoral relationship (108), and designated pastor (191 and 193).

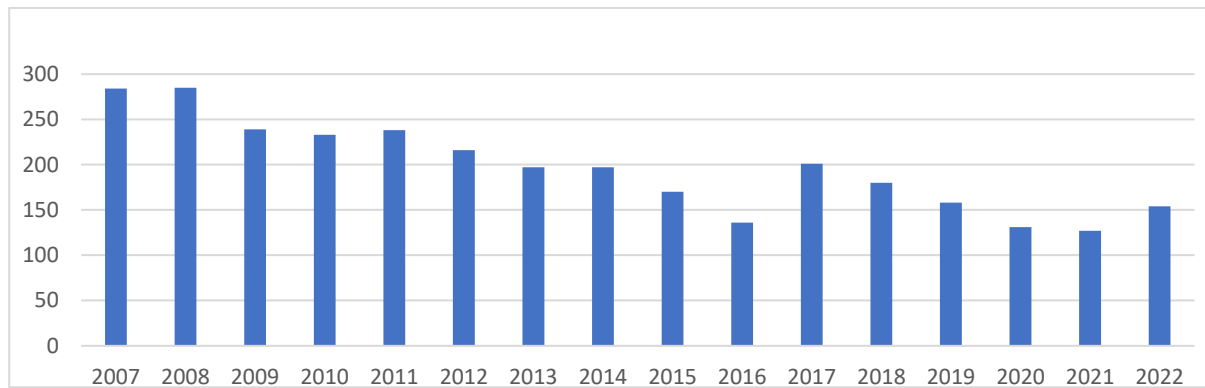
2. The effective salary and relationship (job code) information is self-reported by congregations to the Board for their plan members. It does not reflect the effect of number of years of service.
3. The data comprises full-time and part-time positions, including those in split services (serving in more than one ministry context where the primary service includes one of the above relationships).

Statistically insignificant or individually identifiable data has been removed from certain detail lines in the tables but is included in the high-level totals. As a result, detail lines may not all total to the summary totals.

APPENDIX 3: All Ordinations v. Newly Ordained Plan Members (2007 to 2022)



APPENDIX 4: Number of Ministers New to the Benefits Plan



APPENDIX 5: Ordained Ministers 2007 to 2022/Plan Member Participation by Age at Ordination (with Gender)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
TOTAL ORDINATIONS	375	342	350	331	341	328	305	293	251	208	237	218	190	144	147	158
Total Female Ordinations	176	164	171	175	174	174	164	160	140	108	134	127	107	80	95	93
Total Male Ordinations	199	178	179	156	167	154	141	133	111	100	103	91	83	64	52	65
TOTAL ORDAINED AVERAGE AGE	38.5	38.7	39.9	39.4	40.1	38.9	37.4	38.1	37.4	38.9	39.1	39.4	38.2	39.2	41.5	41.9
% Female	47%	48%	49%	53%	51%	53%	54%	55%	56%	52%	57%	58%	56%	56%	65%	59%
% Male	53%	52%	51%	47%	49%	47%	46%	45%	44%	48%	43%	42%	44%	44%	35%	41%
TOTAL MINISTERS IN BENEFITS PLAN	269	276	266	247	270	242	225	214	178	139	162	140	105	79	63	74
Total Female Ministers	111	119	123	122	126	119	117	107	93	67	85	78	53	44	42	35
Total Male Ministers	158	157	143	125	144	123	108	107	85	72	77	62	52	35	19	39
AVERAGE AGE OF MINISTERS IN BENEFITS PLAN	37.9	38.6	39.2	37.6	38.1	37.3	35.7	39.5	39.4	37.1	38.4	37.9	37.8	39.3	38.3	38.3
% Female	41%	43%	46%	49%	47%	49%	52%	50%	52%	48%	52%	56%	50%	56%	70%	47%
% Male	59%	57%	54%	51%	53%	51%	48%	50%	48%	52%	48%	44%	50%	44%	30%	53%
FEMALE	63%	73%	72%	70%	72%	68%	71%	67%	66%	62%	63%	61%	50%	55%	46%	38%
MALE	79%	88%	80%	80%	86%	80%	77%	80%	77%	72%	75%	68%	63%	55%	36%	60%

NOTE: Women account for more ordinations than men (53% v. 47%), but more men are in the Benefits Plan (76% v. 64%).

