

CHURCH STAFF SALARY GUIDE:

*Discover the Key Factors to
Fairly Paying Your Staff*



Pushpay®



VANDEBLOEMEN
SEARCH GROUP

Table of Contents

Why We Wrote This	03
Why Fair Compensation Matters	03
Why We Created This Guide	06
Senior Pastor	08
Executive Pastor	09
Worship Pastor	10
Student Pastor	11
Children's Pastor	12
Small Groups Pastor	13
Family Pastor	14
Set Your Staff Up for Success with Great Technology	15

Why We **Wrote** This

“How much should we be paying?”

That’s the question so many pastors and church boards have asked us over the years. And it’s a question that involves a delicate balancing act.

On the one hand, every dollar a church spends is a dollar that comes directly out of an offering plate. That’s a pretty weighty responsibility. On the other hand, since the beginning of the biblical narrative, God has charged his faith community with the task of taking care of spiritual leaders’ needs. And even beyond the scriptural example, there’s the painful reality that not paying enough means losing great people. And losing great people means losing momentum, losing money, and ultimately losing ministry impact. The balancing act between stewarding offerings and taking care of your church staff is real.

So how much should we be paying? That’s the question we’ve started to answer in this guide. The answer is different for every church, and your church is totally unique. But we hope this will help you on your journey to discovering the right answer for your church.

William Vanderbloemen
CEO & Founder, Vanderbloemen Search Group

Why **Fair** **Compensation** Matters

You know this better than anyone: Your church staff is working hard to achieve your church’s mission. Every day they’re meeting the physical and spiritual needs of your church while engaging the wider community.

These unsung heroes rarely ask for recognition. They do what they do because they love God and love people.

Your church likely has a lot of different efforts that require financing. You have facilities where you host gatherings and ministry initiatives. You need technology so you can engage with people whenever

and wherever they find themselves. And of course, you have ministry costs—the resources your church needs to care for people physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

But, as a church, you're in the people business. With a mission to make disciples and minister to the needs of people, it's no surprise that the biggest expense on most church budgets is personnel. And it should be.

The Bible makes it clear, "...the laborer deserves his wages..." (Luke 10:7). Missing the mark on compensation can have a major impact on your church—likely a bigger impact than you realize.

If your salaries are too low...

- ▶ You could undermine the cohesion and enthusiasm of your team because team members are always worried about personal finances.
- ▶ You could have high staff turnover as staff members leave to get higher pay elsewhere.
- ▶ You could miss out on talented individuals who might **want** to join your team but who have some unavoidable financial realities to juggle as well.

But how do you figure out what pay is fair for your staff? It's not easy to discern, and there are so many factors to consider, such as:

Benefit Packages: In our experience, there is no single variable that changes the answer to "how much should we be paying?" question than the structure and makeup of a church's benefits package. What churches do here varies wildly, and the difference can be tens of thousands of dollars in employee costs and salaries. Yes, your staff members still have healthcare and retirement needs. They still will need sick days and vacation time. If you don't provide adequately for those elements in your benefits package, you'll be expected to make up for it in the salary. But gaining a full understanding of the impact of your benefits (and how it stacks up against other churches and potential employers) is critical to answering the question of how much to pay.

Cost of Living: You can't pay church staffers in New York City the same price you pay them in Boise, Idaho. Your salary must take into consideration your church's ministry context. Do a Google search for cost-of-living calculators, and you'll find loads of them. They'll help you get a feel for what the typical cost of living is like in your community. It's a good idea to view salary suggestions through a similar filter. As costs in some areas of the country escalate at very high rates, we are noticing that some churches are rethinking housing and returning to church-owned properties for their ministerial staff. This can mitigate the compensation challenge in high-cost areas, and we believe smart churches are rethinking all options when faced with an expensive cost of living.

Experience: Every potential staff member brings with them a certain experience-level for which you should compensate them. A hire with 10 years of experience will presumably bring with them more value to your church than someone with one to two years of experience. However, there is a very clear trend at play in all of the US workforce. As Baby Boomers retire, employers are noticing that there are not many workers available in the 35-55 year-old age range. Talent for replacing boomers is scarce. The result is that many senior jobs are going to new hires that are much younger than historical trends. When that happens, we have seen that smart churches pay less attention to experience and more attention to getting the right person. That might mean paying more than expected to a less experienced person.

