

**ABSTRACT**  
**CLERGY COMPENSATION SETTING PRACTICES:**  
**REVIEW OF PRACTICES IN THE GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE OF THE**  
**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

by

Andrew B.Y. Hargrove

The process for setting clergy compensation is fraught with difficulties and confusion. This study sought to discover the current highlights of the discussions about compensation for full-time clergy in the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church which covers the states of Kansas and Nebraska. This study also sought to help alleviate some of the difficulties and confusion within this conversation. The study includes a review of both religious and secular literature on the topic. Additionally, there are many who have well thought out opinions and have a personal track record of success in helping specific individuals manage the conversation but have not published in peer-reviewed academic journals. This study seeks to add to a healthy practical and theological grounding of salary setting practices for clergy.

Conversations about money are not comfortable for many people. Compensation negotiation practices vary widely across industries and fields. Speaking openly about money in a church setting can seem terribly off-putting to many Christians for a whole host of reasons. In the midst of these and other factors, how do boards and clergy approach the process? Are they using best practices from the secular and/or religious worlds? The questionnaire used in this project was shared with full-time clergy and the chairs of the local church boards who have oversight in the salary setting process. An interview was conducted with District Superintendents who oversee both clergy and

boards in setting compensation. This study can be used to help guide clergy, boards, and those who have over-sight responsibility to look for weaknesses and missing areas in their own practice.

CLERGY COMPENSATION SETTING PRACTICES:  
REVIEW OF PRACTICES IN THE GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE OF THE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Andrew B.Y. Hargrove

May, 2021

© 2021

Andrew B.Y. Hargrove

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	x
CHAPTER 1 NATURE OF THE PROJECT .....	1
Overview of the Chapter .....	1
Personal Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Project .....	4
Research Questions .....	5
Research Question #1 .....	5
Research Question #2 .....	5
Research Question #3 .....	5
Rationale for the Project .....	5
Definition of Key Terms .....	6
Delimitations.....	7
Review of Relevant Literature .....	8
Research Methodology .....	9
Type of Research .....	10
Participants.....	11
Instrumentation .....	12
Data Collection .....	13

Data Analysis .....	13
Generalizability .....	14
Project Overview .....	14
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT .....	15
Overview of the Chapter .....	15
Biblical Foundations .....	15
Theological Foundations .....	28
Clergy Salary Setting .....	33
Clergy Salary Relative to Congregation/Community Income .....	33
Usefulness of Comparisons to Regional or Other Similar	
Churches in Salary Setting .....	36
Salary Setting and the Overall Church Budget .....	37
Authority and Power Dynamic Involved in Salary Setting .....	39
Ways to Ease Talking About Money .....	45
Collaborative Processes in Salary Setting .....	49
Questions for Shared Use with Pastor and SPRC .....	50
UMC Policies .....	55
Research Design Literature .....	58
Summary of Literature .....	59
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT .....	61
Overview of the Chapter .....	61
Nature and Purpose of the Project .....	61
Research Questions .....	62

Research Question #1 .....	62
Research Question #2 .....	62
Research Question #3 .....	63
Ministry Contexts.....	63
Participants .....	64
Criteria for Selection.....	64
Description of Participants.....	65
Ethical Considerations .....	66
Instrumentation .....	66
Reliability & Validity of Project Design .....	68
Data Collection .....	69
Data Analysis .....	70
CHAPTER 4 EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT.....	72
Overview of the Chapter.....	72
Participants.....	72
Research Question #1: Description of Evidence .....	79
Research Question #2: Description of Evidence .....	89
Research Question #3: Description of Evidence .....	92
Summary of Major Findings.....	96
CHAPTER 5 LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT .....	97
Overview of the Chapter.....	97
Major Findings	
First Finding.....	97

Second Finding .....	100
Third Finding .....	102
Fourth Finding .....	104
Fifth Finding .....	107
Ministry Implications of the Findings.....	108
Limitations of the Study.....	109
Unexpected Observations .....	110
Recommendations.....	110
Postscript.....	111
<b>APPENDIXES</b>	
A. Questionnaire for Full Time Clergy.....	113
B. Questionnaire for SPRC Chairs.....	115
C. Interview Questions for District Superintendents .....	117
D. Informed Consent.....	118
E. Sample Clergy Compensation Discussion Guide.....	119
<b>WORKS CITED .....</b>	<b>120</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1. Q8 Clergy.....	83
Table 4.2. Q8 SPRC Chairs .....	83
Table 4.3. Q9 Clergy.....	83
Table 4.4. Q9 SPRC Chairs .....	83
Table 4.5. Q11 Clergy.....	84
Table 4.6. Q11 SPRC Chairs .....	84

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1. Demographics of Full-Time Clergy Respondents .....	74
Figure 4.2. Professional Experience of Full-Time Clergy Respondents .....	75
Figure 4.3. Demographics of SPRC Chair Respondents .....	76
Figure 4.4. SPRC Chair Experience and Pastoral Tenure .....	77
Figure 4.5. Demographics of District Superintendent Interviewees .....	78
Figure 4.6. Professional Experience of District Superintendent Interviewees .....	79
Figure 4.7. (Clergy) Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference or at an all-church conference?.....	80
Figure 4.8. (SPRC Chairs) Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference or at an all-church conference?.....	80
Figure 4.9. (Clergy) How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session?.....	81
Figure 4.10. (SPRC Chairs) How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session?.....	81
Figure 4.11. (Clergy) What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings?.....	82
Figure 4.12. (SPRC Chairs) What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings?.....	82
Figure 4.13. (Clergy) Primary usage of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in discussing the setting of clergy compensation .....	85

Figure 4.14. (SPRC Chairs) Primary usage of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in discussing the setting of clergy compensation .....	85
Figure 4.15. (Clergy) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in practical terms.....	86
Figure 4.16. (SPRC Chairs) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in practical terms.....	86
Figure 4.17. (Clergy) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in theological terms.....	87
Figure 4.18. (SPRC Chairs) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in theological terms.....	87
Figure 4.19. (Clergy) I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual’s compensation proposal .....	90
Figure 4.20. (SPRC Chairs) I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual’s compensation proposal.....	91
Figure 4.21. (Clergy) Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation?.....	91
Figure 4.22. (SPRC Chairs) Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation? ....	92

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have so many people to thank and so much to be thankful for. Thanks to my cohort small group: Wade Langer, JJ Shimko, Craig Stephans, and Simon Thiongo. You gentlemen helped me process and think through mountains of questions. Thanks to all my instructors and the Asbury Doctor of Ministry staff. Thanks to Dr. Tom Tumblin, my advisor, for working through my starts and stops on this project. Thanks to Rev. Dr. Bruce Emmert for seeing potential in me and encouraging me to apply and pursue a Doctor of Ministry at Asbury with the Beeson Fellowship. Thanks to the Beeson family for their generous financial gifts to the Seminary making my studies possible. Thanks to the churches I have served, Berryton UMC in Berryton, KS, First UMC in Wellington, KS, and Gordon's Chapel UMC in Hull, GA, during these studies and their encouragement, faithful prayers, and willingness to allow me the time and space needed to do deeper level academic work. Thanks to my family who have encouraged, cajoled, and cared for me through this process. Thanks to my parents for encouraging and pressuring me to pursue academic success and faithfulness to God. My beloved wife Christine is a saint, putting up with a crazy calendar and shifting responsibilities. And to our children, Junia, Gideon, Theo, and Phoebe, your joy continually brings warmth and encouragement. Thank you all for your love. Most of all thanks goes to Jesus, my Lord, Savior, and Friend.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the entire project. It explains the primary topic being considered, the setting of clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference of the UMC. It also includes the socio-cultural context of the Great Plains Conference, the participants in the project, and the various parameters guiding the study, including the selection of participants. Further sections include the reasoning behind the various facets of the project, what drove the many decisions controlling the project, and the foundational research design used to explore the topic and validate results.

Also included in Chapter 1 are the basic outlines of the data gathering and analysis that took place. A literature review of the pertinent studies on the topic at hand is briefed in the chapter. And finally a description of the results of the study project is offered.

### **Personal Introduction**

I was headed to meet with the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) at my first appointment in the Kansas East Conference of the UMC. My young family was with me, and we were in a town we had never visited before. If everything went smoothly, we would be moving in just a couple of months so I could become one of the associate pastors at First UMC Manhattan, KS. It was exciting, fun, and scary all wrapped together. A District Superintendent I hadn't met before took us to dinner to talk a little about family, ministry, and the specific local church. One of the things we received was a clergy salary worksheet detailing the pay package. I had not seen one of these before, but it was pretty straight forward. We were taking an enormous pay cut to enter full-time

ministry, and we did not know anything about the cost of living in Manhattan. But we were so excited! What we discovered is that the cost of living in Manhattan was significantly higher than we expected. I received a few raises while serving there, but that was simply because my status with the Conference changed from local pastor to provisional Elder, and the minimum compensation number changed. Money was very tight for our young, single income family. But I had no idea how to talk about it with the SPRC or the senior pastor.

Two years later we were once again meeting with a new District Superintendent in preparation to meet with another SPRC. This time we were aware enough to ask if there was room to adjust the housing allowance if we could not find anything in the area for the rate listed. They asked us to try to stay inside the current figure, but after we had a great deal of difficulty finding a home, with the assistance of a local realtor who was a member of the church, they were willing to raise the rate to bring it in line with other church's housing allowances in similar communities. Moving forward from that point my salary stayed even with the Conference minimum standard, which was regularly raised by a small amount. Then for the first time, in a year the Conference did not adjust the minimum, I asked for a raise. I requested an increase of 2%, which was standard with the local school system raises. I was reasonably comfortable with this request because the church was in good fiscal health.

My experience in general, and in pastoral counseling sessions, is that people have a difficult time talking about money openly and honestly with other people. I would put myself in that category too. I have never been trained to negotiate my salary. I have not trained the SPRC members at the churches I have served in setting clergy salaries, nor do

they receive regular training from the adjudicatory officials on the topic. Additionally, the need to review clergy pay packages when a new pastor is arriving is important, but it is a fraught experience with the pressures of a pastor meeting their church for the first time and the church meeting the pastor for the first time. The sensed risk of alienating a room of church leaders a pastor has just met for the first time by asking for more money is high. In the yearly review, the pastor has a good grasp on what is happening with the church budget and the constant ministry demands on the budget, so it can be difficult to ask for raises even after a pastor is in place leading a congregation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Moving the conversations around setting clergy salaries to a healthy and faithful dialogue requires a more robust discussion of the elements at play. Practical and theological dimensions must be considered. Committees and boards are generally as unprepared as pastors to discuss compensation packages. Reticence to share openly about money blocks conversation in general, and when a spiritual component is involved, it becomes ever more complex. Limited resources at the local church level are perceived as the primary factor. However, they should only be one of the many factors considered.

The lay leadership of the local church is disempowered when these dynamics are at work. They find it difficult to manage faithfully the stewardship of the pastor and the stewardship of the church's financial resources. And pastors can become frustrated and even embittered without a comprehensive resource to encourage them to talk about their finances and to offer training to the lay board they communicate with and work alongside.

The practical issues include a taboo about talking about money and compensation. This then gets exacerbated by theological complexities about giving and stewardship of resources at the personal and ecclesial level. These are compounded by local issues with the membership of the local board having a variety of expectations and experiences around salary setting in their own lives or the lives of their families. Other local issues include the need for a broad understanding of the socio-economic setting of the local church and cost of living changes particular to the region. Clergy family considerations are sometimes used and sometimes utterly removed from discussion, including items like spouse employment, changes in family size, or responsibility for educational debt.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this research was to study the theological and field-based rationale for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church, in order to recommend best practices for Staff Parish Relations Committees and pastors.

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the purpose of this project three research questions were developed. The first question examines the current discussions about setting salary in SPRC meetings in the Great Plains Conference. These processes are often opaque, and the discovery of what is happening will open the door for this study. The second question asks about pain points in the current conversations. Without explicitly searching for these, there could be a tendency to gloss over them or to over-state them, leading to misunderstandings for the current process. The third question enables the synthesis of information helping to develop recommendations.



**Research Question #1**

What are the practical and theological considerations for setting clergy salaries currently used by District Superintendents, Pastors, and Staff Pastor Parish Committees in the Great Plains Conference?

**Research Question #2**

What challenges are experienced in the setting of clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?

**Research Question #3**

According to the literature, questionnaires, and interviews, what are the best theological and practical practices for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?

**Rationale for the Project**

Talking about money in open and honest ways is a healthy Christian practice, but these conversations set too many hearts fluttering, souls clenching, and palms sweating. In a process where a very specific set of dollar figures is discussed, like setting salaries, those conversations cannot be theoretical and esoteric, but must reach a specific conclusion, and that specificity and finality, at least for a fiscal year, can make things even more complex. Now, doing all that in a church board meeting with all of the complications of faith, different perceptions, different starting points, mountains of unexamined pre-existing ideas, and so forth, and the recipe is difficult to hold together. How can the conversations around setting clergy salaries by the board responsible for doing so move from being a ministry liability for board, church, and pastor, to being a healthy theological exercise modeling faith, compassion, and serious diligence?

Compounding the problems of talking about setting clergy salaries are the lay people involved in the conversation. In the UMC they are elected for three year terms, and so have limited experience in the specific process. They also come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, including members working on union contracts, small business owners who have hiring and firing responsibilities for hourly employees, or retirees living on fixed income. Their preparation and training for the job often consists of little more than a few handouts from the denominational publishing house and some recent historical information from their particular church. On top that, they are setting the salary for the person who has spiritual care of their own souls. How do you have a discussion about that, much less put a price on it?

A third major struggle in this process is the pastor. Pastors often have very little business or Human Resources training, unless from a prior career. Seminary has prepared them to be great students of the Bible, preachers, and spiritual leaders. But seminaries often neglect some of the more seemingly mundane and worldly responsibilities of local church leadership. Conferences in their Residency programs spend some time on the topics of local church management, but there are often more pressing and frequent issues than the annual discussion of clergy salary setting. Added to all of that are the erroneous perceptions of self-doubt and impostor syndrome, alongside thoughts about fears of coming across as being motivated primarily by financial considerations.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

There are a number of terms that need to be known by the reader to dissect the material presented here. When using the term “salary” or “compensation” the researcher is referring to the pay package of a pastor that includes base salary and value of housing

allowance/parsonage. It does not include other benefits, like business expenses. At various times in the research the term clergy or pastor appears. These are references to church leaders appointed by a Bishop serving full-time, which can include church leaders with a variety of ministerial credentials from ordination to licensed. The Staff Parish Relations Committee, or SPRC, is a group of 9 lay members of the church who have the primary responsibility for engaging in the process for recommending the pastor's annual compensation. These nine are elected by the membership of the local church and led by one of their number, also elected by the membership of the local church.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study include multiple boundaries to help ensure the results are applicable. The study is restricted to the Great Plains UMC Conference which covers United Methodist churches in all of Kansas and Nebraska. The study includes full time pastors in the Conference. The Conference registrar estimates there are 304 individuals serving local churches in that capacity. They are both male and female. They include a wide variety of ethnicities, but the strong majority is Caucasian. Their age ranges reach from the mid-twenties to the early seventies. In addition, the Staff Parish Relations Chairperson for each of those pastors will be surveyed. The potential number of SPRC chairs is roughly the same as the number of pastors, but some chairs are responsible for multiple pastors because some churches have multiple pastors on staff. District Superintendents have also been included because, in addition to the pastor and the SPRC chair, the District Superintendent must approve of the pastor's compensation package. There are currently ten District Superintendents in the Great Plains UMC Conference.

The study leaves out pastors serving in part-time positions because the variables around their compensation and discussions about compensation could produce significant outlier results in the research. Pastors serving in extension ministry (not a local church) have also been excluded because their compensation packages are settled by a wide range of systems that can differ greatly from the local church. Members of the SPRC beyond the chairs are not surveyed due to the difficulty in contacting such a wide array of people (most SPRCs have nine individuals serving), and to try to keep the number of responses from SPRC leaders in the data set comparable to the number of responses from pastors.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

The literature related to the topic of the study is fairly thin, and many cases are significantly dated. There are peer-reviewed articles in academic journals, largely by economists, about clergy salaries that rely on large datasets. These are helpful in seeing trend-lines that need to be noted and generating some foundational information. There are a number of older (more than 20 years) books about pastoring that include guides to these discussions, but they almost universally anticipate a single-income, male pastor who is supporting a family. There are more current guides from a range of institutions, but their development and methodology are usually hidden.

The biblical foundations literature is robust and is characterized by rich engagement in the commentaries on the selected scripture passages. Scholars frequently examine the texts that are relevant to clergy compensation. The historical and contextual research is well covered. However, direct and specific application of the passages is generally left to the reader.

Articles by prominent theologians and pastors are frequently published in popular Christian magazines like *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today*. Similarly, many Church consulting firms regularly produce guides, usually behind paywalls, for setting clergy salaries. These popular writings speak to the hunger for learning on the topic.

This research project is directed to a Methodist context. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist revival, did not provide detailed instructions for the current style of clergy compensation setting processes. Though, he did write about money, and his ideas are brought to bear on the topic within the UMC. A close second to John Wesley for any United Methodist would be reading Albert Outler, especially as he reflected on John Wesley. Reviewing the Book of Discipline, the text that governs the procedures and structures of United Methodism, for the processes and participation of setting clergy salaries is also an imperative.

There are journal articles about setting salaries from the economic and business world, and some of them are helpful in bringing a slightly different lens to the questions at hand. But they also can be centered deeply in the for-profit world of business.

A key author in the review is Charles Zech. His articulation of four models for understanding compensation setting conversations is central to the literature review. His specific description of clergy salary setting as a promotional tournament is particularly enlightening.