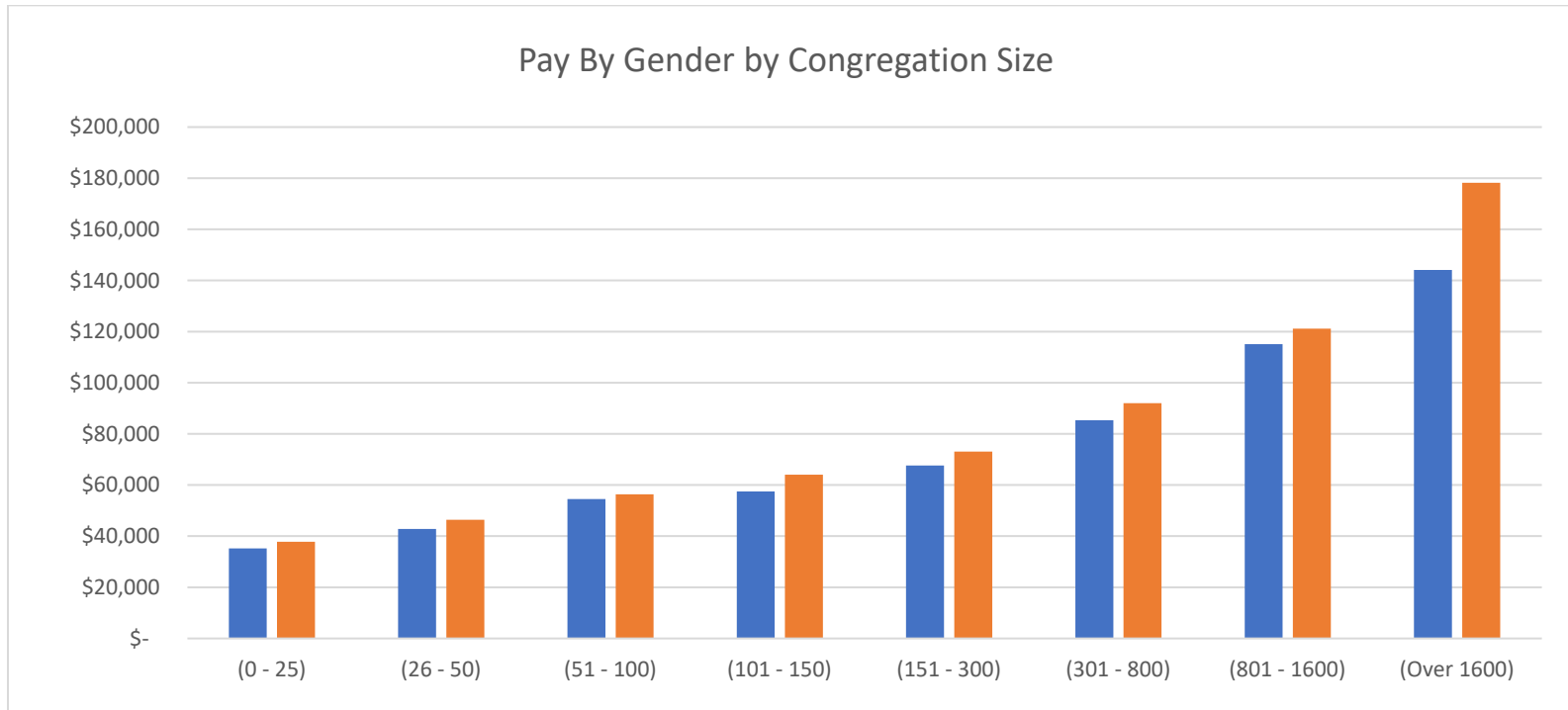
	Total
TOTAL ORDINATIONS	4,218
Total Female Ordinations	2,242
Total Male Ordinations	1,976
TOTAL MINISTERS IN BENEFITS PLAN	2,949
Total Female Ministers in Benefits Plan	1,443
Total Male Ministers in Benefits Plan	1,506
TOTAL MINISTERS NOT IN BENEFITS PLAN	1,269
Total Female Ministers NOT in Benefits Plan	799
Total Male Ministers NOT in Benefits Plan	470

