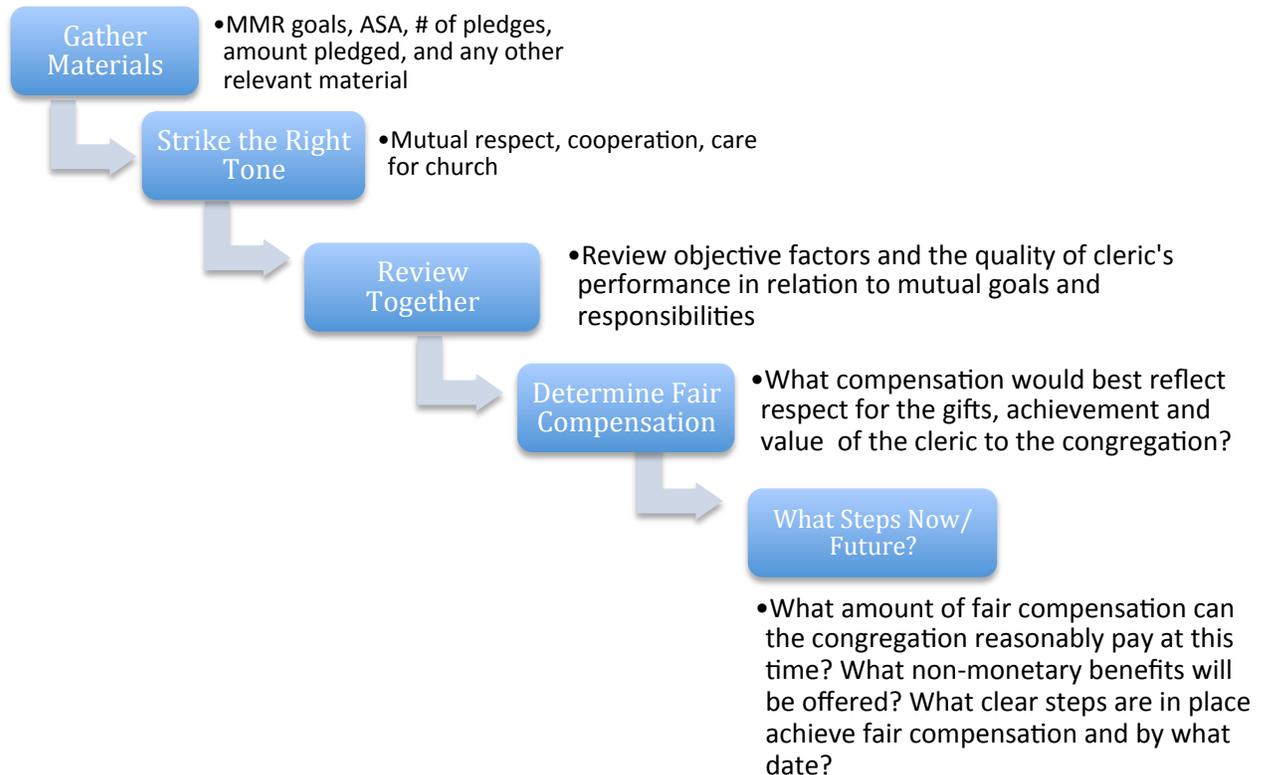


Tool Kit for Conversation on Clergy Compensation

Talking about money in churches can be awkward and difficult, whether it's stewardship season, or any of the financial business of the Vestry. Discussing compensation with your clergy can be doubly difficult, as it crosses the financial business of the Vestry with the Wardens' personal and working relationship with a priest. This document is meant to ease that necessary conversation and to help you steer clear of some of the common pitfalls that can hurt a parish.

Follow this step-by-step guide to a Respectful Conversation:



After you have completed your Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) and have clear reviews of progress toward goals set out in prior reviews, and have gathered the basic factual materials most of what you need will be here: www.ecww.org/sites/default/sites/files/

[CompensationAndBenefitManualForParochialClergy.pdf](#) here are some basic guidelines to a productive conversation about compensation.

Things to keep in mind

It is unlikely that your priest has taken a vow of poverty. Vestries know this, of course, but what happens too often is that the clergy, as models of Christian self-sacrifice, are expected to live at a lower economic standard in order to balance tight parish budgets. If the priest volunteers sacrifice under extraordinary circumstances, that is one thing. If vestries expect this of their clergy as a matter of course, it can be quite damaging to the relationship, and the health of the parish.