### **Research Methodology**

There are three sets of questionnaires used for this project. The questionnaires are researcher designed and tested through an expert review model. They were distributed electronically through links on the Conference newsletter and through social media

accounts. The questionnaires specifically target three groups: pastors serving full time; Staff-Parish Committee chairs (lay people leading the boards helping make decisions); and District Superintendents. These three groups are included because they are the three signatures needed at the end of the annual clergy compensation agreements. They all play a role in the process of clergy salary setting.

The questions are focused on the meeting, or meetings, about clergy salary. What is that meeting currently like? What practices are involved? What are the theological and emotional components? Are participants currently pleased with the process, or are there ways it is lacking? What has been useful? What has been a distraction? Where is there a need for guidance? What is missing from these conversations based on the literature review?

### **Type of Research**

This research project is in the class of pre-intervention projects. It reviews the current state clergy compensation setting practices in the Great Plains Conference. It does not seek to implement a particular tool for aiding the conversation or to evaluate a process for improvement already implemented by leadership. The conversations about clergy compensation happen annually, but they are largely opaque to anyone not directly involved in them at the local level. Uncovering what regular practices are already in place in these sessions is a desirable outcome.

The research works through both qualitative and quantitative lenses. The qualitative instruments include a set of interviews with District Superintendents and some open-ended questions from the questionnaires shared with pastors and SPRC chairs. The District Superintendents, as leaders who have oversight of a significant number of clergy

salary setting conversations, have a broad understanding of the current practices that can best be utilized and discovered through a more open-ended process. The questionnaires include quantitative questions for pastors and SPRC chairs providing direct insight into the conversations being studied. By collecting both types of data the research seeks to improve the accuracy of this project through the use of mixed methods.

### **Participants**

This study restricts the respondents to members of three categories. First, the District Superintendents of the Great Plains UMC Conference are leaders of regional sections of the Conference, and they oversee about 60 to 120 churches each. They are United Methodist pastors with significant experience and leadership skills, appointed to their office for a six-year term by the Bishop of the Conference. Every year they offer the Bishop guidance and insight on the assignments of clergy to churches within the Conference, and they must approve of all compensation packages for clergy within their Districts. There are currently ten District Superintendents in the Great Plains UMC Conference.

Pastors of local churches may serve in full time or part time capacity. This study is restricted to those serving in full time positions. Clergy serving in part time capacities have a wide diversity of reasons for doing so that can have significant impacts on the discussions around salaries. As a result, they are not included. This distinction should help prevent some significant outlier factors from being included in the study results. Clergy serve local congregations by appointment of the Bishop for one year at a time. They can be reappointed to their current location or sent to a new assignment each year. They may serve more than one local church as part of a multi-point charge. These pastors

are still considered full time. Full time pastors include elders, provisional elders, deacons, provisional deacons, and licensed local pastors. Some of these people have completed a Master of Divinity at a seminary. Others have been trained through the local Course of Study program. They have all been vetted by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry or their local District Committee on Ministry. The Great Plains Conference registrar has estimated that there are 304 pastors serving full time in local churches in the Conference.

The third group of respondents are Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Chairs of charges with full-time clergy. The SPRC is the local church's primary board with responsibility for interacting with the pastor. They cover annual evaluations of job performance, recommendations to District Superintendent and Bishop about the annual appointment of their pastor, and the recommendation to the local church for what the pastor's pay package should contain. These are lay people who are respected leaders in their local churches and communities, and they are elected to office by their local church.

### **Instrumentation**

The research was conducted using three instruments and a literature review. The instruments are researcher designed and tested by an expert review. The three instruments all contain a section of questions about the respondent's demographics to provide insight into generational, ethnic, and gender differences. The interview for District Superintendents draws on their wider field of vision to the process. Thus these interviews include open-ended contributions that help answer the research questions. The questionnaire for pastors and SPRC chairs allows for those individuals to provide answers to specific questions in a standardized way that can be compared with other participants' responses. These questionnaires address the research questions. The data



from the interviews and the questionnaires along with reference points in the literature review answers Research Question 3.

### **Data Collection**

The general timeline for data collection from the creation of surveys to the deployment of surveys to the review of surveys was about three months. The required timeline includes the expert review of the researcher designed interview and questionnaires, along with receiving Institutional Review Board approval. The respondents were given three weeks to complete the implements allowing for vacations and the dispersal of information about the research being conducted. The questionnaires were deployed through the digital platform SurveyMonkey. Brief explanations and invitations were shared through the Great Plains Conference newsletter and on the Great Plains Clergy Facebook page. The research was conducted in the fall before the regular time frame for most churches to conduct clergy compensation review conversations so that the conversations would be relevant in the minds of the respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis for the research includes multiple components. Contextual data will be found in the questionnaires' qualitative questions. This material is coded in order to compare it to the quantitative data from some of the questionnaire questions. A textual analysis of the questionnaires will be performed to look for patterns and trends. This information will then be compared to the quantitative data. As Tim Sensing writes, "One way to organize the data is to discuss the areas of significant overlap as themes or patterns, the areas of disagreement as slippage, and the 'realities' not represented in your findings as silences (197)." Sensing's three constructs create a story from the data for

each individual research tool and then for the data from the tools in combination with each other.

### **Generalizability**

This project tackles an underemphasized area of local church life. How do the local church board and pastor, along with any adjudicatory leaders, have the conversation about setting clergy salary? The research covered a diverse group of pastors and churches in terms of size, resourcing, and community type leading to more trustworthy resulting data. The unique appointive, itinerant process for UMC pastors will limit the applicability of this research. Conducting the research during the coronavirus pandemic could lead to outside stressors causing participants to answer in specific, non-generalizable ways. The research tools were vetted by an expert review process and applied in a consistent, single method through the digital tool SurveyMonkey.

### **Project Overview**

In the following pages the reader will find a literature review, a methodology explanation, a compilation of results, and the conclusions reached by the study. The literature review includes a look at the biblical mandates and standards for paying religious leaders, a discussion of the theological ideas that impact clergy compensation discussions, a consideration of various models and topics for clergy compensation discussions between boards and clergy, and a report on the distinctives of UMC polity that come into play. Chapter Three contains the methodology used in the research. Chapter Four spells out the results of the questionnaires and the interviews. And the final chapter details the conclusions of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature for clergy compensation setting practices. The opening sections include a detailed explication of five scripture passages. The review then moves to the variety of theological underpinnings, including a look at ideas from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. The review then turns to scholarly literature that speaks to the clergy compensation setting process. Finally, the compensation policies of the United Methodist Church are explored.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

Five scripture passages form the biblical foundation work for this study. Three of them are related since two are New Testament references to the Old Testament passage. They all offer instructions about the faith community caring for the financial provision of the clergy/priests who are their spiritual leaders.

#### **Supporting Priests (Num. 18.8-32)**

The most specific passage about the compensation structure from scripture where the community is supporting the needs of spiritual leaders is Numbers 18.8-32. This passage follows a section recounting a rebellion against God and his appointed leadership (Num. 16-17), which resulted in divine judgment against the perpetrators and widespread fear among God's people. Philip Budd argues that this setting provides an opening for God to reinforce instructions and stabilize the future leadership structure for his people (204). Dozeman concurs by pointing out that the need for priests to be intermediaries between the people and God is especially clear in this moment (147-48). Dennis Olson

states that this setting following the rebellion is only one side of the priests' intermediary position, and they not only shield the people from missteps in faithfulness, but also are used by God as a conduit for blessing the people, all making this an auspicious moment to share about the on-going maintenance of the priests (112).

In the midst of instructions about God's expectations for how faithfulness will look among his covenant people, God speaks to Aaron. It is a shift from much of the way God speaks during the sections of the Pentateuch that include the giving of the Law. As Dozeman points out, for God to address someone other than Moses with such specificity should draw attention to the passage from the very outset (146). But then, part way through, God speaks to Moses while continuing to expound upon the same theme, although that appears to be a shift designed to shield Aaron from charges of self-dealing (Budd 204; Olson 116). A delineation of responsibilities is developed that can be shared for healthy decisions about money in the local church, though the specifics will still have to be worked out.

There is some debate about the reaction of the community to these instructions. Were they viewed as a payment called a gift, or something more like a tax (Dozeman 147-48)? Or were these payments meant to be more of a concrete expression of thankfulness for the work of God amongst the people (Olson 114-15)? The community undoubtedly answered these questions in a multitude of ways simultaneously, not unlike a modern church congregation and their relationship to money and support of clergy. This offers a good venue for further research.

This passage also specifies what is to be used for and by the priests alone within the consecrated area, and what is designated for the consumption of priests and their

families at other locations. Dozeman shares that this extension allows for the sustenance to be extended beyond the individual priests to their families (147). This particularly includes females within the priest's household (Sakenfeld 105). The maintenance of the priests is not just a concession for while they are on the job but an extension to the whole of their lives.

Even while they themselves are beneficiaries of the tithes of God's people, the Levites are not excluded from the expectations of tithing (Dozeman 149). Much of Numbers includes details designed to add specificity to outstanding questions about the functioning of the community, especially the spiritual leadership of the community (Budd 203). This builds into the system a reminder to both the Levites and the rest of the people that they are all equally part of God's people, and it prevents glamorizing or demonizing the Levites (Olson 118-19). The expectations for this tithe are rather high. Since the provisions come from many fields, they are required to select the best out of the lot, rather than just the first items to arrive, in order to prevent cherry picking the worst items to offer back to God (Sakenfeld 106). Many of the legal sections in Numbers contains material that solidifies, expands, and reveals the expectations for the spiritual leaders' resources and responsibilities (Budd 203). This section of the passage speaks to an openness about pastoral giving in the life of a local church as both a safeguard against manipulation and leading by example in giving.

The priests and Levites, supported by the expectations around tithing, were both involved in leading God's people in right worship in holy services and also leading God's people by the example of their lives. They had no access to agricultural livelihood because they had no allotment of property. This made them living exemplars of

dependency upon God, just as was true in the most profound sense for all of God's people (Olson 115-16). As such, the people of God are called to faithfully support those who announce God's good news, whether Old Testament priests or New Testament preachers, by provisioning them for life (Olson 117). These expectations are not meant to just be in place for a season in the wilderness, but a lasting commitment marked by the "covenant of salt" language (Dozeman 147). By making these provisions for the spiritual leaders of his people, God is making sure that they will not be without faithful leadership (Budd 207).

#### **Deuteronomy 25.4**

Deuteronomy 25.4 does not appear to address clergy compensation upon a first read through. In a section largely devoted to relationships between people, Deuteronomy 25.4 offers instruction about working animals. But the passage itself is in the midst of a section designed to prevent the abuse by people of other people, those guilty of a crime, and widows, and fits in well adding a perspective laying out a command not to abuse animals being used for their labor. It also fits into the questions raised by this study due to its multiple uses in the New Testament to discuss clergy compensation, and more generally about the wages and treatment due those who labor.

Historical Jewish teaching has repeatedly affirmed this passage as a command about working animals (Clements 471). The animal must be allowed some benefit from its labor and cannot be treated as an inanimate tool (Brueggemann 241). There is an important mark of equitable compensation for the animal as it is allowed to eat some of the grain it is working, and though the owner/driver of the beast may wish to preserve all of the fruit of the work for themselves, it must not be so (Tigay 231). Similar practices

were even used in the place of Israelite slavery, Egypt, as evidenced by reliefs showing the working animal pausing to eat (Tigay 231). This all connects with Proverbs 12.10 and the pronouncement that the faithful will care for their animals appropriately.

While this material does not connect with human labor at a direct commandment level, and only clearly does so in Paul's allegory, it does have bearing on its own merits. The compensation for beasts who labor can find parallels in the need to compensate any worker who labors. Pastoral leadership is in that category.

### **Do not Muzzle an Ox (1 Cor. 9)**

The letters of Paul contain two references to Deuteronomy 25.4. In both instances, Paul uses it to discuss paying church workers, and particularly preachers of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul explains his authority and place in church leadership. He uses his choices to avoid certain practices, that other gospel proclaimers appropriately engage in, as a testimony to his seriousness about sharing the gospel in the Corinthians social setting. In particular, the Deuteronomy reference in 1 Corinthians 9:9 culminates in v. 14 and the announcement that gospel proclaimers should be paid. But Paul has chosen to avoid this legitimate practice for a number of reasons, and his arguments provide a great deal of insight into the payment of gospel proclaimers.

This section of Corinthians is developed along lines that would have been familiar to hearers and readers by following socio-cultural practices of "Hellenistic diatribe" (Collins 328). Noticing that Paul is using such a culturally relevant technique requires the interpreter to also be aware of the broader cultural setting. Corinth was a wealthy merchant city with a significant divide between the haves and the have-nots, often exploited by those with means (Sampley 775). A significant portion of the populace was

held in varying forms of slavery (Collins 329). So when Paul speaks about his freedom to make choices, the language carries unmistakable cultural reference. The choice Paul makes front and center is his decision not to receive income from the Christians or the church at Corinth. In many ways, this marks an astonishing choice of one who is free making the decision to act as a slave, and receive no payment for labor. But it is Paul's effort to connect fully with the people of Corinth (Sampley 907).

Paul's choice not to receive income for his work at the church is not just about solidarity with the slaves of Corinth. Nor is it only an example to the upper-class Christians that as a leader of the church he is like the slaves and they should treat the slaves as they do him. His choice also frees him to preach the gospel unrestrained. Classical arrangements between philosophers and religious teachers and the people they were instructing who paid them often included a strong tie of patronage that would preclude the teacher from speaking certain hard truths (Hays 147). Paul's refusal to partake of that system may have even caused some consternation among the wealthier Christians (Collins 330). Throughout all of this, Paul makes the case that this is a particular moment in a particular socio-cultural setting that means his witness to the faith will be stronger by taking these actions. Hays makes a comment asking if we are in a similar moment in the Church now, but he does not wrestle with the uniqueness question and leans quickly to a more universalizing application (Hays 157).

Paul makes a strong case for the paying of gospel proclaimers. His opening query in verse four is about his right to have his basic needs met (Collins 330). He makes the transition from the preceding section about food offered to idols into a discussion about financing preachers by staying with questions about food. A short time later Paul will use



the passage from Deuteronomy to solidify this position by saying that if laboring animals must be taken care of, then surely a proclaimer of the gospel must be cared for (Collins 330).

Throughout this discussion Paul speaks about money in an open and direct way. For all of the cultural nuance that is being employed, the clarity remains. By all reckonings and in unambiguous terms, Paul should be paid for his work (Collins 330). He uses two authorities in an effort to double the clarity on the topic. His first appeal is to the Hebrew scriptures as authoritative (Collins 332). His use of scripture in this way may seem novel, but it aids in specifying his point (Horsley 126). He then adds to that by invoking the teachings of Jesus that also undergirds and makes plain Paul's point (Hays 152). Given the level of frankness and supporting teachings, it is possible the Corinthians could be expecting Paul to be employing some sort of rhetorical device that will shortly be demanding finances from them. Instead, the clarity continues in verses 15-18 displaying his ongoing insistence on not being paid (Sampley 906). Richard Horsley argues that it is possible Paul is suggesting his payment is to remain free from a coercive relationship with a patron in Corinth and instead retain God as his only boss (130). While speculative, this could have bearing on the impact of clergy compensation and its relationship to pastoral authority in the local church.

Comparisons around money and compensation can veer into unhelpful and unhealthy terrain, moving in directions of keeping up with the Joneses and initiating feelings of competition or feeling slighted. But Paul moves directly into the use of comparisons. The central verse, quoted from Deuteronomy 25.4, compares his work to that of an animal of labor. He also runs through several other occupations who receive

compensation for their work, from the military to farm workers (Sampley 904). Paul continues the comparisons with an allusion to other gospel proclaimers among the Corinthians. The clear inference is that other pastors and preachers who have been in leadership have received compensation (Collins 333). It is even likely that Paul is suggesting that as founding pastor he has more of a right to compensation than those like Apollos who came later and benefited from the ground Paul had already tilled (Horsley 126). There are other external, secular comparisons in the cultural background that are partially driving these internal, church comparisons. Paul could be questioned by the Corinthians about why he should be compensated differently than the pagan philosophers and teachers who often took patrons, but he shifts the comparison point from them to rabbis, who in certain traditions worked a trade to support themselves in addition to their work in the faith community (Collins 331). Throughout these comparisons Paul avoids the nastier side of compensation comparison by maintaining a seemingly lighthearted tone (Sampley 906). But comparisons cannot be fully ignored because, for Paul, everything in life is interconnected and to be used for the advancement of the Kingdom (Sampley 909).

Similar to his use of clarity around money, Paul also maintains a level of consistency with the way he speaks about money. Paul piles up explanations for why he should be compensated, after pointing out that he has not been paid up to now, and it would seem to be the ground work for an argument for a shift in the relationship between him and the Corinthian church about why they should pay him. The three allowances given to apostles, compensation, bringing a wife, and freedom from manual labor, all point towards a change (Collins 332). But just as the argument seems to be headed for

that climax he reiterates his on-going position of refusing to be compensated by the church (Hays 152). Part of what Paul is doing in this section is not to renounce his rights, but to make clear that he will not be using them for a very specific reason; he is guided by the consistent theme of love (Sampley 905). The driving desire to spread the gospel message, and to do anything that will enable and assist that goal, leads Paul to find more avenues for connecting with people, including plying his trade (Collins 331).

The dynamic of this relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church as it relates to compensation matters is instructive in a wider area than just compensation. Given the way Paul speaks about the practices of other gospel proclaimers, the standard operating mode appears to have been for the local church community to financially support and compensate their pastors and preachers (Collins 331). Paul uses his peculiar decision to make a broader point about rights and what is acceptable behavior for Christians, paralleling the Corinthians struggles with questions related to food (Collins 333). The theme of withholding from what is permissible for the sake of others is a theme of this letter to the Corinthians (Horsley 123). The theme of compensation cannot be divorced from the overall message of the gospel or the particularities of local context. In fact, part of the reason for Paul's detailed discussion is the danger that the Corinthians might think him a lesser or even false apostle if he refuses compensation altogether (Hays 147). Instead, Paul used this as a teaching moment to provide wider application, which leads questions about compensation practices and the ways they impact the wider body of believers. In an effort to prevent a wholesale application of his particular choices, Paul interprets the verse in Deuteronomy to promote the appropriateness of compensating

gospel proclaimers by stating that it was written specifically for the benefit of his fellow workers (Hays 151).