APPENDIX 6: Congregational Ministry Effective Salary Study of Board of Pensions Plan Members as of 1/1/2024 Relationships by Age Group (and Gender)

			Pastor or Co-Pastor 101		Associate Pastor 103		Interim Pastor 105		Temporary Pastor 108		Designated Pastor 191 and 193	
TOTAL	4,294	\$75,154	2,870	\$78,884	516	\$81,878	428	\$69,503	295	\$57,903	185	\$39,103
FEMALE	1,661	\$72,736	897	\$73,193	297	\$80,842	232	\$69,256	151	\$61,353	84	\$69,262
MALE	2,633	\$78,952	1,973	\$81,471	219	\$83,284	196	\$70,392	144	\$54,287	101	\$72,125
0-29 TOTAL	47	\$59,239	14	\$68,336	25	\$63,261	2	--	--	\$61,505	2	--
Female	29	\$64,237	7	\$73,788	17	\$62,735	1	\$57,202	2	\$58,606	2	\$52,725
Male	18	\$63,556	7	\$62,883	8	\$64,378	1	\$60,000	2	\$64,403	0	--
30-39 TOTAL	482	\$71,308	258	\$70,997	145	\$74,002	38	\$66,129	25	\$71,450	16	\$63,989
Female	241	\$70,082	99	\$67,766	91	\$73,501	26	\$70,165	17	\$70,753	8	\$58,166
Male	241	\$72,533	159	\$73,008	54	\$74,846	12	\$57,384	8	\$72,930	8	\$69,811
40-49 TOTAL	1,028	\$78,997	688	\$81,546	164	\$80,904	76	\$68,254	56	\$58,353	44	\$76,868
Female	395	\$75,584	227	\$77,577	81	\$80,130	37	\$66,278	35	\$64,008	15	\$70,840
Male	633	\$81,128	461	\$83,501	83	\$81,659	39	\$70,128	21	\$48,928	29	\$79,986
50-59 TOTAL	1,148	\$79,257	828	\$81,785	83	\$89,283	113	\$71,373	83	\$59,828	41	\$68,975
Female	395	\$76,482	225	\$76,162	48	\$89,514	65	\$74,211	30	\$67,678	17	\$68,129
Male	763	\$80,658	603	\$83,883	35	\$88,967	48	\$67,530	53	\$55,384	24	\$69,574
60 and over TOTAL	1,589	\$71,339	1,082	\$76,989	99	\$93,522	199	\$70,260	127	\$53,668	82	--
Female	611	\$69,984	339	\$69,860	60	\$91,130	193	\$67,087	67	\$54,830	42	\$72,058
Male	978	\$78,078	743	\$80,241	39	\$97,203	96	\$73,665	60	\$52,370	40	\$68,418

- / - Figures are not shown due to possibility of being identifiable. Figures are included in the totals. Further explanation in Appendix 2: Introduction.