Education: The inherent value of a seminary degree or advanced degree has come into question in recent years. With the advent of online learning and the renaissance of internships and on the job training, an advanced degree no longer automatically implies higher pay. However, if a staff member puts in the work (and money) to get additional education, you should take that into consideration. Unfortunately, those in ministry have a reputation (similar to teachers) of being underpaid for their level of education.

Church Size: Staff responsibilities tend to change as churches grow. Typically, larger churches pay more as their staff workload becomes more specialized. We have also noticed a very clear trend in larger churches: the larger the church, the higher the turnover rate (particularly in mid-level positions). As your church grows, be sure to pay attention to valuable employees in the middle of your organizational chart. If you pay them a little more than you think you should, you may increase retention and end up saving the church money in the long run.

Budget: One of the most common questions we get is “What percentage of our budget should go to staff?” Great question, but there is no one cookie cutter answer. Outsourcing, whether or not you have a building, the age of the facility, internship programs, and a myriad of other factors make this answer a moving target. Every church has a different answer. Having said that, in general, we see a range of 35-65% as acceptable. But rather than focusing on a single percentage number, we believe the best advice is to ask how much to pay each individual, and as the budget goes up, the salaries of people able to work in larger settings go up accordingly. Many times, we see churches raise individual salaries and eliminate other positions to offset the increase. Our general advice is: As the budget increases, salaries should as well. Pay fewer people better salaries, and you’ll see greater long-term results.

Job Responsibilities: Not every church organizes staff responsibilities the same way—even among churches of similar size and denomination. Some senior/teaching pastors preach multiple sermons a week. Some preach one. Some executive pastors manage the entire staff. Others manage a portion of the staff. You’ll need to factor in some of these responsibilities as you consider salaries.



Why We Created **This Guide**

When you take all of these factors into consideration, the question of “how much should we be paying?” gets more complex and not more simple. This guide won’t remove all of the complexities. Instead, it’s designed to help you get started. Vanderbloemen received feedback from 5,000 church staff members nationwide on how they were compensated. We’ve used that data to provide you with a range of average pay (for three different sizes of churches) for seven specific positions.

Those positions include:

- ▶ Senior Pastor
- ▶ Executive Pastor
- ▶ Worship Pastor
- ▶ Student Pastor
- ▶ Children’s Pastor
- ▶ Small Groups/Discipleship Pastor
- ▶ Family Pastor

As you look through the salary ranges in the guide, keep in mind that the factors described above (education, cost of living, experience, church size, etc.) determine where your compensation should fall within these ranges. Some of these factors will impact certain positions more than others. In this guide, the factors that impact specific positions more than others will be noted in the description under the salary range.

But, despite all the insights you’ll receive in this guide, data is only helpful with context.

If you need help navigating the complexity of ministry compensation, Vanderbloemen can help.

William Vanderbloemen, CEO & Founder of Vanderbloemen Search Group, he says tell new members on his team,

*“After working with thousands of churches, I’m more convinced than ever that **if you’ve seen one church....***

You’ve seen about one church.”

If you're looking to fill one of these positions or get a detailed answer to "the question of how much you should be paying," you **need** to connect with [Vanderbloemen](#), the nation's premier church staffing firm.

Start with hiring the right person. Vanderbloemen's expertise in staffing and culture over the last eight years has come from a combined, unique perspective of business and ministry experience. Vanderbloemen Search Group has worked in nearly every state in the United States and has a blossoming international practice. The firm works with churches of every size, ranging from 70 to over 70,000 in weekly attendance. Vanderbloemen Search Group has successfully executed searches in over 75 different denominations or types of churches, ranging broadly in ethnicity, theological bent, and philosophy of ministry.

They'll lean on a long history of helping churches like yours find great staff members, and provide you with expert insight into how to fairly compensate your next staff hire.

Data is only helpful with context. Vanderbloemen provides a premium, [customized compensation analysis](#) for churches, taking into account all your church's unique needs and compares them to other churches within your scope and size.