### **Do not Muzzle an Ox (1 Tim. 5.17-18)**

Paul quotes the same passage from Deuteronomy for similar purposes in 1 Timothy 5. The context is different with a letter directed to a specific person, and that person being a leader of the church, rather than a letter addressed to an entire church body. The particular section, 1 Tim 5.17-18, follows after a broader set of instructions about how to treat widows in the church, and specifically which ones should receive financial benefits so that they do not fall into crushing poverty. Paul is careful about not over-extending the resources of the church, not stepping in and preventing children and family from having the opportunity to bless their elder, and not having those register for assistance who will later wish to remarry thus invalidating their claim to impoverished widowhood. For all of his care, Paul does allow that there are those who need the fiscal assistance of the church. In the midst of this discussion, Paul shifts to speaking about church leaders. While there have been attempts to interpret this passage in a way that does not lead to pastoral compensation, the context of financial assistance continues (Horrell 124). Indeed, Thomas Oden uses the preceding passage's insistence that a family should not be denied their opportunity to care for their elder, widowed members via financial assistance as a parallel for the importance of not preventing a church family from caring for their church leaders in a financial way (151).

That the specific inference here is financial compensation comes from multiple markers. The work that the preacher engages in is clearly labeled labor, and the term used for "honor" is elsewhere in scripture and secular literature, that is contemporary to the

text, used to refer to monetary payments (Young 106). That labor terminology shows the reader that the work being engaged needs exertion, commitment of time, and will wear out the one doing it (Collins 145). The word for honor can mean a more general kind of “esteem,” but the notion of monetary compensation for work fits this context (Collins 144).

Dunn suggests that this letter was written after 1 Corinthians, which would have set the standard for using Deuteronomy 25.4 to speak on the matter, but it is unclear whether his dating is certain or whether Timothy would have been aware of the other letter (822). It would be better to simply suggest that the repetition of this theme marks it as something that was likely to have been a standard exposition for Paul. Of additional note is the shift from 1 Corinthians in speaking about apostles to speaking of elders in 1 Timothy. This suggests the compensation of two different groups of church leaders is appropriate (Horrell 125). Churches have been paying their leaders from the earliest days (Oden 150).

On the topic of how much to pay the preacher/elder, Paul does not offer specifics. Interpreters vary in the terminology they use. Collins suggests thinking in terms of sustenance (144). Oden describes an awareness of a minimum (151). Samuel Ngewa speaks of “basic needs” being met (127). This is in contrast to the Levites who received a fixed percentage. In both cases, the system was designed to prevent the stresses of finances from interfering with the work of religious leaders (Oden 151). It is possible that the compensation of the widows is meant as a baseline, but Paul is not specific about such a comparison (Bassler 99).

There is an odd phrase about a factor of two, in 1 Timothy 5:17, relating to the topic. Is it meant to be aligned with the widows' compensation, or perhaps vis-a-via other elders or apostles (Bassler 99)? It certainly seems unlikely to be another group of elders, since the only ones mentioned are a group that is being rejected from leadership (Bassler 99). Some interpreters suggest that the doubling is meant to apply to the additional witnesses in v. 19 rather than the compensation in v. 18 (Collins 144). But the discussion of wages in the midst of a discussion about higher standards for accusations would be an odd inclusio if the two are not related. A possible solution is that the doubling is related to both receiving compensation and a higher threshold for proving wrongdoing (Ngewa 127).

Paul makes it clear that this idea of compensation for church leaders is not a novel one that originates with him. The way he offers multiple quotations to back up his assertions is fairly different from other justifications in the Pastoral Epistles (Dunn 822; Young 106). The quotations speak directly to compensation for work, and so heavily emphasize his point (Bassler 99). Of special note is that the teachings of Jesus are given prominence right next to the words of the Pentateuch in the midst of Paul's argument (Dunn 822).

### **Luke 10.7**

As Paul notes in 1 Timothy, Jesus himself offers directions about compensating proclaimers of the good news. In the beginning of Luke 10, Jesus sends out the seventy with specifics about how to carry out their mission. This detailed discussion is a significant expansion on what has come before in Luke 9.4 (Culpepper 220). It is a surprising moment in the gospel accounts given the lack of other information about how

the disciples were financed (cf. Luke 8.1-3). While there isn't a full or exact accounting, it is a more robust picture than elsewhere.

The proclaimers of the good news are going to get a welcome, a place to stay, and sustenance. This mirrors some of the goals of the new community of faith: sharing in meals together and providing for needs and begin to take apart the rigid social stratification of the socio-cultural setting that is anathema to the gospel (Culpepper 220). The hospitality serves a dual purpose, both creating spaces for the gospel to be proclaimed and faith developed as well as providing the earned compensation for the proclaimers (Bovon 28). This system provides for a shift in the mindset of the giver and receiver, pushing the gospel proclaimer from the status of beggar to that of someone receiving what they have earned (Tannehill 175). The method of compensating the proclaimers from the local family's table also breaks down holiness food codes, preparing the way for the entrance of the Gentiles into the faith (Craddock 145; Jeffrey 146). These ideas open powerful questions for modern compensation practices. What does pastoral compensation say about hospitality, the goals of Christian community, and connections with those currently outside the Church?

Perhaps the most difficult question for current compensation discussions is, how much? Jesus begins to work around the edges of this question, but he does not directly address it. The instruction to the seventy to stop immediately with a family who welcomes them prevents the proclaimers of the gospel from hunting for better deals and discourages seeking extravagance, while at the same time preventing conflict among gospel proclaimers angling for what someone else has and falling prey to covetousness (Bovon 28). In essence it removes the temptation to "shop around" (Craddock 145).

These practices have an impact on the local faith community, not just the compensated proclaimers of the gospel. It brings the proclaimer into the household, making them defacto members for a time (Tannehill 175). This compensation practice would have communicated, internally and externally, what the household places value on. Placing the burden of caring for the proclaimers of the gospel on the welcoming family/community seems to have been set in this precedent moving forward for the early missionaries (Craddock 145). The inclusionary power of table fellowship and partaking of what the host provides is both an example for the household of faith that they are welcome in the faith and an example for them to be welcomers. Do our churches compensation practices have the potential to be used in similar ways?

### **Theological Foundations**

A fruitful field in theology concerns covenants. The most prominent are the major Old Testament covenants: Noahic (Gen. 9), Abrahamic (Gen. 15), Mosaic (Exod. 20), and Davidic (2 Sam. 7). There are numerous less well discussed covenants and reaffirmations of covenant too; Joshua and the people (Josh. 24), David and Jonathan (1 Sam.18), and post-Exile recommitments (Ezra 10; Neh. 13). In the New Testament the covenant language at the institution of Holy Communion (Luke 22) and the many markers of covenant referenced especially at the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3) and Pentecost (Acts 2), point to an on-going importance of covenants. The discussion about clergy compensation must consider covenant theology. In the United Methodist tradition, the talk is of covenant between the local church, the itinerant elder, and the Conference/Bishop. But the relationship between local church and pastor can also be



viewed as a covenant. Compensation is certainly a part of that covenantal discussion as Keck points out.

But what is “appropriate financial support”? This is different from asking, “What can a church afford?” or “How much can I get as the pastor?” The former is a question of covenant, in that it is attentive to the well-being of the pastor as well as of the church. The latter questions are contractual, because they are concerned primarily, perhaps exclusively, with one party’s self-interested point of view. (Keck 140).

A theological reflection on the struggle of the faith is repeated throughout the scriptures. God’s people faced a plethora of enemies in the Old Testament, not the least of which was their own propensity for self-sabotage. Jesus faced off against demons and religious leaders’ questions. The revelation to John of Patmos displays an ongoing cosmic struggle. Perhaps the most famous imagery comes in Paul’s letter to Ephesus. His description of the gear of the Christian in Ephesians 6.10-17 leaves no doubt that Christians face a struggle that can very easily be categorized in terms related to war fighting. This language and the ideas behind it have not held strong sway in many parts of the Church in the USA, which has become largely complacent over the last half century. As John Piper writes, “Very few of our people have said to themselves: we will live at a level of joyful, wartime simplicity and use the rest of what we earn to alleviate misery. But this is surely what Jesus wants” (170). The implications for clergy compensation of a swing back in this direction as the Church in the West returns to being a minority of the population with all the attendant headwinds are enormous. Does this mean extreme deprivation for clergy? No. Officers of the military are paid and paid on-

time, but their compensation is nowhere near extravagant. The question for the local church and clergy remains finding that line between deprivation and extravagance.

What God expects from leaders is a fruitful area of theology. Leadership came with expectations about holiness throughout the Old Testament. The failures of faith leaders were roundly criticized by the prophets, and judgement was meted out by God. In the New Testament, Jesus set standards for those who would follow him (Matt. 19.29). The pastoral epistles contain similar expectations for leaders of the Church and the necessity of their own seeking holiness in order to model for the faith community what holiness can and should look like. The need for church leaders of today setting the example for church members follows in this same line of thinking. “Brothers, we are leaders, and the burden of change lies most heavily on us. The place to start is our own lives” (Piper 170). Transforming a congregation’s relationship with money is heavy, heavy lifting. In too many cases the Church in the West tries to serve two masters (Matt. 6.24), and part of what is needed to respond to the dilemma is courageous leadership. How can clergy compensation, the method, and the discussion around setting it help show faithful servant leadership as a model for communities of faith?

Like other protestant denominations, the United Methodist Church affirms the ministry of all believers. All who are in Christ are called to be in ministry, while some are serving in specialized roles like pastors. When speaking about Article XIII of the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, part of the doctrinal standards, Bishop Scott Jones says, “The church is composed of those who have responded in faith to God’s saving invitation” (247). None are excluded for reasons of power, prestige, or position. Part of the functioning of the local UMC is to allow for members to take votes on items before

the local church, including the pastor's compensation. This theological idea, that all members of the church are ministers of the church, is lived out in having a part in the decisions taken.

Another place for theological reflection on the pastoral compensation questions is John Wesley. He wrote quite a bit about money and even discussed his own personal habits and compensation at times. Remembering that Wesley lived and worked in the midst of the Industrial Revolution adds significant color to his remarks. As Outer writes, "To strike a creative balance between frugality and generosity and to come as near as this essay [The Use of Money] does to a successful fusion of the monastic spirit *and* the mercantile system is an achievement still worth remarking" (239). This context must be kept in mind when reviewing his work.

There are three sermons from John Wesley that speak very clearly on money. The first is titled "The Use of Money." Wesley argues that money is not inherently good or bad, but a tool to be used. He offers the encouragement for Methodists to earn, save, and give with serious intentionality and an eye to faithfulness. One of the great compensation questions arising from the sermon is, if pastor and church leadership are on board with "earn all you can," what should the pastor's compensation package look like? Does the pastor have a responsibility to ask for as much money as a church can possibly pay, and does the church have an obligation to pay it? Another of question is, if pastor and church leadership are on board with "give all you can," should the board review the pastor's giving as part of the compensation negotiation process? How much detail should the pastor eagerly share and should the church request? These questions have no easy or clear

answers, but they can serve as theological back drop to the conversation around compensation setting.

In “The Good Steward” Wesley talks about how God has made humanity stewards of money and we will have to answer to God on how we have used it. How can the pastor and board be good stewards of the financial resources of the church? Managing the resources of the church is a sacred trust and must be undertaken with care. In conversations about compensation, both the pastor and the board must find a way to keep this a conversation with roots in holiness. In addition, the board and pastor must be good stewards of one another. They must look not only to their own interests, the board protecting the interest of the church and the pastor guarding the interests of the pastor and family, but they must consider how to steward the resources of each other.

The third sermon that can inform the clergy compensation discussion is “The Danger of Riches.” What does Wesley mean when he uses the term “rich?” Being rich means having more than covering (clothing and shelter) and food than one needs or can use. The surpluses of the current century in most of Europe and North America would probably take Wesley’s breath away. Wesley warns, “Of those who thus enter into temptation very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed” (Outler and Heitzenrater 455). How can the pastor and board avoid falling into the danger of desiring to be rich? The pastor and board must hold one another accountable in light of the dangers of temptations to greed, either for the pastor attempting to increase a personal account at the expense of the church or the board in trying to increase the church’s account at the expense of the pastor.

While coming from another time and a very different society, Wesley's handling of money remains instructive for followers of Christ in the Wesleyan stream. His income rose regularly throughout his life as his prominence and publishing efforts increased, but his disciplined level of spending enabled him to give away significant sums. This was partly driven by an encounter early in his teaching career when he tried to provide funds for a maid at Oxford to purchase warmer clothing for the English winter, but found he had spent almost all of his money on himself. Subsequently, he put himself on a very strict budget that did not increase as his income increased (Friedeman 80). Should not pastors be concerned with how boards spend money the Church is stewarding? And should not boards be concerned with the financial health, including spending and giving habits, of their pastors? These topics must be handled in delicate ways so as not to become overly prescriptive or demeaning, but they must be handled.

### **Clergy Salary Setting**

#### **Clergy Salary Relative to Congregation/Community Income**

One of the frequent starting points in salary negotiations is to compare salaries to similar groups in training, expectations, or geography. A clergy person has an automatic group for comparison purposes—the congregation they serve. They will have a deep relationship with many different touch points, but one of those is finances. Exploring the pastor's salary relative to the congregation is not always easy because detailed data on congregants' income levels is difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, this is a useful tool in evaluating the setting of clergy salaries. Even Niebuhr, almost 100 years ago, raised it as a point when he wrote about a colleague whose church had gone through an additional fundraising process in order to increase their pastoral compensation by nearly double so

they could close the deal in hiring a particular pastor, thus creating a situation where the pastor was earning more than almost anyone else in the church (Niebuhr 66). It is unclear how Niebuhr's friend's tenure worked out, but he is clearly shocked at the move. On the other hand, there are many pastors who earn significantly less than the majority of people in their church (Hoge et al. 13).

These two extremes can both be damaging, whether they are accurate in fact or only in perception. With the importance of clarity around issues of money, it is worth discovering if these are factual positions or just assumptions. The two extremes both can lead to a debilitating disconnect between pastor and congregation. A church and pastor may have practical or theological reasons for leaning towards one end of the spectrum or the other, but in those cases openness about the reasoning behind the decision is essential.

Comparisons to the congregation are not the only useful comparisons when evaluating a pastor's compensation. Comparisons to the larger community can be a helpful tool too, and they can be more accurate. Thanks to a variety of government data, sources churches can find averages and median individual and household income data for their regions. Each local church will have to make decisions about whether they want to review household income or individual income, and how much information to request from their pastor about total household income. Each pastor will have to make their own decisions about how much household information to share. But the clergy compensation in a local church can speak volumes to the wider community about how they do or don't value their religious leader, how the local church is viewed by the community, and how the church views their relationship with the larger community.

That all leads to the next primary set of comparisons. How does the pastor's compensation compare to the larger community? There are layers of perception to work through on this topic, and no single answer will ever suffice to quiet all critics or supporters of various moves. Is the pastor being honored by this compensation? Is the pastor viewed by the community as a religious leader just interested in getting rich? Is the pastor in an entirely different economic position relative to the rest of the community (either above or below)? Berger recommends reviewing multiple pieces of community economic indicators including "consumer prices and living standards in the community, average incomes, general conditions of economics in the community" before discussing salary (13). These items can be helpful at setting some broad parameters at the beginning stages of discussions.

More specifically, there are questions about how the pastor's compensation stacks up against others employed in the community with similar levels of education and training with consideration to the costs and time given to those things (Hoge et al. 13). In the mainline church, this would often put the pastor in the upper echelons of income due to the time and expense of advanced education and training. A common touchpoint in comparison are educators in public schools, partially because their compensations are a matter of public records, but also because they are responsible for multifaceted organizations with many varied constituents. Berger recommends keeping the local high school principal's compensation in mind during discussions (13). Also, among their peer high-skilled workers, presumably not primarily driven by higher incomes, clergy employed in the area tend to bring benefits to those on the bottom of the income ladder (Lozano and Cheng 355). This is particularly true in the African-American community

where an increase in the percentage of pastors living and working in the populace leads to an increase in the average earnings of African-American males (Lozano and Cheng 359).

Looking at these and other similar factors cannot be done in a vacuum. It is important to include some historical data when working through these to get a picture of on-going trends. During a twenty-year period from 1960 to the end of the 1970s average United Methodist pastoral compensation vis-à-vis the US middle-class dropped by fifty percent while the expectations placed on pastors increased (Hudnut-Beumler 91). These kinds of shifts can be demoralizing to clergy leadership and lead to all kinds of problems. While there may be specific, localized reasons for these kinds of shifts, it is important to have that information on the table during discussions.

#### **Usefulness of Comparisons to Regional or Other Similar Churches in Salary Setting**

Getting closer to similar responsibilities and expectations, using comparisons to other clergy in the geographic area can be an especially helpful tool. Berger explains the pastor should always be ready to talk about the compensation of other clergy in the area (13). These numbers are not always public in various church polities, but decision makers should attempt to build as much information as possible Holck suggests both the pastor and the board should share in this information as discussions are being held (23). An additional point of comparison should be the denominational average compensation for pastors (Holck 30). Most denominations make these figures available publicly or at least to their clergy.

In all of these comparisons, care has to be taken with regard to geographic differences in compensation and costs of living. Especially when looking at other clergy salaries it is important to note differences in training and experience, as well as job



expectations, responsibilities, and fruitfulness, and not just use a comparison model to aim for the perfect middle (Holck 31). That may be the greatest danger to working with all of these comparisons. In the midst of difficult and sometimes amorphous conversations about finances and compensation, both pastor and board may be tempted to avoid the hard work of really digging into the nuances of the discussion and fall back on averages. These items are only part of the tool box available to pastors and boards and it would be a mistake to stop here.