APPENDIX 7: Congregational Ministry Effective Salary Study of Board of Pension Plan Members as of 1/1/2023 Congregation Sizes by Relationship (and Gender)



Congregation Size	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Pastor or Co-Pastor 101		Associate Pastor 103		Interim Pastor 105		Temporary Pastor 108		Designated Pastor 191 and 193	
			Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary
TOTAL	4,589	\$70,449	3,155	\$73,937	551	\$74,282	414	\$60,313	301	\$45,361	168	\$62,295
FEMALE	1,692	\$65,523	942	\$67,758	314	\$72,528	212	\$60,739	149	\$45,942	75	\$60,541
MALE	2,897	\$73,326	2,213	\$76,567	237	\$76,607	202	\$59,866	152	\$44,792	93	\$63,710
0-25 TOTAL	118	\$41,792	70	\$46,000	0	\$0	17	\$38,060	26	\$32,760	5	\$42,536
Female	35	\$41,908	20	\$42,299	0	\$0	5	\$41,963	7	\$38,360	3	\$47,493
Male	83	\$41,743	50	\$47,481	0	\$0	12	\$36,434	19	\$30,697	2	\$35,100
26-50 TOTAL	332	\$43,858	206	\$47,176	3	\$57,044	40	\$41,802	65	\$33,746	18	\$44,780
Female	131	\$43,449	72	\$46,861	2	\$60,666	18	\$46,238	29	\$33,167	10	\$40,235
Male	201	\$44,125	134	\$47,345	1	\$49,800	22	\$38,173	36	\$34,213	8	\$50,461
51-100 TOTAL	957	\$54,433	695	\$56,674	6	\$59,811	102	\$50,584	98	\$42,015	56	\$54,785
Female	368	\$53,304	245	\$55,713	4	\$62,050	47	\$49,443	51	\$42,817	21	\$57,639
Male	589	\$55,138	450	\$57,197	2	\$55,332	55	\$51,559	47	\$41,144	35	\$53,072
101-150 TOTAL	714	\$62,200	578	\$63,139	5	\$52,261	60	\$57,765	40	\$55,814	31	\$63,117
Female	267	\$59,453	203	\$60,225	0	\$0	30	\$58,528	20	\$52,967	14	\$59,498
Male	447	\$63,841	375	\$64,716	5	\$52,261	30	\$57,002	20	\$58,660	17	\$66,098
151-300 TOTAL	1,016	\$73,149	806	\$74,936	50	\$62,956	91	\$65,586	33	\$65,072	36	\$73,825
Female	350	\$70,145	232	\$73,152	26	\$62,127	57	\$64,077	18	\$61,827	17	\$70,531
Male	666	\$74,728	574	\$75,657	24	\$63,854	34	\$68,116	15	\$68,967	19	\$76,771
301-800 TOTAL	983	\$85,474	622	\$94,167	239	\$69,510	77	\$75,060	23	\$56,174	22	\$80,211
Female	348	\$77,921	140	\$90,824	145	\$68,975	41	\$72,109	12	\$57,498	10	\$75,333
Male	635	\$89,613	482	\$95,138	94	\$70,335	36	\$78,420	11	\$54,729	12	\$84,276

Congregation Size	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Pastor or Co-Pastor 101		Associate Pastor 103		Interim Pastor 105		Temporary Pastor 108		Designated Pastor 191 and 193	
			Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary	Count of Ministers	Average Salary
801 to 1,600 TOTAL	312	\$99,346	131	\$131,747	144	\$77,525	21	\$83,536	16	\$51,191	0	\$0
Female	121	\$78,475	19	\$115,190	79	\$73,667	11	\$83,467	12	\$47,423	0	\$0
Male	191	\$112,567	112	\$134,556	65	\$82,215	10	\$83,612	4	\$62,493	0	\$0
OVER 1,600 TOTAL	157	\$114,384	47	\$174,924	104	\$88,596	6	\$87,149	0	\$0	0	\$0
Female	72	\$97,962	11	\$168,863	58	\$85,652	3	\$75,983	0	\$0	0	\$0
Male	85	\$128,294	36	\$176,776	46	\$92,307	3	\$98,315	0	\$0	0	\$0



THE BOARD OF PENSIONS
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