Clergy Compensation

How much should we pay our pastor? Are there any guidelines for what clergy should be paid?

It is a question that is often raised about this time of the year as many congregations prepare budgets for the coming year. And many clergy are wondering what the answers to those questions are as well.

The answer for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ is, like many things in the UCC, yes and no, and we’re planning to do something about it.

First, there is the yes. If you are eager to find something right away, we have guidelines. You can find them on the Conference website: pncucc.org. On the Home Page, find “work” on the list going across the top. Click “work” Under work scroll down until you will find a line “for clergy”, click it and scroll down until you find Guidelines for Compensation and Reimbursement of Full Time Ministers in the Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ. The document is even longer than its title. Some 24 pages. If you are in a hurry, you can go to the worksheet on page 9 and find the size and location of your congregation. The numbers are based on a rural Eastern Washington congregation with a fulltime pastor and you can use the multiplier below the boxes for other possible situations. For example, if your congregation is an church in Western Washington, etc.. If you are not sure which category your congregation fits, check page 24.

Now you need to notice that these guidelines were created in 2009!. Our friend Tom Miller calculated the cost of living increases in the past 9 years and to bring these numbers more of less UpToDate. You need to multiply the 2009 number by 1.1349 (which is the compounded social security increases over this period of time.)

Your Committee on Ministry is committed to reviewing the total compensation guidelines in the coming year and by this time next year have a more current guidelines. Our Conference Minister, Mike Denton, has recently received a new form for a Call Agreement from the national office of Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA). It provides a broader context for looking at Compensation (in general) and includes more guidelines for part-time pastors as well as full time. It’s a first step in updating the guidelines. As the Committee on Ministry begins its work, if you have suggestions, questions, concerns on the current guidelines or suggestions on how to proceed as we develop new ones please contact the Conference Office (206)725- 8383 and leave a message for the Committee on Ministry.

Finally, remember that these are guidelines, not mandates. Each local congregation and pastor(s) have unique circumstances and covenants. Discussions about money can sometimes be difficult. The guidelines can provide a relatively objective perspective to your ongoing conversations.