### **Salary Setting and the Overall Church Budget**

Another major point of consideration whenever clergy compensation discussions are happening is the status of the church budget. What are the trends in the budget (decreasing, static, increasing)? What portion of the budget is dedicated to employees in general, and clergy specifically? The answers to these questions will shift in different places and in different seasons, but they also need to be on the table. Clarity and openness must remain watchwords throughout this part of the process. The ability to manage a budget is a high priority expectation for pastors (Zech 741). That can lead to an assumption that the pastor will just handle and explain the impact on the budget (if she or he is seen as competent in this area) or the dismissal of this as something only the board needs to worry about if the pastor is seen as incapable in this area. There is a danger that churches used to a certain level or type of pastoral leadership based on previous compensation levels can no longer sustain those practices. Making the clergy person's compensation dependent entirely on the size of the church budget is a mistake as they should be compensated based on job responsibilities and execution. Too often churches

try to skimp on paying their pastor but have expectations for what a more well compensated leader would provide (Holck 18).

Another question relates to accounting for the pastor's compensation in the annual budget figures. Narrative budgeting, promoted by Horizons Stewardship and others, recommends showing parts of the pastor's salary in the different ministry areas where they have responsibility as a system to display the truly responsibilities and impact of clergy leaders (Great Plains Orders and Fellowship Conference 2018). But others disdain this idea for two reasons. It can be viewed as just a ploy to obscure the total cost of the compensation package. Or viewed as an attempt to prevent pastoral calls for generous stewardship from appearing like calls to simply pay their wages (Hoge et al 11). The answer to this conundrum is not clear or easy. Like many questions around compensation, it boils down to clarity, openness, and intentionality.

Zech provides a robust discussion of attempting to align the pastor's compensation with the church budget and goals. He talks about four different models that can be used and some of the flaws inherent in them. In the models his expectation is that the church is trying to grow numerically. The first is the rational choice model. Under this program, the leadership would perfectly balance the cost-benefit tradeoffs to pay for and get performance of the most essential tasks. This kind of result only happens in the totally objective world of theory. Church leaders never have the full scope of data or the ability to parse it that this would require (Zech, *Four Economic Models* 259). The second is a modified version referred to as the bounded rationality model. This model takes into account additional factors like the community culture in which the church is situated, the condition of the physical plant of the church building, the health of the church budget,

and the reality that there are significant unknowns in the process (Zech, *Four Economic Models* 260). This moderated version provides for a healthier and more realistic approach. The third option comes from new institutional economics and is called the principal/agent theory. It calls for a robust set of expectations and monitoring to be laid out ahead of time by the principal that the agent will work towards. While not quite to the level of quotas, there is a definite undercurrent of those kinds of employee/employer relationship dynamics. But in a church setting there is almost no way to offer monitoring in a meaningful way. So, the agent (employee/pastor) is free to set their own priorities disregarding the principal's (employer/church) desire to grow (Zech, *Four Economic Models* 263). The fourth practice is the organized anarchy model. In this system choices are made based on similar factors in the other models, but foci and determination are allowed to flow without significant attempts at objectivity guiding the prioritization process. This often leads to discussion of issues being delayed or accelerated in unhelpful ways (Zech, *Four Economic Models* 265). The timing of clergy compensation and church budget development are often linked and are often at a set time of year, whether or not that is the best or most appropriate point in any given year based on other factors.

### **Authority and Power Dynamics Involved in Salary Setting**

Whenever salary and compensation discussions happen between employee and employer there are acknowledged and unacknowledged relationship balances at play. These negotiations will often sharpen the focus on issues of highest importance in the midst of systemic structures. Those structures are frequently concerned with “power and authority” in a broad sense (Burns et al. 211). These factors play out in churches too. In some settings pastors wield significant authority, and in other settings lay boards feel free

to question and even denigrate what a pastor has to say. There are many churches that fall somewhere along the spectrum between these extremes. Power can be expressed in different ways in these settings, but frequently “formal and relational” power are the centerpieces (Burns et al. 211). Like many other parts of the discussion around clergy compensation these factors need to be named with clarity so that they will not sabotage healthy negotiations.

Churches have significant power in compensation negotiations with their clergy. In most non-church plants, the members of the board and the church has a significantly longer shared history with one another (Burns et al 212). This leads to understood but not always verbalized standards and expectations that can create a grounding for the compensation discussion that the pastor has to learn to traverse while others are in their comfort zone. It can also create the appearance of a unified front, even if one does not exist, that the pastor feels he or she must face alone. This factor does not have to be a negative. Strong, longer-term relationships, when openly acknowledged, can lead to better and open communication practices. It can provide a fuller understanding of the dynamics at play within the community and the local church that have bearing on compensation matters. The speed with which the group can move toward consensus can be improved by these relationships.

One way churches exercise their power in compensation discussions is what Zech calls a “promotion tournament” (731). The idea is that churches have few ways to hold clergy accountable relative to the compensation they are receiving, so in order to achieve gains in compensation the clergy person will have to prove fruitfulness in some way because that will be necessary to achieve a promotion. But those opportunities for

promotion dwindle as a clergy person moves higher on the compensation tables providing ever greater incentive for success, because the competition becomes fiercer. So, as the local church is able to increase their compensation, they will be able to be choosier about the clergy they hire and the expectations for that person. It also allows the local church to approach conversations with current clergy with an eye to what they want their compensation to say in the midst of the tournament. This discussion can sound like a brutal rat race more suited to the high pressure world of cut-throat business than the Church. But it can be used in a healthy way for the local church to use its power to encourage and guide clergy leadership toward productivity.

To get a view of what the church might look like without something along the lines of a promotion tournament, Stark and Finke turn their review to the current church culture in Northern Europe. They find that the clergy in Scandinavia and Germany are among the most well compensated Christian clergy on the globe. But participation in worship services and other church events is among the lowest in the world (Stark and Finke 112). They place a significant part of the blame at the feet of the cultural practice of clergy support and compensation being driven by the national governments and removing the local church's power from the equation. This leads to a culture of laziness, where the clergy have little to no incentive to work, and the lay people are bereft of any need to organize to support their clergy people (Stark and Finke 230). Zech refers to a similar dilemma known as the free rider problem. Churches in general do not want to keep people away due to a lack of ability to financially contribute, but that leads to an over-abundance of people taking advantage of services they are not paying to support (*Four Economic Models* 257). His expectation is that churches will have to engage in

some kind of mitigation to avoid their systems being overwhelmed by those folks. The situation in Northern Europe suggests the situation is a little more complicated than that. It appears that having some skin in the game is actually a driver of consumption of religious services.

Due to their inability to pay what many perceive to be market level wages for a highly educated and vetted workforce, many commentators recommend churches focus on healthy pension planning. In recent history this has been a successful plan because while churches may not have the resources of for-profit businesses, they tend to have significantly longer term stability making pensions an attractive option. But increasing longevity among the population in general and gyrations in the stock market combined with shrinking congregational resources cause problems. Zech points to a much more insidious long-term expectation. The promise of eternal rewards and the benevolence of the divine upon faithful ministers has been and can be used by congregations at the negotiating table to argue for lower and sometimes poverty level wages (Zech 731). While this is sometimes an understandable reactionary response to grievous practices amongst prosperity gospel preachers receiving ludicrously lavish compensation and benefits, it is too often trotted out as an excuse to under-compensate pastors because the church does not have sufficient resources.

Perhaps the most painful and well reported and studied power dynamics in salary setting between clergy and churches is the difficulty of women and people of color have in making sure they receive fair and appropriate compensation. Histories of open racism and sexism in culture, and in church culture particularly, absolutely deserve some of the blame. But the way those sins have wedged themselves even in the subconscious must be

acknowledged beyond the open practices that are much more frequently maligned. The stereotypes that negotiators (boards) carry beneath their own awareness can have large negative impacts on the process of setting salaries. Stereotypes of women suggest they should be meek or mild and women who negotiate forcefully can lead to a negative impression; however, people from East Asian backgrounds who are often thought to be more reserved but negotiate passionately are given a more favorable response, so there is some variability (Hernandez et al. 1). Women who take the common response and “act like a man” in negotiations are even more harshly penalized (Seligman 284). Similar to factors for women, there are challenges African American employees. Due to stereotypes that they will not negotiate, when they do approach the bargaining table with requests they face a hostile reception and frequently end up with less generous compensation packages (Hernandez et al. 7). This all leads to significantly lower immediate earnings, and life-time earnings.

To make things more complicated, the individual employee negotiating is influenced by stereotype threat. They often think the other party views them from a stereotypical position. So they modify their request to seem more appropriate based on the stereotype, but this then perpetuates the whole systemic problem (Telhed and Bjorklund 192). One solution is for the employee to approach the negotiations with a clear idea of the bare minimum they will accept. This “reservation salary” creates a floor that can protect them in the midst of discussions.

The United Methodist Church has a couple of ways to nullify or at least mitigate the effects of stereotypes in pastoral compensation negotiations. Each Annual Conference sets a minimum salary for full-time pastors. This often functions as the reserve salary,

preventing the most egregious fallout from happening. But clearer training for pastors about stereotype threat and the preconceptions they carry about themselves could alleviate some of the issues. Another attempt the UMC makes to smooth out the process is making sure the board holding discussions has both female and male representation. But this is rarely adequate as other researchers have noted. “We discovered that female interviewees who initiate negotiations in job interviews are penalized by both male and female interviewers” (Kang et al. 154). Instead, a more comprehensive training and discussion with clarity is needed to allow a board to use the power it has in healthy and holy ways.

While congregations and their boards wield significant power in the salary discussion, the pastor is not without influence. Nearly one hundred years ago Niebuhr realized the problem, even when the religious landscape in the USA was very different. He writes, “I suppose it is not easy to get a combination of Aristotle and Demosthenes, and on the current market, that ought to be worth \$15,000 [1924 dollars]. Nevertheless, there must be some limit to this matter of oversized salaries” (64). Trained, skilled, and experienced professionals will find a market for their abilities. Pastors have significant moral and spiritual leverage over the people in their care, including members of the board.

There is a danger in wielding this power. The trustworthiness and reliability of religious leaders tends to come partially from their visible dedication to the tenants of the faith, and it has often been seen in the tradition by adherence to codes of celibacy and poverty (Stark and Finke 112). While required poverty for pastors is not a common protestant motif, a display of wealth or disclosing of a large salary for a church leader can



lead to disruptions of ministry and loss of confidence in that leader. Especially since the combination of an agency model of employment along with few measurable success points means that a pastor is free to engage in their work with a focus on tasks that are different than the congregation's broader goals for that position (Zech 729). The pitfalls of the practice of high clergy salaries without accountability measures, like a promotion tournament, lead to apathetic worship participation among the populace as seen in Northern Europe (Stark and Finke 230).

So what can be done about the power dynamics in the church during clergy compensation discussions? Christians are called to die to ourselves and live for Christ (Gal. 2.20), but this advocating for fair pay sounds dangerously like living for ourselves. It is especially important in the church to approach pastor pay packages as a chance for lay boards and pastors to engage in an open give and take aiming for a win-win outcome and not to think of the conversation as something one side or the other must win (Holck 27). Burns et al. suggest that negotiations move through three phases. It starts with a back and forth between parties, moves to bringing various forms of influence to bear, and finishes with an outcome of increasing or decreasing the power of the people engaged in the process (218). Surely the goal in the church must be that the power of God residing in each party should be magnified and none should leave the process having been made to lose their voice.

### **Ways to Ease Talking about Money**

American Christians are not good at talking about money. On the giving side there has been a pervasive lack of communication and clarity about the instructions of the faith, followed by low expectations, and compounded by a general lack of trust in the

ways the institution handles money (Smith et al. 97). There are similar general difficulties on the compensation setting side. Clarity and a deep understanding of the theology around pastoral support are often lacking. These are exacerbated by the general difficulty in a non-profit salary setting that must balance needs of balancing budgets, stewarding scarce resources, recruiting and keeping successful employees, and keeping a fair salary schedule across positions and responsibilities (Masaoka 57).

The person who could most alleviate these issues because they carry authority in so many other areas of the life of the church is the pastor. But clergy have their own reasons for getting stuck and not being able to help these conversations move forward. The personal finances and financial understanding of many pastors often are weaknesses in terms of training, ability, and comfort (Hoge et al. 1). There is a healthy reluctance to take on a topic that is not well understood, but material resources must be more of a focus if the needle is ever going to move on this topic. Another common problem is the fear of being seen as a faith leader who is only and all about money (Smith et al. 104). Avoiding picking up the title “Reverend Grabadollar” is a highly motivating influence (Hoge et al. 9). On top of that, the percentage of the church expenses going to pastoral support tends to be fairly high, and pastors do not want to seem like they are taking away from other vital ministries of the church (Hoge et al. 10).

Comparisons are a great starting point for easing talking about money. They have been covered in detail earlier, but they are worth a second mention. Non-profits in general use very rough comparisons to prevent running afoul of US laws preventing “excessive compensation” (Masaoka 60). It is also worth keeping in mind that compensation is only one part of negotiations. When it falls within the general

comparison range most employees will not hold it as the top priority (Adler 70). This balance can be achieved by any number of practices, from reaching out to other organizations, reviewing local job listings, subscribing to and participating in salary aggregation surveys (Montana and Charnov 224). Internal comparisons are helpful too. Building a salary band by comparing responsibilities and expectations for different positions will allow the board to regularly review them (Masaoka 63-65, 259). During compensation discussions, comparisons can be wonderful tools, but they can also suck up all the attention in the room.

The timing of discussions about clergy compensation can have enormous impacts on how the dialogue proceeds. When considering pastor pay relative to other items on the board's calendar, the most important item to consider is the evaluation process. Brinckerhoff strongly recommends not combining the two items. The compensation package should be set well before the evaluation occurs (Brinckerhoff 87). In addition to the larger issues of maintaining clarity in the midst of conversations, this practice will also avoid creating a significantly longer board meeting if trying to complete both tasks in one sitting. Another piece related to timing that needs to be considered is the goal of compensation discussions. Is the goal to pay for past work accomplished? Most guidance suggests that a board and employee must be thinking primarily about the work that will be done in the future when the pay is actually received (Masaoka 66).

Another way to ease discussions about money is with direct clarity. This can be hard because obfuscation is frequently a natural reaction to discomfort. But believers have a responsibility to be clear that their treasure is in heaven and that money does not secretly hold sway in their hearts (Piper 172). Clarity also aids in building a sense of trust

and equitability. Employees can handle knowing that there are different pay scales for different positions, but when management tries to hide the practice, problems breed. It is better to make openness a major part of the process (Heller and Hindle 333).

Along with clarity, preparation must be a watchword for clergy compensation discussions. Going into any delicate conversation, including money, completely cold is a recipe for struggle. Groundwork must be laid both spiritually and practically. What kinds of discussion about the theology of money have the pastor and board undertaken? What kinds of research about compensation practices have been carried out? On whom has the burden of these things fallen? Preparation is a standard expectation in for-profit boards too. Economic forces beyond the control of any one entity mean fluctuating prices for human talent, so boards must always be aware of the shifting climate around them and making adjustments to their plans for hiring, promoting, and retaining (Montana and Charnov 224).

It may seem unnecessary due to the obviousness of the statement, but a valuable reminder for all parties engaged in a negotiation is that money is not everything. Adler suggests that if the pay package being discussed is roughly in the upper 30% of comparable jobs, then money will not be the top consideration for an employee (241). Top performing employees are looking for growth and challenge, with long-term goals. While there is another organization with deeper pockets, there is always an opportunity to distinguish an offer based on these things (Adler 9). Adler suggests thinking about a 30% increase from a previous position, but not making that 30% increase all about money, instead thinking about other factors, especially the future oriented ones (Adler 203). These can always include tangential benefits like vacation time, continuing education

funds and time, job security and stability, flexible scheduling, and additional staff members and other resources. For pastors an additional bonus is frequently their position in the larger environment from a status and recognition stand-point, as well as the ability to aid other people (Zech 738). This might include a pastor's discretionary fund for assisting people in need, invitations to social clubs and gatherings, and the simple act of a church member introducing a pastor to someone new in a non-church environment as their pastor. Assuming fair negotiations and a reasonable offer, the financial package is rarely a long-term factor in the happiness of employees with their jobs (Curhan et al. 532).

### **Collaborative Processes in Salary Setting**

Compensating pastors is a complicated discussion for many reasons. Zech calls their pastoral work "noisy" and points to the difficulty in tracking, multi-faceted demands, and variety of outcome targets as ruling out traditional incentive pay practices (735). An alternative process to use during pastor pay package discussions is a collaborative model. This seeks to minimize any adversarial approaches and/or domineering approaches by any party in the discussion.

One of the major benefits to collaborative salary setting is the way that it preserves, and can even enhance, community. "Importantly, the goal of an employment negotiation is typically to maximize economic outcomes as well as social ones because, unlike a negotiation for a house or car, employment negotiations are between partners who can expect an ongoing, interdependent relationship" (Seligman et al. 284). Taking a longer view of things is always helpful in the Church. In the midst of conversations that can be as tense as salary negotiations, it is worth contemplating how words and actions

taken in that discussion will impact the viability of pastor, congregation, and community to interact. On top of that, the choices made will influence the fabric of the community, whether evident in the short term or the long-term. Hudnut-Beumler writes about the danger of damaging community through missing the larger impact of financial positives and negatives being shared in the group and the particular danger of causing others to bear all the expenses for something the church or pastor wants (Hudnut-Beumler 97). Remembering that pastor and church are on the same team is a necessary step in collaboration.

