

Heartland Annual Conference
Guidelines for Clergy Compensation for the Year 2026,
Presented to the Annual Conference May 2025
by the Heartland Finance and Administration Committee

The following are guidelines, not mandates. We are operating under a more market-oriented approach to clergy employment than we might be expected to. A congregation or charge can offer whatever it thinks is fair, but without guaranteed annual appointment, it might struggle to create a compensation package which would be attractive to a proper candidate; the Cabinet will not, nor cannot, force clergy to accept appointments they do not desire to take.

In defining what “full-time” means, we desire to speak as much about expectations of job performance and working conditions as about salary. The FTM only addresses the salary, which is part of a compensation package that also may include health insurance, vacation, continuing education funds, housing allowance, and more. The recommended ranges for each sort of appointment are thus guidelines, not mandates. Nevertheless, in comparing compensation packages, we have decided to propose a single number each year, percentages of which are used in describing all the salary ranges of all the types of appointment. That number is the Full Time Minimum (FTM), which expresses our judgment of the low end of the salary range for a full-time pastor in charge.

The FTM for 2026 will be **\$43,000**.

Appointments in our system are open-ended, not annual; that is, once an appointment is made, it is assumed it will continue until either the pastor or the parish desires otherwise and acts upon that desire in harmony with our appointment procedures. The bishop fixes appointments at their beginning, but does not “re-appoint” everybody each year. So there is no end-date for an appointment, except in the case of Interim Pastors. Interim pastors are appointed for a term, usually six to twenty-four months. They serve in all regards as the pastor of the church, but they are there to provide a transition from one open-ended appointment to the next. Sometimes, they are appointed with the expectation of assisting in congregational evaluation or healing, or for the preparation of a future ministry. Interim appointments might become open-ended appointments, but that is not their intent. An Interim Pastor is usually compensated at the low end of the range for their appointment type, and benefits packages may vary from that offered for an open-ended appointment.

In cases where a pastor has not yet been ordained (or been granted sacramental authority in the case of Transitional Local Pastors and Supply Pastors), or where there is no regular pastor, the Presiding Elder will either undertake to offer sacramental ministry oneself or arrange for a qualified clergy person to provide sacramental ministry as occasion requires.

These guidelines are for clergy appointments, not lay employees. The types of lay staff churches might be in the market for, and the expected compensation for their skills, varies too much for us to express an opinion on.