

Transcript of video available at https://youtu.be/zJ-Nj_g-Flg

Hi! I'm Lisa Dierks, and I serve as the synod vice president for the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. I'm a member of Trinity Lutheran Church of Wanamingo.

As we head toward the 2023 Synod Assembly, the Synod Council has been discerning our process for approving the SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefit Guidelines.

Past precedence has been as follows:

1 – A task force was raised up according to the SEMN Synod Constitution, S11.13.A99 which states: A Task Force is a temporary unit of the synod which is assigned responsibility for an identified portion of the program of this synod. Such assignment may be made by the Synod Assembly, by the Synod Council, or by a Synod Table. Normally its term of existence is defined by the unit which establishes it. It is subject to annual review by the initiating unit. Membership is determined by the initiating unit.

Naming the members of the task force has typically occurred in August of each year; for example, August of 2022 working on the 2024 guidelines.

2 – The task force would begin their work with the end goal of creating a proposed SEMN Synod Compensation and Benefits Guidelines to be presented to Synod Council at its regularly scheduled February Synod Council meeting; for example, February of 2023.

3 – The Synod Council approved SEMN Synod Compensation and Benefits Guidelines would then be presented at the Synod Assembly held in May for approval from the assembly in the form of a resolution; for example, May 6 2023 Synod Assembly approving 2024 SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines.

As you may notice, this process required the bulk of the work of the task force to be done more than a year before the guidelines were to be in effect. The Synod Council realizes this timeline requires the task force to complete their work without a key piece of information: The Social Security Administrations determined Cost of Living Adjustment for the year the guideline would be in effect. This adjustment is determined in the third quarter of each year for the following year.

In order to put forth a Minimum Compensation and Benefit Guideline that better reflects the economic reality in which the guidelines are in effect, the synod council has discerned a process that makes space for that and I would like to share this new process with you in this video.

January of each year: The task force is named and will include the following:

- One rostered minister member
- One lay member
- One synod council member (either rostered or lay)
- One synod staff liaison

February through September the task force will review the current guidelines and update as needed while awaiting the announcement of the next year's COLA.

October, after the COLA for the following year is announced, the task force will develop the proposed base salary portion of the guidelines.

The proposed guidelines will be made available to rostered leaders and congregation leadership for public comment for a duration of 2 weeks. In this comment period folks may review the guidelines and are invited to direct concerns, questions, or affirmations to a task force member. Synod membership will be made aware of this comment period through our website and targeted emails.

The proposed compensation guidelines will then be presented to the Synod Council for approval after which time they will be made public on the SEMN Synod Website as congregations work on their budget proposals for upcoming annual meetings.

You will note that the Minimum Compensation Guidelines will no longer be presented at the SEMN Synod Assembly as a resolution but will be approved by the Synod Council with input from leaders throughout the synod in a timeframe that allows for a better sense of the current economic realities.

Our hope and vision for this new process is two-fold:

1 – to present and approve a more economically accurate Minimum Compensation and Benefit Guideline

2 – to offer opportunity for both rostered ministers and congregations to engage thoroughly and wisely with the Minimum Compensation and Benefit Guideline.

The guidelines are presented as a tool for congregations and rostered ministers to use together so that compensation decisions can be made in such a way that God's mission flourishes, all are cherished as servants of God, there is a sense of faithful partnership between church members and rostered ministers and all areas of the church's ministry thrive.