There are other helpful frameworks to carry into a collaborative salary discussion. Pastors must be prepared to plainly and clearly explain what is needed to maintain “independence, dignity, and an opportunity for a freedom to minister” (Berger 15-16). In addition, pastors must be clear with boards, who rarely get a vision of the daily demands of professional ministry, about the lift their job requires and the diversity of tasks (Holck 32). For collaboration to work, all parties must be active participants. On the church/board side, there must be a willingness to have the conversation in a way that explains the reasoning backing up an offer, shows respect for other parties, and allows for feedback and input from the pastor, all of which points to an on-going reality that the goal of the relationship is healthy teamwork (Curhan et al. 532).

### **Questions for Shared use with Pastor and SPRC**

For all of the difficulty involved in having healthy and holy conversations around setting clergy salaries, there is advice that will help. A starting place is simply expanding clarity for lay board members. Frequently they do not understand the basics of how pastor pay works (Holck 29). An opening step will be separating benefit packages and

explaining tax situations for independent contractors under IRS rules, so that items that are part of the cost of doing business (like continuing education) are not lumped in with salary negotiations (Hudnut-Beumler 94). A clearer picture of compensation is available when considering base pay plus housing.

Also, the insider versus outsider questions must be raised. “Is the minister one of them or a stranger hired to do a job?” (Hudnut-Beumler 98). The way this question is answered will have deep implications for the possibilities of fruitful ministry into the future due to the intimacy or remoteness of relationships, but it also immediately impacts the way pay packages are discussed. This is golden rule level thinking (Matt. 7.12). To make the question more pointed, Hudnut-Beumler offers a series of additional questions:

Do the laity pay the minister enough to live among them? If church members rent their housing, can he rent a similar dwelling? If they own their homes, can she afford a similar home?... Do they pay according to their own means and according to the needs of their pastor?... Do they pay enough not to breed resentment, and not so much as to breed feelings of superiority (99)?

This series questions can help build a better dynamic.

A broader understanding of negotiation types will benefit both pastor and board. Marks and Harold lay out five types of negotiating that can be used by either employee or decision makers, or both (373-74). Avoidance is a strategy of studiously avoiding discussion and minimizing it as much as possible when forced to engage. This can lead to hard feelings on all sides and an unhealthy culture of secrecy and resentment. An accommodating approach insists on the value of others’ positions and ideas and a devaluing of your own. This might seem like a Christian approach at first glance, but

devaluing one's gifts and the work God has for them (either by pastor or board) would be a mistake. It can be a beneficial tool where harm has occurred or a long-term pastorate is in the forefront of needs, but it should be used sparingly. A compromising attitude at the negotiating table seeks for a balance and for all concerns to be weighed carefully. It aims for a kind of centrist position: not under-valuing or over-valuing any take. This would represent a fair meeting of the minds in many cases, but it would be a failure if there are uninformed or unhealthy stances at the table. It also views everything as just being a sum of the parts. This method does not see greater possibilities. A fourth approach is called competing. In this style the parties are all jockeying to win and have their position be more highly valued than others. This can often lead to cajoling, heated arguing, un-truths, and domineering language. The research from the for-profit world shows that when utilized by the employee this approach often leads to the highest salary outcomes.

Collaborating negotiations would be the healthiest approach for pastor and church. This style of interacting seeks the best for oneself and other. Traditionally this might be called a win-win. It requires a clear sharing of information and perspectives and a willingness to listen with care to absorb what other parties are saying. The process can develop a synergy where outcomes are greater than the sum of the parts. Thus, the entire organization can flourish. This process can be time consuming, requires trust and attention to detail, and works best when everyone has skin in the game. Yet it has the best chances of combining seemingly disparate positions and creating new solutions.

Compensation differences between men and women in academic institutions are well documented. They tend to compound over the course of life-time earnings (Seligman et al. 283). A conference paper for women negotiating their first employment



contract with an academic institution suggests four specific areas for the women and the institutions, along with mentors, to focus on to help alleviate the pay gap (Selingman et al. 285). The first suggestion is to “reduce situational ambiguity.” Employees should clearly ask up front what items in a contract are negotiable and do their homework on what average salaries in the field are, especially at similar institutions. Institutions should be open about where there is room for changes and what items are fixed. They also must prepare their current students by exposing them in some way to the process. The next tip is to engage in “strategic niceness.” The authors warn that abandoning gender stereotypes may seem like sound advice, but it often backfires either because it raises anxiety in the employee and/or the interviewers. Instead the employee should deploy traits often connected with their gender carefully during the process and not abandon them altogether. Particularly helpful is rooting requests in a collaborative framework that shows how they will benefit everyone involved. Institutions and mentors should become aware of different negotiating styles that may come from candidates and that may emanate from decision makers. The next shift is into “strategic assertiveness.” This move is recommended for the middle of discussions, and not as a lead or concluding query or statement. It should be accompanied by research from similar institutions, so as to be clear that it is a grounded position. Institutions and mentors should train their students to use them as the foil that made the recommendation. They must also work to enable clarity around topics so mistaken understandings do not take root. Finally, they recommend a careful accounting of how negotiations are approached. For the employee a shift from talking to more listening, remembering that this is a chance to make an ask, not demand something, and writing out the way you hope the conversation will go. On the

institutional side they recommend re-evaluating who is engaged in the talks based on literature from the field, considering the priorities for the conversation ahead of time, and re-thinking the format for discussions.

While these recommendations are gender specific and related to academic institutions, there are many parallels for churches and clergy. Both church and academic institutions are almost always non-profit entities, and so have similar concerns about success not being simply driven by a profit motive. In addition, just as academic institutions have a long history of being male-dominated, so too do churches. Ingrained perceptions and practices from decades and centuries before must be accounted for and faced. Also, many of the classic “niceness” traits and expectations ascribed to women are often also expected of clergy, so these must be tempered and used carefully by both clergy and board.

A final recommendation comes from the work of Tellhed and Bjorklund. They confirmed other studies’ conclusions that women request lower compensation than men when the discussion about the compensation is seen as a gauge of their future performance (Tellhed and Bjorklund 191). Their study also showed the best way to mitigate the factors involved in this issue, which leads to larger pay gap problems after compounding over time, is for the candidate to work from a reservation salary. The employee should come into discussions with a salary floor in mind, and this is more effective even than setting top-end goals to work towards. This method of reservation salary is partly built-in to many denominational discussions due to minimum salary requirements. But it would behoove both pastors to enter discussions with clear base

expectations that are not set at a threshold where living expenses in the community are impossible to meet.

There are many factors to keep in mind throughout the salary setting process, for both pastor and board. The priorities will vary from community to community and church to church, as well as among pastors across different seasons of life. The decisions made in clergy compensation discussions must be seen as more than just an employment agreement. As Hudnut-Beumler writes, “In short, a church’s employment practices provide a living witness both to a congregation’s view of the world as it should be and its view of the world as it is” (96). The way pastors and churches handle discussions and decisions about money is an important stewardship question that involves a host of theological and practical questions.

### **UMC Policies**

The United Methodist Church came into existence in 1968 with the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The first UMC Book of Discipline, the compendium of church law that guides life together in the Connection and is revised and re-published every 4 years, was published in the same year. The 1968 version and the 2016 contain very few differences on topics of clergy compensation. They both include requirements of a minimum salary, instructions about who has authority in setting compensation, the possibility of standardized compensation policies, and requirements for information to be made public.

The UMC has always enforced a minimum salary for pastors employed at full-time status. The dollar figure for this salary is different in different regional Conferences, but the Conferences must set one. The 1968 Discipline called for a board of both clergy

and non-clergy to oversee the process of recommending and enforcing the Conference standards (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 1968* 252). In addition, the 1968 Book of Discipline allowed for variations to the minimum compensation based on variances in costs of living in the broad geographic regions, number of dependents, or other factors the Conference deems important (252). This practice is completely gone by 2016 when minimum salaries are set for the entire Conference and level the field for every pastor (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 279, 443).

The authority for setting clergy salaries runs through several phases before arriving at the final decision. It starts with the equitable compensation board at the Conference level providing advice to local churches about the process for setting pay packages (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 444). These advisory packages are not developed beyond the information about minimum salary, health insurance standards, and pension costs. The group has the authority to offer recommended salary ranges (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 444). But this optional task is rarely undertaken.

Within the local church the Staff-Parish Relations Committee is where the heavy lifting of discussion about pastoral salaries happens. Annually, it is the first body to discuss with the pastor the salary and make a recommendation about clergy salary (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 201). That recommendation is then shared with the Church Council, an elected body of church members including the chairs of all the committees (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 183). The Church Council then offers a recommendation to the charge conference (an annual gathering of the duly elected leaders of the church, often expanded to include all church members in good standing) of the local church, where a final vote can be taken with the District

Superintendent participating in any discussion and signing off on the final decision (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 177). In this three stage process, it is the first step, with the pastor and SPRC, where the most robust discussion happens. The 1968 Discipline follows a similar pattern of the SPRC making a recommendation to the Church Council, who then makes a recommendation to the annual charge conference, with the emendation of adding the Committee of Finance reporting a recommendation to the Church Council at the same time as the SPRC (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 1968* 84, 89).

The Book of Discipline contains provisions for the standardization of clergy compensation in both 1968 and 2016 (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 1968* 252; *The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 415). In 1968 there was even a variation that allowed a local church to pay their clergy person more than the standardized pay if their full pastoral support (health insurance, pensions, etc.) costs had been paid (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 1968* 253). Despite the inclusion of this possibility, the Great Plains Conference has not approved such a plan or even considered one on the floor of Conference. There is a historical precedent of a previous Conference (Kansas West) using this provision to try to create more equity for female clergy in compensation (<http://ee.umc.org/decisions/41909>).

Another important United Methodist practice is the public disclosure of all clergy compensation practices. The 1968 Discipline made clear that this information had to include salary and other benefits, like car and travel allowances, paid to the pastor and would be printed in the publically available journal of the Annual Conference (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 1968* 253). The 2016 Discipline continues this practice and

mandates that the information must be published in a consistent manner across Conferences (*The Book of Discipline of the UMC 2016* 417, 418, 559). The advent of the internet makes these documents all the more accessible and possible to cross reference. The Great Plains Annual Conference Journal is published on the Conference website each year for anyone who has an internet browser to review.

### **Research Design Literature**

A significant portion of this pre-intervention research was done to generate a full understanding of a current process, clergy salary setting discussions, that can then be used to design healthier processes. “The goal of phenomenological studies is to understand the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘who’, ‘how’, and ‘when’ of phenomena, so that we might draw inference and conclusions to explain and predict similar events in other contexts” (Winston 183). The revelation of what is all too often an opaque process is deeply needed. By not trying to develop a specific set of guidelines leading to a detailed formula for what the researcher thinks clergy salaries ought to be, the research avoids building a set of biases into the project that could turn off a number of participants. “The lack of a researcher-structured agenda creates a relaxed, conversational atmosphere necessary for eliciting narratives” (Sensing 90). The danger of compromising the research due to real but unexamined research biases in the structuring of questions must be alleviated. “It is not always easy to spot a leading question, but the use of emotive language or the way a question is put can influence respondents to answer questions in one way” (Bell and Stephen “Designing and Administering Questionnaires”).

One of the key parts of the research design used on this project that increases its reliability and validity is the use of mixed methods. By having three distinct groups,

SPRC chairs, pastors, and District Superintendents, results can be cross referenced to check for outliers, misunderstandings, and accuracy. One helpful point will be looking for what is not said. If there is a large gap in answers from one sub-group but not the others, it could be an indication of a significant problem in the clergy salary setting process. “One way to organize the data is to discuss the areas of significant overlap as themes or patterns, the areas of disagreement as slippage, and the ‘realities’ not represented in your findings as silences” (Sensing 197). Another correlation to look for is points of convergence among disparate perspectives, which offers increased validity to what is being discovered. “Theory triangulation-the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data” (Sensing 72).

In addition, this wider reach of the research means that it will be more useful in more places. “By selecting people who represent a broad range of perspectives, you increase the inclusivity of your project” (Sensing 83). This also complements the use of qualitative work alongside quantitative work. “When adopting qualitative methods, scholars draw on the observations from the data to introduce abstracted knowledge that can generalize beyond the specific contexts” (Jull et al. 1194).

### **Summary of Literature**

The scripture passages are discussed in-depth by the commentaries, but there seems to be a disconnect between the scripture passages and other writing on the topic of clergy compensation, as seen by the minimal references back to scripture in the other sources. This is a tendency to watch for in the research. The general lack of robust academic research on the clergy compensation setting process, the conversation between the board and the clergy person, suggests another place to be aware of a general lack of

consistency and thick engagement by boards and clergy. Two key-words that arose multiple times are comparison and collaboration. Looking for ways that those words are used or avoided is an important part of the research.

The four models discussed by Zech offer keywords and ways of thinking about the process of setting clergy salaries that can help categorize ideas. His specific explanation of a promotion tournament as the standard approach to clergy compensation is very helpful. The idea is that clergy are not directly financially compensated for success at their current church, but their success at their current church provides a platform to be promoted to a larger church with a larger compensation package.

Distinct United Methodist practices, like open itinerancy, bring a unique setting to the process of discussing clergy salaries. The dynamics of the appointment system should be kept in mind when reading any results. Authority and money mix together in odd ways, and the UMC Episcopal authority structure makes for a unique setting in which to have conversations about compensation between a pastor and SPRC.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter covers the research practices and procedures employed in the study. The selection of participants, reasons for their selection, and safeguards for their protection are all reviewed. It covers the design and reasons for the design of the questionnaires and interviews, along with explanations of how they are disseminated. The process for reviewing and parsing the collected data is detailed.

The chapter offers the material in a repeatable format, so that the study can be done again to confirm, clarify, or negate the original findings. These findings are cross referenced to the research questions and the way they interact with the purpose statement.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

This project is a pre-intervention review of current salary setting practices in the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The purpose is to discern the parameters and nature of current conversations around the clergy compensation setting process between pastor, local church board, and adjudicatory authorities. These conversations are often opaque to the larger church membership and frustrating for untrained and unprepared clergy and laity. But the current system has remained largely unchanged throughout the history of the denomination since the creation of United Methodism in 1968.

Finding answers to the three research questions and considering the data from a number of angles allows the researcher to gain new insights into what is currently happening, what is working, what is not working, and what is missing from clergy

compensation setting. This material could then be used to develop a strategy to improve the process for the sake of clergy, laity, and the mission. It could also be the foundation for future studies on the topic in a field where academic research has been lacking.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ #1. What are the practical and theological considerations for setting clergy salaries currently used by District Superintendents, Pastors, and Staff Pastor Parish Committees in the Great Plains Conference?**

This research question helps determine the base line for the variety of present practices for setting clergy salaries, opening the door to a less than transparent process. The first part of the research method is Questions 2 and 4-11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for SPRC chairs with full-time pastors. The next parts are Questions 2 and 4-11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for full-time Pastors. Finally, Questions 2-5 from the interview on Practices for Setting Salaries for District Superintendents speak to this RQ.

**RQ #2. What challenges are experienced in the setting of clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?**

This research question seeks to expose sore spots in the current process of clergy salary setting that may be hidden or unexamined and need to be healed. Questions 1-5, 8, 10, and 11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for SPRC chairs with full-time pastors speaks to this topic. Questions 1-5, 8, 10, and 11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for full-time Pastors brings another angle to this RQ. Also, Questions 1-3 and 5 from the interview on Practices for Setting Salaries for District Superintendents offer a well-rounded look by hearing from formal church leaders.

**RQ #3. What are the best theological and practical practices for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?**

This research question seeks to find the most helpful practices for setting clergy salaries. Questions 3, 4, and 6-11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for SPRC chairs with full-time pastors help to enlighten this topic. Questions 3, 4, and 6-11 from the questionnaire on Practices for Setting Salaries for full-time Pastors also offer a window into best practices. The interview on Practices for Setting Salaries for District Superintendents directly asks this with Question 6. Finally, a review of best practices from the relevant literature helps answer research question three.

**Ministry Context**

The ministry context for this study is the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church. The GPUMC is part of the global United Methodist denomination, variously considered both mainline and evangelical, encompassing a broad diversity of theological leanings within Christian Protestantism. It is guided and shaped particularly by the teachings and leadership of John Wesley, an eighteenth century Anglican priest, but also structurally designed in many ways to mirror the United States government having been born as a denomination during the founding of the United States. The UMC is a connectional church, meaning all UM churches within the geographic boundaries of a Conference are bound together under the oversight of a Bishop and share in time, talent, and treasure working toward the mission of the UMC “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” within their area.

Of particular note for the purposes of this study is the appointive system within United Methodism. Local churches do not call or hire their pastors, but pastors are

assigned by the Bishop on an annual basis. However, churches are responsible for setting and paying the salary of the pastor they are sent. This all means that churches not only share in mission and ministry together, but they also share clergy with one another.

The UMC is currently in state of turmoil over questions of polity and theology related to understandings of human sexuality, with a focus on homosexual marriage and same-gender sexual acts. These discussions have been happening for almost all of the denomination's existence, but there is a strong possibility that this will lead to a formal divide in the church. This has raised the anxiety for everyone involved and could have an impact in the way respondents answer questions.

The Great Plains Conference includes the states of Kansas and Nebraska. It was created by the merger of three Conferences (Kansas East, Kansas West, and Nebraska) in 2014. The Conference includes both significant urban areas and large swaths of very rural territory. Outside of the urban centers the rural areas are in population decline due to long-term farm consolidation (<https://www.kcur.org/season-2/2019-10-18/s2-episode-1-rural-problems-and-prospects>). Kansas in particular is experiencing a net of outgoing migration (<https://www.unitedvanlines.com/newsroom/movers-study-2018>). These factors have substantial impacts on resource and people allocations among churches and exacerbate long standing urban/rural divides. These divides likely impact the answers given to questions.

