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Dear Northwest Coast Presbytery Sessions and Personnel Teams,

We give thanks for your dedicated service in your local congregation, and we hold your ministries in our prayers. We also give thanks for ways you adapted throughout the pandemic and admire your perseverance, faith, and grace as we all move into this next season of life together.

We are writing specifically today with regards to the compensation and the standard contract known as “Terms of Call” (including benefits, vacation time, study leave, and sabbatical) for each of our pastors. Fall is often the season when Sessions are looking ahead and planning their next budget year and we want to encourage and educate you about your contractual obligation and best practices. As we have listened to our pastors over the last few months, many of them have shared concerning stories about their lack of appropriate compensation or that their “Terms of Call” have not been honored regarding vacation time or other benefits. We want to remind you that the “Terms of Call” is a legally binding contract. Below we hope to offer helpful guidance, encouragement, and education as you make financial and personnel decisions in 2024 and beyond.

COMPENSATION

We encourage you to set a salary for your pastor (and all your church staff) that is equitable and just. The salary minimum for Western Washington and Alaska is \$52,000 and the salary minimum for Eastern Washington is \$46,800. Please take into consideration the cost-of-living in your areas as well as the years of service of your pastor and any additional education or certifications they have achieved that enhance their qualifications. “A worker deserves his wages” (1 Timothy 5:18). If you cannot afford to pay your pastor fair salary, you might consider reducing the position to $\frac{3}{4}$ or PT so that the pastor may be able to seek additional work elsewhere. We are happy to consult as needed.

COST-OF-LIVING-RAISES + MERIT RAISES

For 2024, we are recommending a 3.2% COLA raise. COLA raises are not required but they are highly recommended. If you do not give your pastor and staff COLA raises, you are effectively paying them less each year. Relationally, it can also be quite hurtful when churches do not give raises to their staffs and often this can lead to a pastor looking for work elsewhere. Merit raises are also an option but not required. These are a caring way to communicate to your pastor that they are doing excellent work and that your congregation is appreciative of their service. For example, you could give your pastor a 3% COLA raise and a .5% Merit raise, and it could mean a lot to them.

VACATION TIME AND STUDY LEAVE

Our standard “Terms of Call” contract include 20 working days annually, including no more than four Sundays. Teaching elders with seven years in the same position, or ten years of ordained service should receive 25 working days annually, including no more than five Sundays. We also have a 12-week Family Leave Policy. Vacation and study leave are required. Congregations must honor this part of the “Terms of Call” and are subject to the jurisdiction of our Commission on Ministry if they fail to do so. We offer a pulpit supply list of preachers who can cover worship while your pastor is away (multiple languages are available).

SABBATICAL

Sabbaticals are typically given after 7 years of service for the duration of 3 months. We have several resources for that practice on our website.

SERVICE TO THE DENOMINATION

Occasionally, pastors are called upon to serve on committees, commissions, and task forces of their local presbytery or our larger denomination. Sessions should do their best to accommodate these seasons of service to the greater Church. It is likely that pastors may be called upon several times over the course of their careers.

OTHER FORMS OF COMPENSATION

There are other forms of compensation that Sessions may consider regarding their pastor such as: a manse, housing equity, holiday bonuses, SECA offsets, optional FSA/HSA coverage, an extra quarterly Sunday off for pastoral renewal (in addition to their vacation and study leave allotted Sundays), additional continuing education or professional expense time or money, and more. The presbytery staff would be happy to consult on these matters.

In summary, thank you for your consideration and due diligence as you attend to the personnel related matters of your congregation. We are here to support you in these matters and are happy to offer coaching and consultation through any challenges. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Blessings,

The Committee on Ministry of the Northwest Coast Presbytery