If you're hiring or trying to figure out whether you're paying your staff fairly, Vanderbloemen can help you in a way no one else can.

Senior Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$68,591 - \$156,217 | \$102,293 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$84,270 - \$184,025 | \$122,637 (Median)

1,200+ attendance

\$92,255 - \$189,053 | \$129,485 (Median)

You can't understate the importance of your church's senior pastor. It's also the most difficult position to compensate fairly. This position has, by far, the largest range for compensation of all positions described in this guide. Lead pastors tend to carry a great deal of responsibility. Your compensation structure needs to reflect the uniqueness of the role and its responsibilities in your church. For example, you'll need to think through some of these questions:

- ▶ How many weeks will your senior pastor be expected to preach?
- ▶ How many sermons does a senior pastor need to preach on a weekly basis?
- ▶ How many direct reports will your senior pastor manage?
- ▶ Do you have a built-in sabbatical plan that allows your lead pastor to have times of reflection and spiritual refreshment?
- ▶ How many counseling sessions, weddings, and funerals will the senior pastor be responsible for?

These are just a few of the responsibilities that could impact your salary commitments to senior pastors. You should err on the side of generosity with your compensation for all positions but especially with this one. Your senior pastor and family typically face enough disruptions in their lives that it's best if you can clear away as much of the financial stress from their lives as possible.

Education may also be a significant factor in your compensation package for this position. Many senior pastors will have an M.Div degree and a sizable number may already have doctoral degrees (either D.Min or, for the more academically suited, Ph.D. degrees).

Executive Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$54,055 - \$94,756 | \$69,710 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$66,234 - \$96,966 | \$78,054 (Median)

1,201+ attendance

\$84,325 - \$135,065 | \$103,841 (Median)

Like senior pastors, the responsibilities of executive pastors vary greatly. Some large churches have multiple pastors whose responsibilities fit within an executive pastor job description. Particularly in today's church environment, they typically have at least some business experience. This could mean that they are accustomed to larger salaries than churches typically provide.

Your church must also consider how many staff members an executive pastor will manage. This is particularly important because staff oversight often plays a big part in the role.

Of all the positions in this guide, executive pastors are the most likely to have an advanced degree that isn't theological in nature (such as an MBA). Because a business background is often critical for this role, you also may have some strong candidates without any advanced degrees but with extensive practical experience. Executive pastors with advanced degrees tend to be on the higher end of the above pay spectrum.

Worship Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$45,999 - \$62,745 | \$52,440 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$54,909 - \$83,975 | \$64,858 (Median)

1,201+ attendance

\$54,022 - \$92,291 | \$68,741 (Median)

Churches often evaluate worship pastor candidates based on three different criteria: musical ability, leadership/management skills, and pastoral aptitude.

Musical abilities revolve around vocal and instrumental talents. Worship pastors with leadership/management skills can lead effectively and get the most out of volunteer and staff teams that serve under their direction. Those with a pastoral aptitude bring significant theological reflection and expression to their roles. Not all churches expect worship pastors to be proficient in all three areas. But worship leaders that can do all three should be compensated on the higher side of the range.

When you consider worship pastor compensation, take into consideration how many worship services they'll lead each week and how many weeks they'll lead per year. You'll also want to keep in mind how much rehearsal time they'll need. Churches with multiple services and different volunteer bands in each service will need to account for multiple weekly rehearsals.

Hiring a college student to play guitar and plan your setlists is drastically different from hiring a seasoned, experienced pastor with years of experience and a family. You'll need to adjust your compensation accordingly.

Also, if your church expects worship pastors to take on multiple roles (including communications, student ministry, etc.), your compensation should reflect those additional duties.

Student Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$35,088 - \$62,859 | \$48,973 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$45,596 - \$64,641 | \$52,921 (Median)

1,200+ attendance

\$47,423 - \$75,365 | \$64,641 (Median)

Because student pastors are often young, they've been historically underpaid (which is unfortunate). Churches that don't move out of the low end of the above ranges will struggle to keep youth pastors at the church long-term. Having to replace your youth pastor every five years isn't good stewardship and will ultimately cost you more money as you constantly hire and onboard new staff. Also, the higher you pay a youth pastor, the higher your likelihood of attracting a more seasoned veteran who may need higher pay to support a family.