### **Participants: Criteria for Selection**

Full time pastors in the Great Plains UMC Conference were invited in order to get a broad sample size, while keeping some consistency in the respondents. They are all part of the same Christian denomination, and all go through a required annual process for

salary setting. They are in diverse communities in terms of demographics, but all are part of Midwestern US culture. The pastors have all been through a Conference designed process that vetted them for ministry within the Conference. The SPRC chairs come from an even wider array of backgrounds. But they share in being respected, elected leaders in local churches. They also must be leaders in the annual process of setting clergy salaries. The District Superintendents are major leaders in the Conference with significant oversight responsibilities. They are all ordained Elders in the same denomination, and were all selected for leadership by the Bishop of the Conference. In addition, they have all been through a denominational training specifically tailored for their leadership position.

### **Description of Participants**

The pastors in the study have been vetted by the Conference at different levels. They vary in educational backgrounds with some possessing Master of Divinity degrees and others having completed a denomination designed Course of Study program. All are under appointment and serve at the direction of the same Bishop. The pastors have served in pastoral roles for differing lengths of time. They include both male and female persons. All are legal adults over the age of eighteen. They come from various ethnicities.

The SPRC chairs in the study are both male and female. They are all legal adults over the age of eighteen. They have served for varying time periods on the committee, though they are elected for three-year terms to the committee and one year terms as chair. The length of their involvement in the local church varies, but they trend toward being long term members.

The District Superintendents are male and female. They are all legal adults over the age of eighteen. All have served as pastors for a significant number of years and are ordained Elders. They come from different ethnic backgrounds.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Money raises ethical considerations. In the US it is fairly unusual for individuals to speak openly about how much they earn, but pastor compensation packages are publicly voted on by the local church and published in Conference Journals. The discussions around how to set salary are also private and often done in closed door meetings as they deal with personnel issues. For these reasons confidentiality in must be maintained in responses. No names or exact locations will be gathered. Responses will be maintained behind password protected accounts, and will be destroyed within one year of the study. All participants were informed that they are free to leave the questionnaire or interview at any time with no negative consequences. "Once permission is given it can be withdrawn at any time, and the ethical researcher has no choice but to honor the request of a member who no longer wishes to participate" (Bailey 71-72). By maintaining this strong stance of giving the participant the ability to opt in or opt out and keeping responses confidential the research will maintain high ethical standards.

### **Instrumentation**

There are three instruments, two questionnaires and one interview, used for data collection in this research. The researcher designed all three instruments using language and ideas gleaned from the literature review. The instruments were then subjected to an expert review to test their ability to reliably and accurately provide information.

The expert review process yielded help in all stages of the instruments, from the demographic questions to the questionnaires and interviews. The broad foundations and themes of the material were affirmed. Editorial and grammatical corrections were made. No new questions were recommended. Substantive adjustments to multiple questions were needed.

Both reviewers recommended an adjustment to the question 3, the age bands question, in the demographics section. Because no one under the age of 18 is participating in the study it was recommended to shift from a 20 and under category to an 18 to 29 year band. An adjustment to question 5, the setting of the local church, was made due to a lack of clarity around the descriptors. It was changed to match the US Census Bureau descriptions of areas by population (50,000+ meaning urban, 50,000 to 2,500 meaning urban cluster, less than 2,500 meaning rural). Question 6, about the number of pastors on staff, was clarified to be referring to pastors serving full-time.

The Questionnaire for SPRC Chairs and the Questionnaire for Full-time Pastors contain the same 11 topical questions, with variations in the demographic information being collected. Question 1, about experience in setting salaries outside of the local church environment, needed to be reworded for clarity. It was both clunky and confusing. Question 2, about the final voting process for setting clergy salaries, needed specificity about distinctions between a Charge Conference and an All Church Conference. Questions 5, 10, and 11 were adapted to use a forced-choice Likert scale in order to prevent the overuse of a neutral answer. Questions 6 and 7 added an additional possible answer with a fill in the blank box. Question 9 raised the most issues. Familiarity with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral cannot be assumed, so additional wording was added to help the

respondent understand what was being asked. The differences between practical and theological underpinnings in questions 10 and 11 also needed some additional clarification to help respondents discern the difference between the questions.

The questions from the Interview with District Superintendents had fewer changes. Question 4 needed to be changed to make it clear the comparisons were with other salaries. Question 5 was narrowed to the most frequent topics. Question 6 was adjusted to look for positive influences rather than solutions to problems.

### **Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

The questionnaires and interviews employ mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, of data collection and analysis. Using mixed methods enables the research to offer a robust set of data that can be cross examined to see if there is alignment in responses and confirm the validity. “The in-depth and contextualized nature of the qualitative research results in better and more nuanced understandings of the setting and its participants than is possible with quantitative research” (Bailey 181). This type of research protects against failures in design and implementation.

The questionnaires and interviews have been tested to see if they align with the project, and been corrected when they do not, through an expert review. This should alleviate the problems noted by Bailey: “The lack of congruence between interview questions and research questions is common on early drafts, so I strongly recommend checking for correspondence” (104). In order to draw forth richer detail and a fuller picture of what is happening, the queries have been structured to avoid quick one word answers, while at the same time not becoming overly wordy and confusing the respondent leading them away from the point of the question, all as Bailey recommends



(102-3). The interviews contain significant necessary demographic description questions, but rather than lead with them the interviewer offered them at the end of the session (Bailey 103).

A repeat of the research in the Great Plains Conference might lead to different results, particularly among SPRC chairs as those individuals tend to only serve in that specific leadership position for one or two years. The responses of pastors and District Superintendents should be fairly static over a short period of time, but the landscape of Christianity and particularly United Methodism is changing rapidly in the United States. It would be fascinating to see if other Conferences, both inside and outside the Midwest, would have similar results, but that is a question beyond the scope of this research.

### **Data Collection**

The project is a pre-intervention study. The current process for setting clergy salaries is not well documented or consistent. This research seeks to make an exploration of the current process within the Great Plains UMC Conference (Bailey 4). It uses both qualitative and quantitative tools. As Creswell writes:

The process of [qualitative] research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (Creswell 4)

On the other hand, the quantitative side of the research offers some benchmarking that can be used to correct misunderstood answers to questions or revise and clarify those understandings.

The study contains two questionnaires and one set of interview questions that can be found in the Appendix. One of the questionnaires is designed to be answered by a lay person who is in the leadership position at the head of the board that sets the clergy person's salary. One of the questionnaires should be answered by the clergy person about their approach to discussions with the board. The interview questions are for regional judicatory leaders. They should all be shared and answered within a time frame of one month to help capture information at a similar point in time for all respondents. Analysis should then commence using keyword processing and cross-referencing.

Researcher awareness of their own placement in society vis-a-vis respondents is vital. "Just as your gender can work for or against you in complicated ways as you attempt to enter your research setting, so too can your chances be affected by your race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, social class, or other personal characteristics" (Bailey 67). On top of these personal reference points, the ongoing strife of denominational and local church politics must be taken into account.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed in a number of ways. Sensing's three analytical frames patterns (congruency), slippage (disagreements), and silences all came into use in understanding the results of the questionnaires and interviews (197). The researcher used SurveyMonkey's internal tools and data exported to Microsoft Excel to look for places where the same or similar things were said by different groups, and similarly where results did not align. This was particularly useful in looking at the clergy results compared to SPRC chair results since their questionnaire questions on the topic were the same. Cross referencing ideas from the literature review and looking for absences of

phrasing or ideas in the open-ended questions on the questionnaires and in the interviews was a way to look for silences on particular topics. The answers to open ended questions in the questionnaires were tagged by themes including phrases repeated internally to the answers, the topics shared in the interviews, and the literature review. This followed the guidance of Creswell: “Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (191). An additional task was taking the large number of word tags used in the coding of the different data sets and working to align them and group them by topical theme. The organization of the data was based on the instruction of Bailey. She writes, “When you undertake focused coding, you further reduce the data by identifying and combining the initial coded data into larger categories that subsume multiple codes” (129). Comparing and contrasting the results of the instruments, both quantitative and qualitative, allowed for finding variances within and between the three groups, as well as similarities.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter four details the results of the research study with the purpose of studying the theological and field-based rationale for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church in order to recommend best practices for Staff Parish Relations Committees and pastors. In order to achieve that goal, the chapter explains how the project answered the three research questions. What are the practical and theological considerations for setting clergy salaries currently used by District Superintendents, Pastors, and Staff Pastor Parish Committees in the Great Plains Conference? What challenges are experienced in the setting of clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference? According to the literature, questionnaires, and interviews, what are the best theological and practical practices for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?

The chapter opens by sharing the demographic information from the three distinct groups of participants: SPRC Chairs, Full-time Clergy, and District Superintendents. The results of the project then provides the results of the study that help answer the research questions. These items are shared in graphical formats and prose descriptions. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the five major findings of the study.

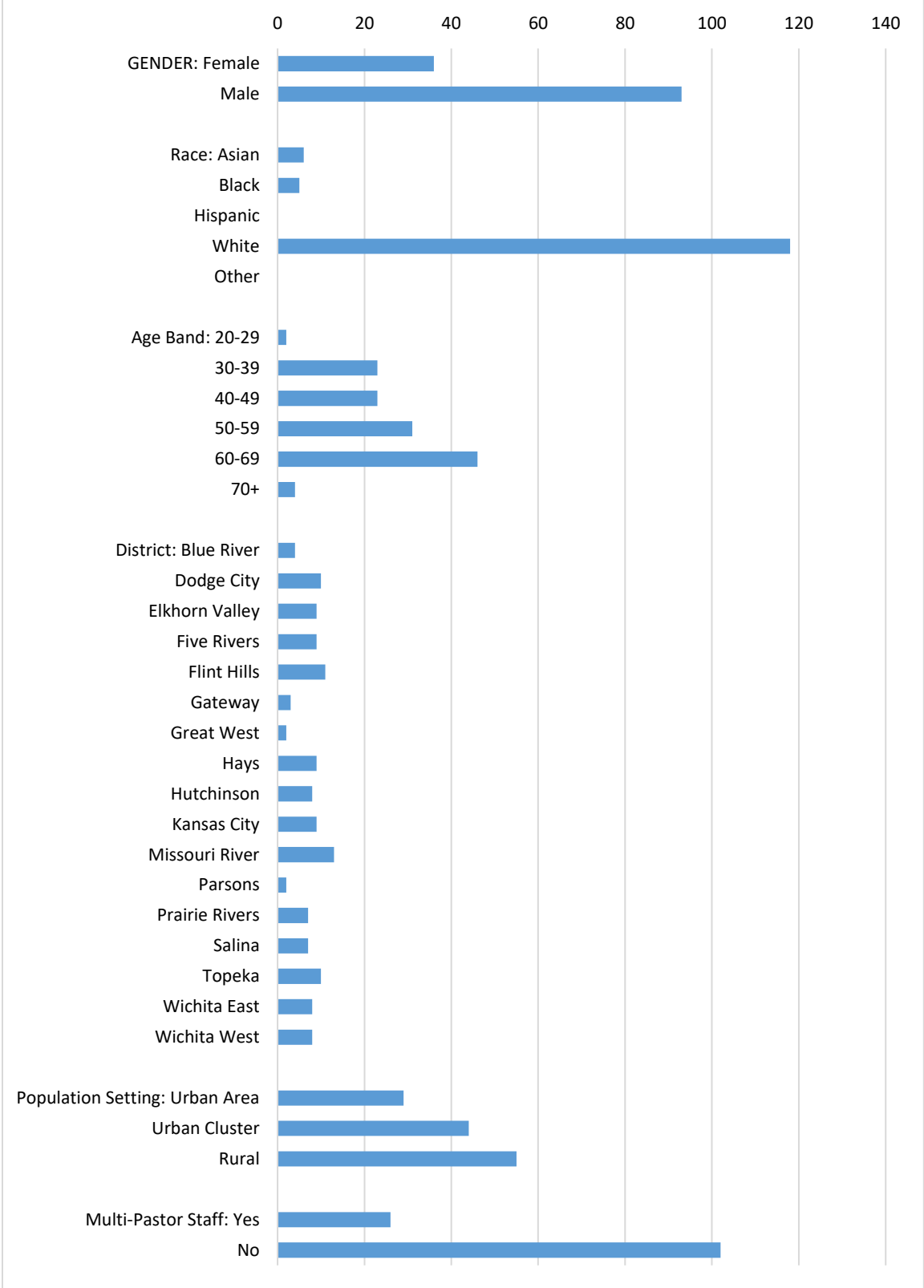
#### **Participants**

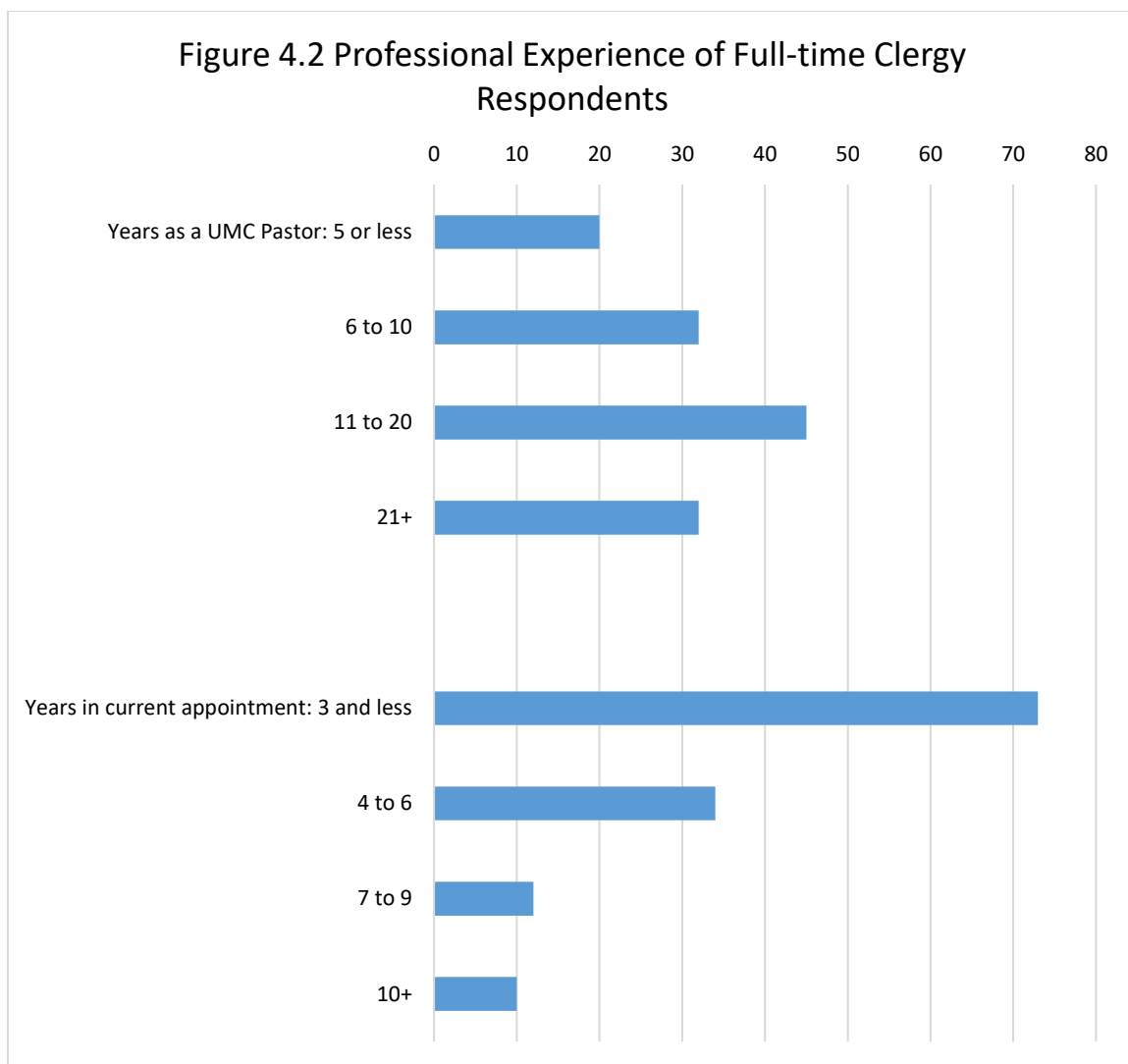
There are three distinct sets of participants in the study that was conducted in the fall of 2020. Pastors serving full time in churches in the Great Plains UMC Conference and Staff Parish Committee chairs of the churches they serve, lay people leading the

board that helps set a pastor's salary, received the opportunity to participate by filling out a one-time on-line questionnaire. The ten District Superintendents of the Great Plains UMC Conference were invited to participate by taking part in interviews by telephone. One hundred sixty-five clergy persons filled out questionnaires, and forty-three SPRC chairs filled out questionnaires. Six District Superintendents participated in phone interviews.

