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## Development of Pastor Salary Guidelines

Anticipating the future merger of The Mennonite Church and The General Conference Mennonite Church, in 1995 the two offices representing ministerial leadership appointed a joint committee to develop common ministerial salary guidelines for congregations within the United States.

These guidelines were developed using knowledge of salaries within the two denominations based upon salary surveys which had been conducted together in the preceding years. Staff members also used ministerial salary surveys of other American Protestant denominations. Mennonite pastoral salaries were in the middle range.

The committee attempted to formulate the new ministerial guidelines somewhat in comparison to other service vocations: i.e. public school teachers, social workers, and nurses. The lowest and highest salaries in each vocation found close approximation to Mennonite ministerial salaries. The committee recognized that there was some educational level disparity with these other vocations.

The committee worked within the background of a 1986 document, "A Wage Philosophy for the Mennonite Church as Employer." One basic concept was that the lowest and the highest salaried pastors should be in a 1 to 2 ratio with the highest paid approximately double the lowest entry level.

There was an attempt to consider various factors including education, experience, responsibility, and geographical location. These guidelines were based upon what was considered to be a full time position.

Inasmuch as these were clearly guidelines, the committee recognized that congregations would determine variances in their own settings which could either raise or lower salaries. Experience suggested the congregations would perceive the guidelines as maximums and pastors would perceive them as minimums.

More recently, the Congregational and Ministerial Leadership Office of Mennonite Church USA conducted a pastoral compensation survey at the end of 2004. The survey highlighted the following:

- *Guidelines for Pastors' Salaries and Benefits in Mennonite Church USA* is much appreciated and helpful in determining compensation.
- Respondents reported exceptionally high levels of satisfaction in their ministries.
- 38% of those responding receive 100% of salary guidelines with 13% receiving over 110 percent. 70% receive at least 90% of the *Guidelines*.
- More than 40% follow the sabbatical guidelines
- Pastors appreciate being involved in discussions about their compensation.
- 78% said that their spouse's income was "necessary to support their family."
- 38% will be able to retire with adequate resources.
- Regional differences in cost of living (especially housing) are not adequately addressed in the *Guidelines*.
- The high cost of health insurance and the ability of congregations to continue providing full family coverage is a matter of considerable concern to pastors.
- Compensation for pastors is an important barometer of pastoral support and affirmation. Pastors who are receiving what the *Guidelines* recommend and are satisfactorily involved in the process of setting compensation are more likely to be satisfied in their ministry.

Currently, pastoral candidates completing the Ministerial Leadership Information form (MLI) are asked to make a statement regarding financial needs and/or expectations. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents name the *Pastor Salary Guidelines* as their expectation.

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