As you consider how much to pay your youth minister, go beyond just looking at similar-sized churches. Look at the size of your youth ministry. Some smaller churches have large youth ministries because of the church's specific demographics. Make sure you're compensating youth ministers based on the youth ministry you have and the youth ministry you hope to have in the near future.

Children's Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$33,972 - \$58,623 | \$43,453 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$42,840 - \$70,220 | \$53,371 (Median)

1,201+ attendance

\$48,915 - \$79,900 | \$60,832 (Median)

Like youth pastors, children's pastors tend to be underpaid because churches typically hire younger candidates. Older children's pastors tend to be paid more than younger ones as churches compensate for both the parenting and ministry experience that often comes with age.

Children's pastors often have significant responsibilities surrounding volunteer management and training. Compensate candidates with considerable experience shepherding volunteers with salaries on the higher end of the above ranges. Also, remember that children's ministry is the growth engine of the church. It is crucial that you have a high capacity children's pastor who is thinking strategically about child and family discipleship.

Small Groups Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$47,538 - \$73,535 | \$57,537 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$52,515 - \$76,912 | \$61,899 (Median)

1,201+ attendance

\$59,672 - \$82,972 | \$68,634 (Median)

Small group/discipleship pastors, in most church contexts, must demonstrate an ability to train group leaders. The breadth of the church's small group system (and whether it includes on-campus and off-campus small groups) will help determine where on the spectrum you'll want to pay these leaders. If you have an advanced small group system with extensive training needs (or you'd like to develop one), increase the compensation you provide for this position.

As you're considering compensation for the small group/discipleship pastor role, make sure you consider responsibilities beyond the small group system. Many of these positions include leadership over discipleship training events, such as men's and women's retreats. Keep the breadth of the ministry in mind as you determine fair pay for the position.

Education level and experience also tend to raise the expected salaries of people in these positions.

Family Pastor

Salary Range:

0-500 attendance

\$38,433 - \$59,352 | \$46,479 (Median)

501-1,200 attendance

\$52,759 - \$75,510 | \$61,510 (Median)

1,201+ attendance

\$57,466 - \$83,885 | \$67,627 (Median)

Of all the positions described in this resource, the family pastor is the newest one for most churches. Most churches created the family pastor position in order to provide continuity of care between youth, children's, and adult ministries. In some churches, this position serves alongside leaders in the age-based ministries. In other cases, the position oversees these other ministries. Churches that ask family pastors to oversee multiple ministries typically compensate them toward the higher end of the scale.

Many churches also ask family pastors to oversee marriage and parenting courses, either as part of their oversight over age-based ministries or as a separate expectation. Churches should factor those expectations into the salaries they provide.

Data isn't everything. Every church is unique, and your church's unique characteristics should be considered when determining pay structure. Contact us at vanderbloemen.com for more information on a customized Compensation & Benefits Analysis.

Set Your Staff Up for Success with **Great Technology**

To build a strong, effective church staff today, you must compensate your staff fairly. Not doing so will certainly lead to low morale and high staff turnover.

But staff morale isn't just about compensation. It's also about the work environment you create for your team.

Are you doing everything you can to set up your staff for success?

Great technology can help. Effective church technology doesn't just help your congregants better engage with you. It can help your staff make the most of their time so they can focus on other ministry tasks.

For example, take [Real Life Church in Covington, WA](#). Back in 2015, the church had three separate platforms to engage givers—one for text-to-give, another for kiosk giving, and another for event registration (which was done largely offline at the time). Managing three platforms took the staff considerable time since they had to manually move data from the engagement platforms into the church's management system.

Then the church switched to Pushpay and was able to consolidate its giving to one platform. Since then, the church saved an estimated 250 hours of staff time per year. That's time church staff has invested in new outreach ministries within the community.

[Learn more](#) about Real Life Church's success story and how you can create the same results in your community.

PUSHPAY RESOURCES
WHERE CHURCH LEADERS
GO TO GROW

VISIT US ONLINE AT [PUSHPAY.COM](https://pushpay.com)

VISIT US





© 2020 Pushpay