Of the one hundred sixty-five clergy participants, four were ruled out by answering no to the opening informed consent question. In addition, there were 32 skips on each demographic question, so 129 participants answered the demographic section of the questionnaire. The demographic results are in Figure 4.1. In addition to those demographics, some professional experience questions were included, and the results are displayed in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1 Demographics of Full-Time Clergy Respondents





The second set of participants in the study is Staff Parish Relations Committee chairs, the board responsible for making the primary recommendation on clergy salaries. Of the 43 participants, two were ruled out by the informed consent question, and eight skipped all of the demographic questions. The demographic results for the SPRC Chair participants are in Figure 4.3. The years of experience for the SPRC chairs in that particular position of leadership, and the current pastoral tenure are in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3 Demographics of SPRC Chair Respondents

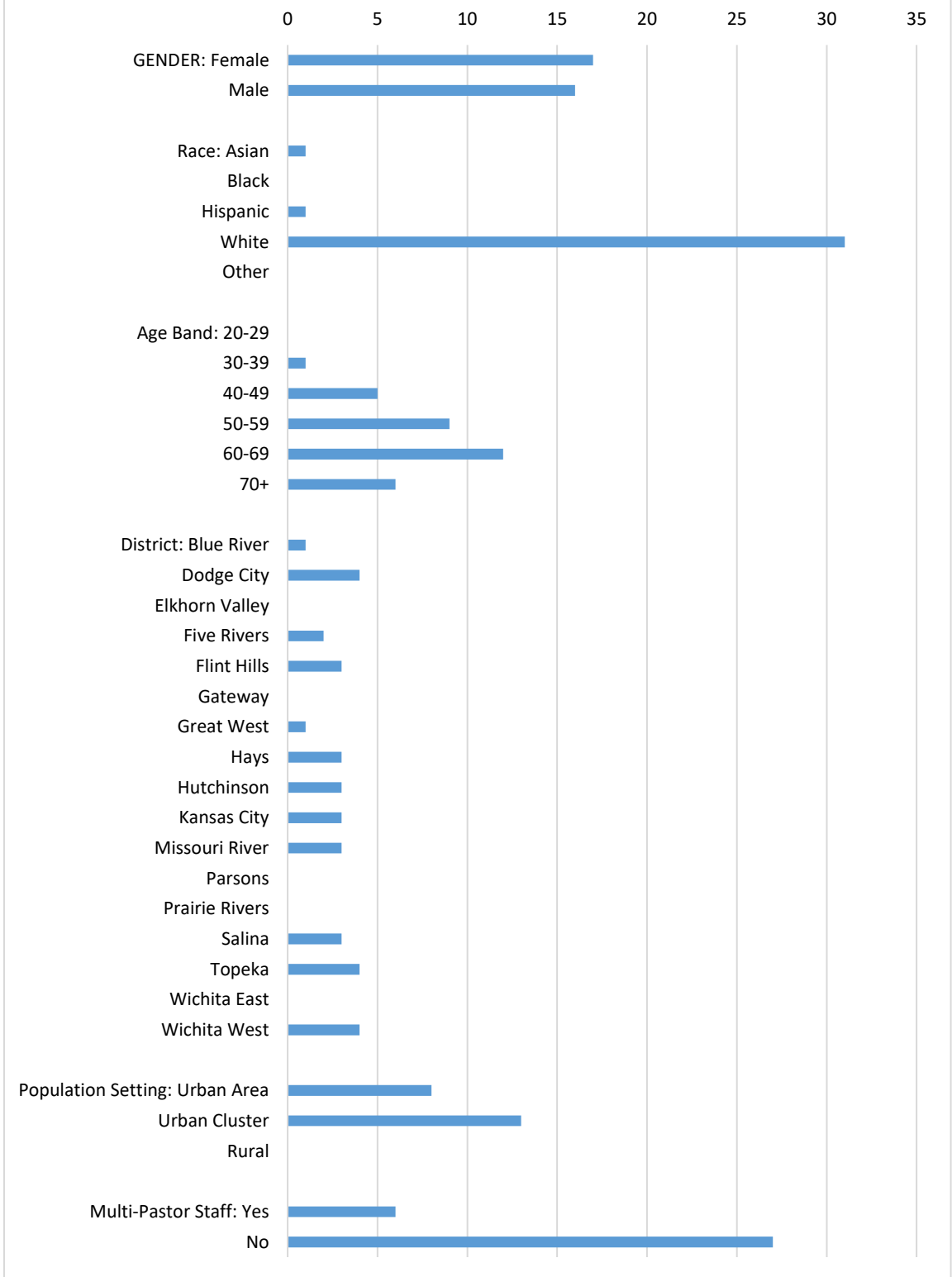
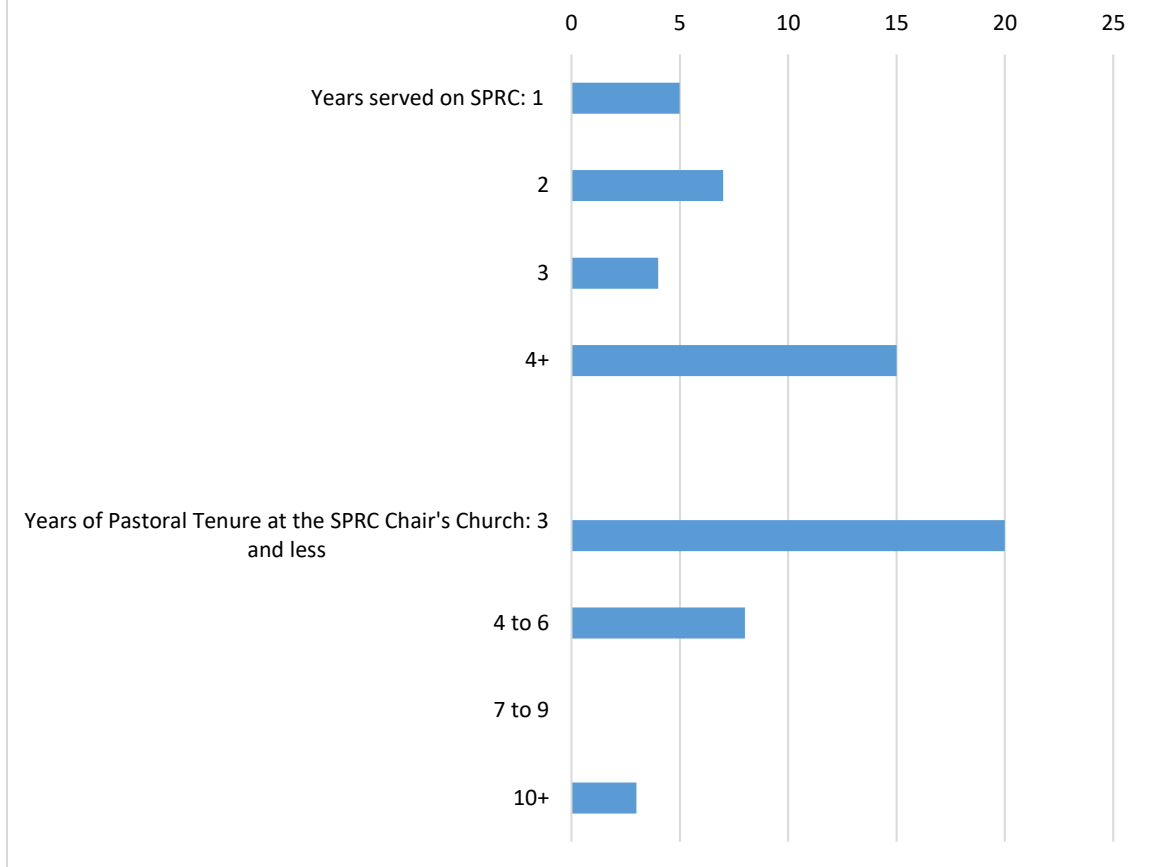
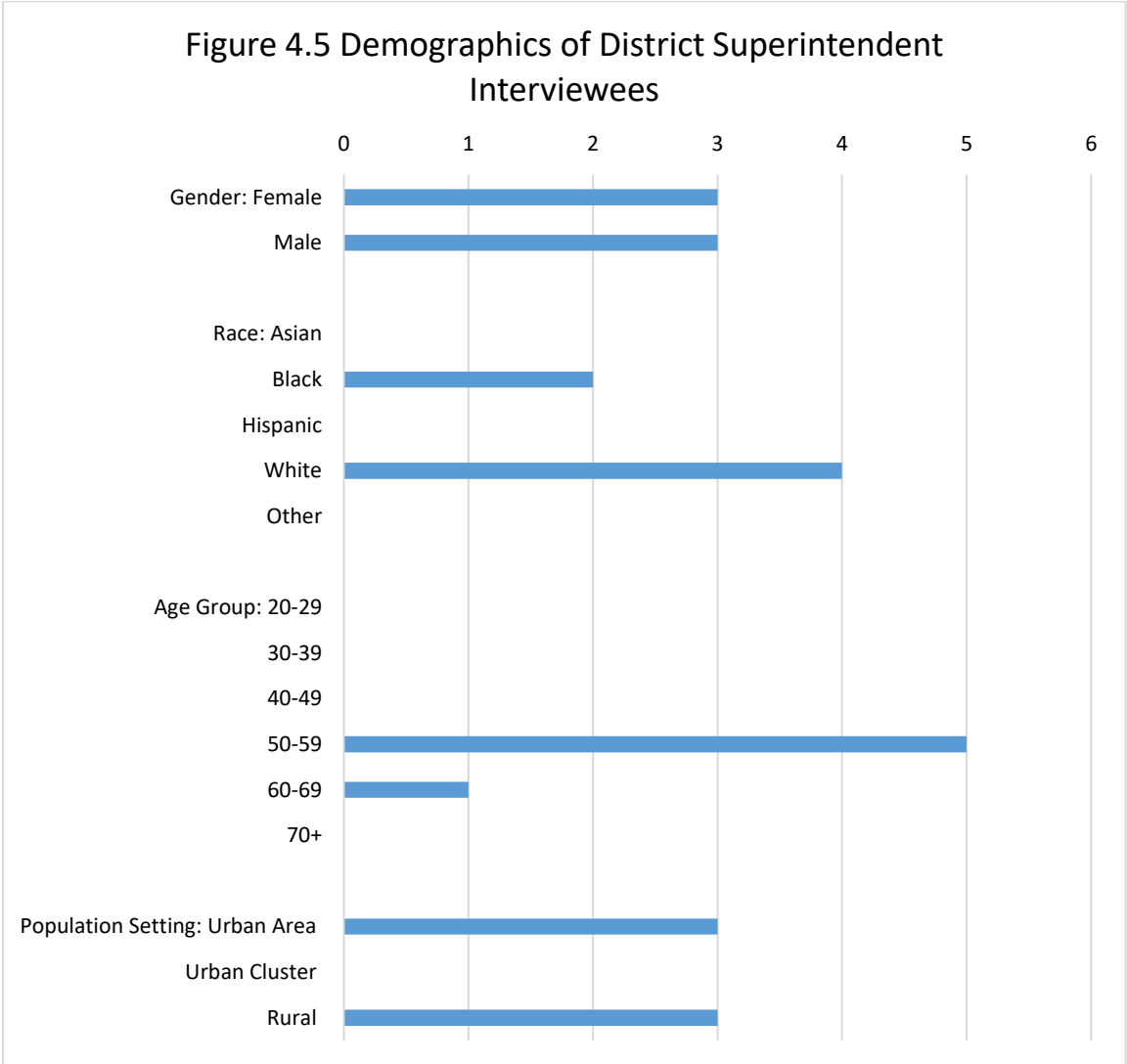


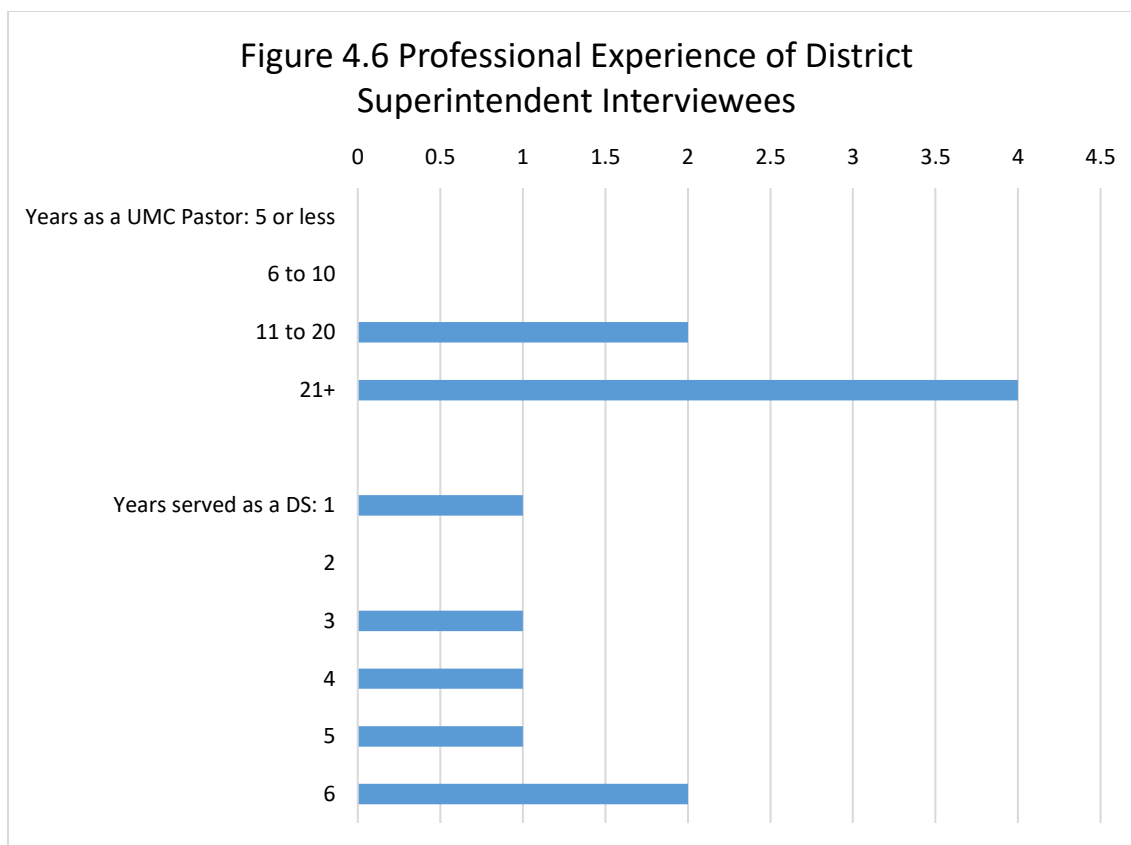


Figure 4.4 SPRC Chair Experience and Pastoral Tenure



The final group of participants are UMC pastors serving as District Superintendents. Six of the ten Great Plains District Superintendents participated in the phone calls. Their demographics are in Figure 4.5, and their professional experience is in Figure 4.6.





**Research Question #1: What are the practical and theological considerations for setting clergy salaries currently used by District Superintendents, Pastors, and Staff Pastor Parish Committees in the Great Plains Conference?**

**Description of Evidence**

The questionnaires for clergy and SPRC chairs contain identical questions, outside of the demographics. So, it is useful to take the answers to the surveys together, especially for elucidating differences and similarities. Question 4 asks about the process for finalizing clergy salaries in the local church. Figure 4.7 shows the responses of clergy, while figure 4.8 shows the responses of SPRC chairs.

Figure 4.7: (Clergy) Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference (with just the Administrative Council) or at an all-church conference (with all professing members)?

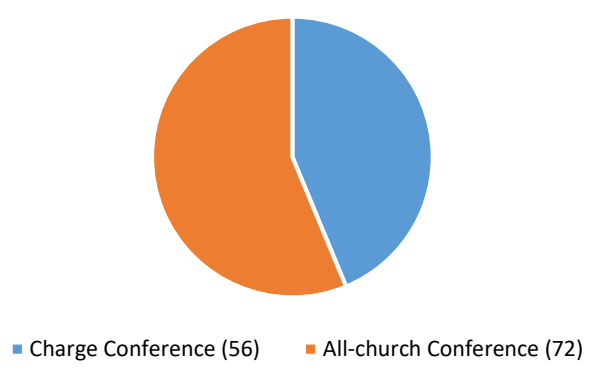
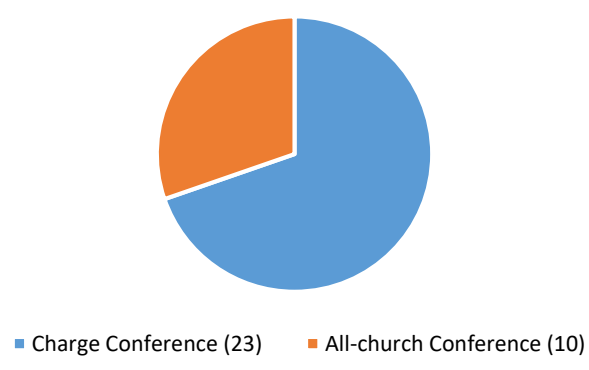


Figure 4.8: (SPRC Chairs) Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference (with just the Administrative Council) or at an all-church conference (with all professing members)?



Question 6 asks about the amount of time spent in the SPRC meeting discussing clergy salaries to make the formal recommendation to the local church about clergy salary for the coming year. The answers from full-time pastors are in Figure 4.9, and the SPRC chairs' answers are in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.9: (Clergy) How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session?

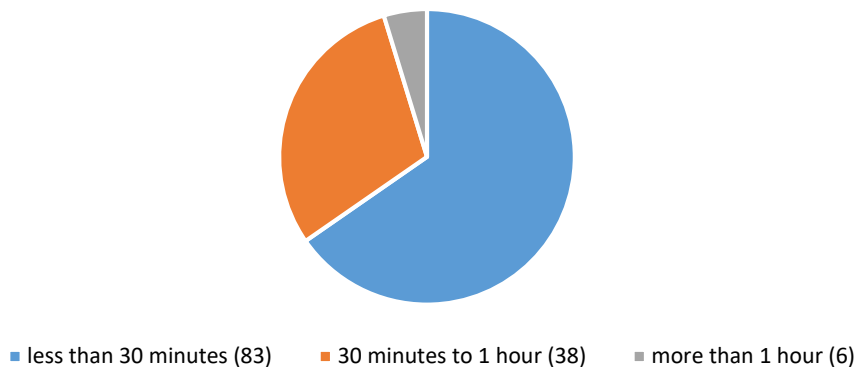
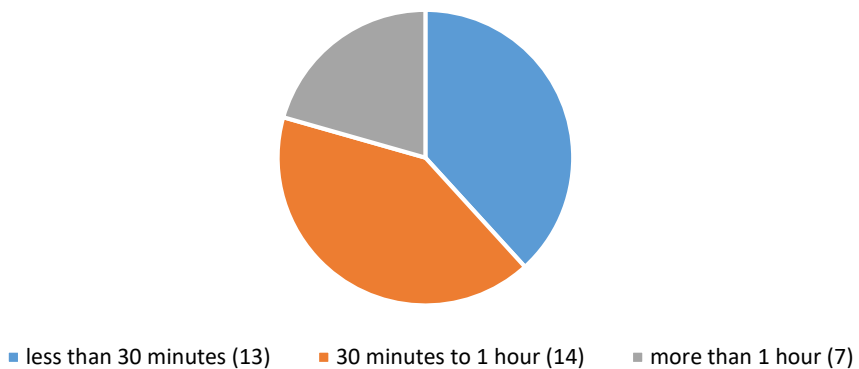


Figure 4.10: (SPRC Chairs) How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session?