Economic distractions hurt the parish. Remember that your priest is employed to care for the concerns of the parish. If the priest has personal concerns about how to pay a mortgage, or how to meet any of the other expenses of life, that will distract your priest from properly taking care of the parish. A little economic peace of mind for the clergy goes a long way for the health of the whole community.

Your priest is an experienced professional. Recognize that seniority is only minimally considered in the scale suggestions from the diocese. That does not mean it is of minimal importance; only that it is up to vestries to fully recognize factors such as relevant work experience prior to ordination, longevity as a priest, use of specialized expertise called upon by your ministry context, level of relevant education, and superior performance.

There may be non-monetary ways to show your support for clergy. Time off to recharge (including sabbaticals), administrative support, and certain lay ministries can be ways to show respect and appreciation for a priest.

Setting the tone

The tone of the discussion can be affected by the environment in which it takes place. Here are some suggestions for how to have the most thorough, productive conversation:

1. Find a **comfortable, private, neutral place** for this conversation where all parties will feel at ease.
2. Pay attention to the **number of people** present. Smaller is better. This can be a one-on-one conversation, or at most 2 wardens and the cleric. If a follow-up conversation is necessary to work out

specific issues, the priest may want another party (a clergy colleague or diocesan representative) to be present.

3. The tone of the conversation should be mutually supportive. This is not a traditional employer/employee relationship. You are not two opposing sides; you are on the same side, supporting the same church from different ministries.
4. The goals of the conversation should be to care for the clergy, the vestry, and the parish as a whole.
5. Mutual respect is an absolutely essential part of the foundation of the conversation.

Specific factors to review

As with any professional review, there are objective factors that should always be included:

- Congregational Grade
- Clergy Compensation Scale
- Years of experience (not only with your parish, but total)
- Advanced degrees and other training
- The goals you have agreed to in your Mutual Ministry Review , and the status of achievement toward these goals
- Factors in the parish that may make the assignment more challenging, and any specialized training your cleric has attained to address these challenges.
- Economic capacity of the parish
- Review together the materials for clergy compensation minimums: Congregational grade (what movement has occurred), the Clergy Compensation Scale (where is the cleric in terms of longevity benchmarks?).
- Has the clergy person been or will s/he be asked to bear greater costs for healthcare benefits?
- What is the expected Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the coming year?
- Is the cleric's current salary at a minimum level for your current congregational grade? If it is, what message does that send to the clergy?

In addition to the objective data, there are other important factors that should at least be considered as part of the discussion:

- Have deserved increases in clergy compensation been deferred, or insufficiently funded in the past year or recent years? This may be the year that other important ministry ventures go underfunded to support a generous compensation increase.
- Discuss other accomplishments outside of MMR goals.
- Discuss the cleric's participation in continuing education.
- Discuss whether the cleric has taken responsibility for her/his wellness. Has she/he been faithful in taking days off, vacations, study leave, etc.? How have the wardens, vestry, and congregation supported these efforts?
- Remember that wardens and vestry change personnel much more often than the clergy, so reviewing previous discussions with earlier wardens may help to put the conversation on more equal footing.
- Does your congregation and vestry easily and readily express its appreciation for the ministry your clergy perform?
- How has the cleric been involved in diocesan ministry in recent years?
- Do the parties agree that, in the best circumstances, the cleric's performance of her/his duties has merited an increase in compensation?
- What would a generous percentage increase be, given her/his salary level?
- What would need to occur for that increase to be granted?
- If it is truly infeasible for the full amount to be granted, what is feasible and what non-monetary compensation could be marshaled to make up the difference?
- What efforts will need to be taken on the part of the wardens to ensure the full funding of the congregation's expenditures?
- If this change in compensation must be voted upon by the whole vestry, what will the wardens do to communicate and support the increase?
- The capacity of the parish to provide non-monetary compensation, such as additional vacation time, or additional study time.

Next steps after the conversation

Determine and record the concrete steps agreed upon to achieve fair compensation, and what non-monetary compensation will be offered in lieu of full, fair compensation until fair compensation can be paid.

Use the conversation as an opportunity to put in place practical measures that enrich the life of the parish as a whole. Things may arise in the conversation that point out weaknesses in the current structures that can be addressed in practical ways.

This process should be an opportunity for both parishes and clergy to ask themselves, and each other, "What do I need? What do you need from me?"

The answers to those questions, which are important in any human relationship, may be addressed by something simple, or by something important enough that it's worth extra effort. Remember that concrete, funded plans are much more valuable to the health of the church than idealistic statements of general intention. All of these things should aim at the ultimate goal of healthy parishes that serve God's people.