



C4SO Customary: Compensation

1. Purpose

Compensation in the Church is both pastoral and practical. How we pay those who serve reveals what we believe about vocation, stewardship and justice. This customary helps C4SO churches set compensation that is fair, transparent, contextual and sustainable, ensuring clergy and staff can flourish in ministry.

2. Core Principles

- *Justice and Stewardship*: “The worker is worthy of his wages” (1 Tim. 5:18). Fair pay honors the dignity of work and expresses the Church’s care for her ministers.
- *Transparency and Trust*: Clear benchmarks and open communication build mutual confidence between vestry and staff.
- *Sustainability*: Pay structures must be realistic for today while oriented toward long-term equity.
- *Contextualization*: Salaries should reflect local cost of living rather than national averages.

3. Benchmarks

C4SO recommends local public school systems as the primary benchmark for compensation and benefits. They provide transparent, regional standards and roles parallel to ministry such as teaching, leadership, formation and care.

Example Comparisons:

- Rector = High School Principal
- Executive/Associate Pastor = Assistant Principal
- Assistant Pastor(s) = Classroom Teacher (Master’s degree)
- Worship Arts or Children’s Director = Specialized Teacher (Bachelor’s degree)
- Administrator = School Office Manager
- Facilities Director = Building Engineer or Custodian



4. Mitigating Factors

Benchmarks require interpretation:

- Depending on church size, pastoral experience, congregation expectations, etc., a Vestry may choose to adjust compensatory benchmarks.
- Clergy housing allowances reduce taxable income, while SECA taxes increase it; a 7.65% offset is customary.
- Housing costs near the parish may warrant adjustment.
- Smaller or recovering churches may plan gradual alignment.
- Bi-vocational clergy should be paid proportionally.
- Staff should receive annual cost-of-living-adjustments (COLA)

5. Designing a Pay Structure

Churches should consider using salary bands (entry, midpoint, ceiling) rather than fixed points. Progression should reflect tenure, responsibility and training. Where full alignment with benchmarks is not yet possible, adopt a multi-year plan and review annually.

6. Beyond Salary

Healthy churches provide holistic care through:

- Rest and renewal (PTO, sabbaticals)
- Family and wellness support (health coverage, counseling, parental leave)
- Professional development (study leave, conferences)
- Housing or retirement assistance (stipends, loans, contributions)

7. Implementation and Review

- Conduct annual reviews relative to benchmarks.
- Form a vestry Personnel Subcommittee for evaluation and staff care.
- Communicate salary bands and principles openly while keeping individual salaries confidential.



8. Theological Frame

Fair compensation is a witness to the generosity and justice of God. Stewardship of people and resources is not a distraction from mission; it is part of it. When churches pay justly and communicate transparently, they embody the kingdom they proclaim.

9. Summary

C4SO churches are encouraged to:

- Anchor compensation in local benchmarks.
- Interpret with pastoral discernment.
- Care for staff holistically.
- Review and communicate regularly.

Through these practices, our churches display the gospel's generosity and foster communities of justice, gratitude and flourishing.

***Note:** If you would like further guidance on matters of compensation, including an in-depth analysis of your church's budget, local benchmarks and other contributing factors, we recommend one of these trusted, third-party ministry partners who (for a cost) can provide additional, professional counsel:*

1. [XPastor](#)
2. [Geneva Benefits](#)
3. [Aven Advisors](#)