Question 7 asks about the individual's comfort level in the discussions about setting clergy salary during SPRC meetings. Full-time pastors' responses are in Figure 4.11, and SPRC chairs' responses are in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.11: (Clergy) What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings?

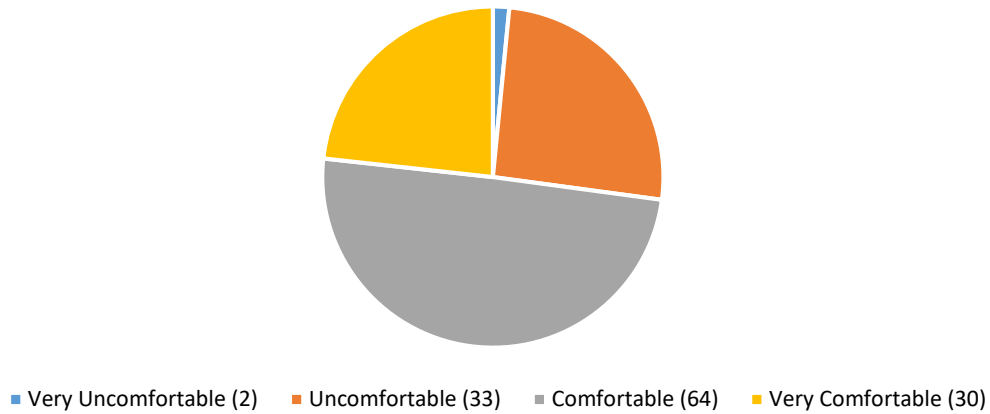
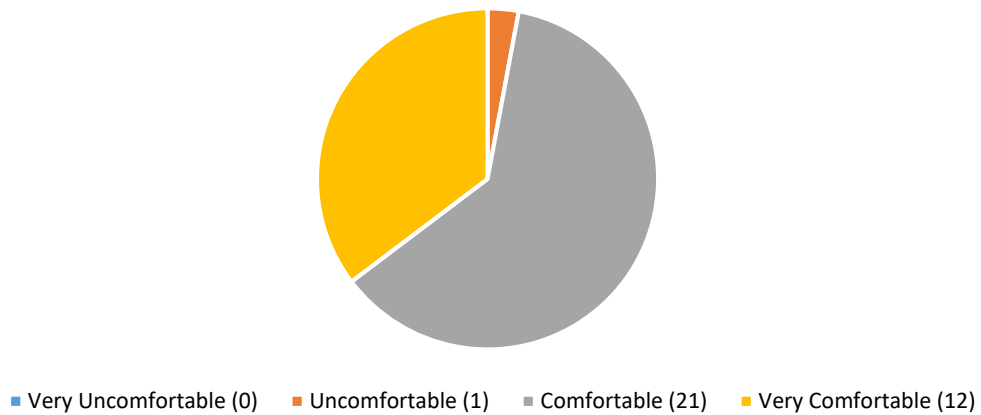


Figure 4.12: (SPRC Chairs) What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings?



Question 8 asked clergy and SPRC chairs to rank items commonly used for comparisons in setting clergy salaries. Table 4.1 contains the pastors' responses sorted by the most frequent first choice. Table 4.2 displays the SPRC chairs responses sorted by the most frequent first choice.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
pastor's compensation last year	97	14	5	5	3	0
none of these	12	10	4	3	2	47
comparisons to other United Methodist Churches	9	42	23	12	9	6
comparisons to other churches in the community	2	9	22	22	29	11
comparisons to other known salaries in the community (school employees, etc.)	2	15	20	31	17	9
comparisons to church members' income	0	14	18	20	36	11

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
pastor's compensation last year	21	6	2	0	1	0
comparisons to other United Methodist Churches	5	9	6	0	1	1
none of these	3	0	2	1	1	10
comparisons to church members' income	1	1	2	4	9	7
comparisons to other churches in the community	0	5	4	8	0	2
comparisons to other known salaries in the community (school employees, etc.)	0	3	5	5	5	3

Question 9 was also a ranked choice question, this time about a variety of factors that are used in discussion clergy compensation. Table 4.3 holds the pastors' answers with the most frequent first choice sorted to the top, and Table 4.4 holds the SPRC chair's answers with the most frequent first choice sorted to the top.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
health of the local church budget	58	44	12	1	1
Cost of Living Adjustment raises in the community	31	19	45	13	5
local church giving trends	26	43	31	5	2
none of these	10	3	7	4	53
discussion of clergy taxes	1	1	9	68	18

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
health of the local church budget	18	10	3	0	0
Cost of Living Adjustment raises in the community	8	4	11	3	4
local church giving trends	6	11	7	2	0
none of these	1	0	1	1	12
discussion of clergy taxes	0	5	2	12	8

Question 10 offered an open-ended response opportunity. A word tagging approach was utilized. There were seventy responses from clergy participants. 18 key words were identified among the pastors' responses. The tags brought up more than once were 22 mentions of the Conference minimum salary standards, 10 mentions of merit based review, 8 mentions of the local church's financial health, 4 mentions of a request made by the pastor, 3 mentions of church attendance, 3 mentions of the economy, 2

mentions of the health of the local church in general, 2 mentions of the education level of the pastor, 2 mentions of the time between raises, and 2 mentions of the compensation relationship internally with other church staff members. There were eighteen responses to Question 10 from SPRC Chair respondents. 10 key word tags were used among those respondents. Of the tags applied more than once, 7 mentions of merit based review appeared, 2 mentions of the local church's financial health, and 2 mentions of the Conference minimum salary standards. In addition to the three multiple mentions by SPRC chairs that all correspond to at least one mention in the pastors' responses, other items of overlap, including single mentions, are local church attendance, the economy, the pastor's personal finances, and requests made by the pastor.

Question 11 asked about discipleship practices involved in the discussion around setting clergy salaries. These were set up as a ranked choice series. Table 4.5 contains the responses of full-time clergy with the most frequently ranked first item at the top of the listing. Table 4.6 shows the answers of the SPRC chairs with the highest ranked item at the beginning of the list.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth	Tenth
gathering together to speak openly	42	34	18	4	6	0	1	0	1	0
prayer	25	15	17	12	11	2	5	3	0	0
review of the role and expectations of a pastor	23	32	23	13	5	4	1	3	1	1
use of tools developed by the UMC	19	6	17	11	6	3	10	10	5	1
reflection on scripture about money	3	11	4	10	18	14	8	3	1	0
reflection on scripture about paying religious leaders	1	1	5	9	15	23	11	2	3	1
fasting	0	0	1	3	2	3	8	8	9	31
discussion of the example set to the wider community	0	4	6	10	12	9	15	10	6	0
use of tool developed by non-UMC faith groups	0	0	2	5	3	3	7	19	19	11
review the impact of past compensation practices on marginalized people (especially by race and gender)	0	1	2	2	3	6	2	10	23	29

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth	Tenth
review of the role and expectations of a pastor	12	10	6	1	2	0	0	1	1	0
prayer	9	8	4	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
gathering together to speak openly	9	4	7	2	5	2	1	0	0	0
reflection on scripture about money	2	2	3	3	4	3	5	1	1	1
reflection on scripture about paying religious leaders	0	0	3	3	3	8	1	5	1	0
fasting	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	3	4	11
discussion of the example set to the wider community	0	2	2	7	1	4	2	5	0	1
use of tools developed by the UMC	0	4	4	2	7	0	5	2	1	0
use of tool developed by non-UMC faith groups	0	0	0	2	1	4	2	5	9	1
review the impact of past compensation practices on marginalized people (especially by race and gender)	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	3	7	13



Question 12 asked for responses about the use of what is often described as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The participants were asked to pick which one of the four parts was the main driver in clergy compensation discussions. Answers from full-time clergy are in Figure 4.13, and answers from SPRC chairs are in Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.13: (Clergy) Primary usage of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in discussing the setting clergy compensation

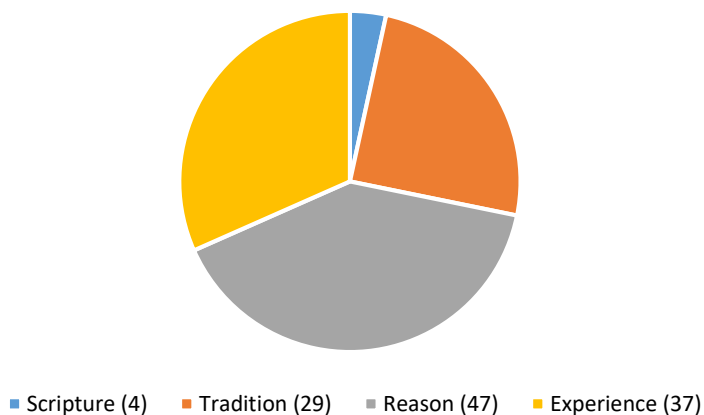
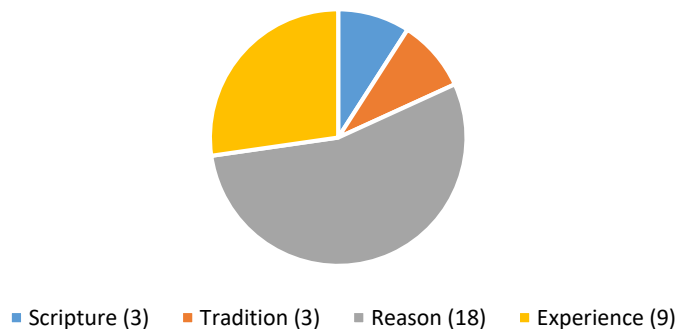


Figure 4.14: (SPRC Chairs) Primary usage of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in discussing the setting clergy compensation



Question 13 asked about the health of the clergy compensation discussion from a practical perspective. Clergy responses are in Figure 4.15, and SPRC chair responses are in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.15: (Clergy) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in practical terms.

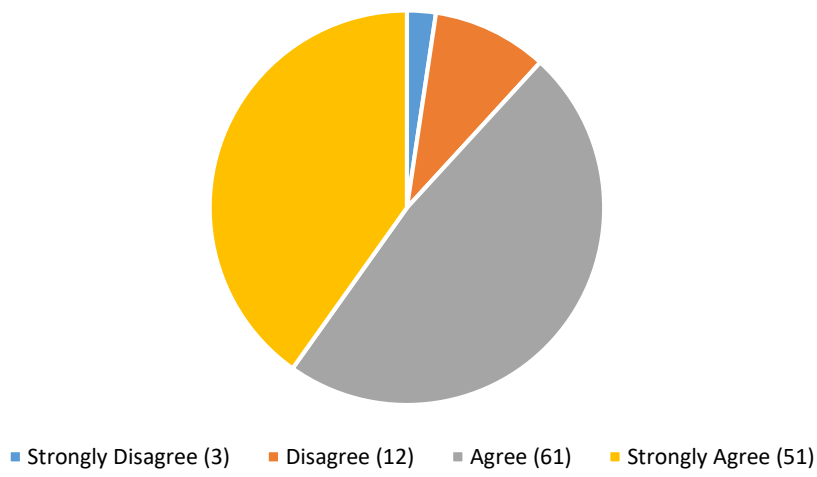
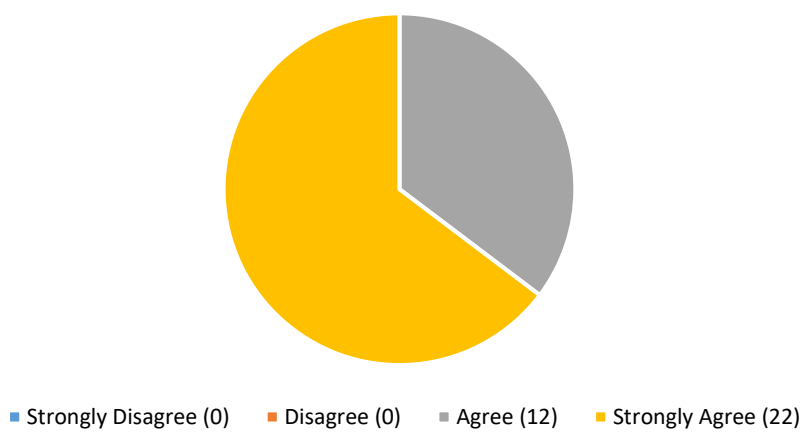


Figure 4.16: (SPRC Chairs) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in practical terms.



Question 14 is similar to Question 13 in asking about the most recent clergy compensation setting discussion but asks about grounding of the conversation in biblical and theological principles. Figure 4.17 shows the clergy responses, and Figure 4.18 displays the SPRC chair responses.

Figure 4.17: (Clergy) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in theological terms.

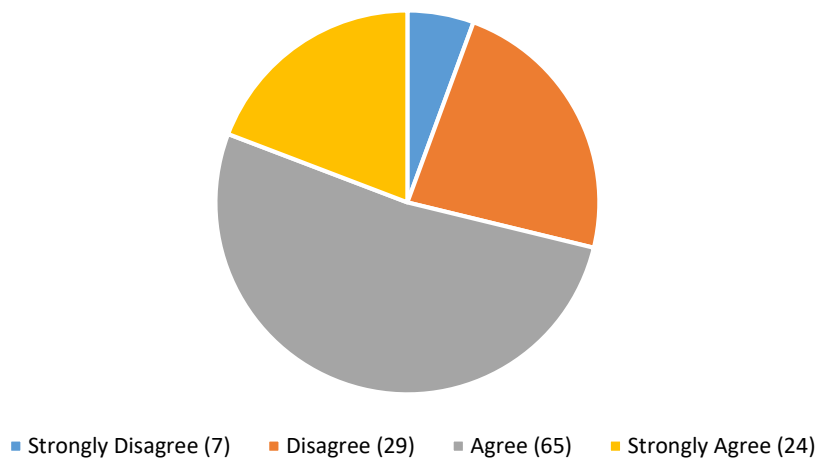
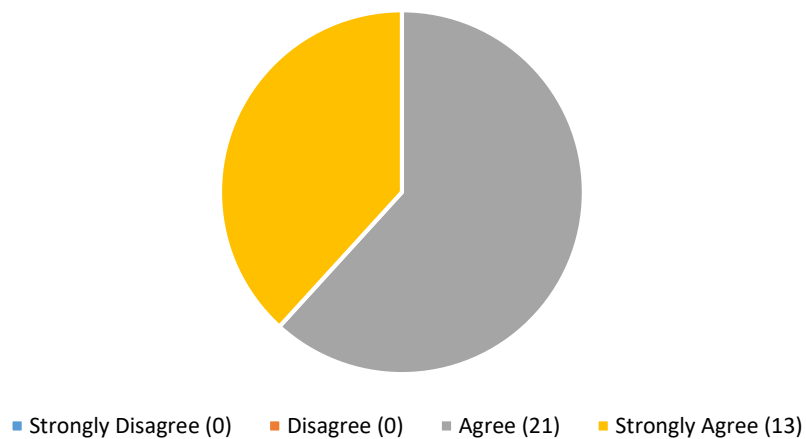


Figure 4.18: (SPRC Chairs) The most recent clergy compensation discussion was healthy in theological terms.



Question 15 offered an open-ended response forum for the topic of clergy compensation conversations. There were 59 responses by full-time clergy to Question 15. Of the items mentioned more than once, church financial health was mentioned 15 times, Conference minimum salary standards were mentioned 10 times, the Covid-19 pandemic was referenced 9 times, terms for a non-spiritual process came up 6 times, the previous year's pastoral salary was mentioned 5 times, merit based review came up 4 times, the

pastor being excluded from the conversation was mentioned 4 times, cost of living adjustments were mentioned 3 times, experience level of the pastor was mentioned 3 times, the total spending on staff was mentioned 3 times, the influence of the District Superintendent was mentioned 2 times, the health insurance allowance came up 2 times, and the recommendation of the pastor came up 2 times. The SPRC chair respondents added 12 responses to the open ended question. Only church financial health was mentioned more than once, appearing 2 times. In addition to that item, there were several items that were mentioned that overlap between the two groups, even though they did not receive multiple mentions by one or both groups of respondents. Those items include: conference minimum salary standards, the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy, the health insurance allowance, and prayer.

### **Interview Responses**

In addition to the questionnaires, several of the questions from the District Superintendent interviews have bearing on this research question. Question 2 in the interview asked about questions District Superintendents receive related to the theology of setting clergy salaries. All six responded with some variation on the theme: none.

Question 3 asked about practical questions that come to the District Superintendents desk related to setting clergy salaries. Three of the District Superintendents noted requests to confirm the minimum compensation amounts. Five out of the six mentioned concerns about financial stress at the local church and working with the church to decide if they could continue to afford a full-time pastor. Two of the interviewees brought up requests to help work through questions related to housing in the pay package and the impact of parsonages vs housing allowances and adequacy. Two

Superintendents discussed questions they field about what similar churches are paying. Two offered regular encouragement to offer pastors raises to recognize the good work being done.

In Question 4 the District Superintendents were asked what, if any comparisons they recommend churches and clergy consider when setting salaries. Three District Superintendents mentioned the need to use the minimum salary guidelines as a comparison tool. Three of the answers included salary packages at churches of similar size and community type. Two of the Superintendents mentioned how “difficult” finding accurate comparisons are.

Question 5 requested the District Superintendent reflect on the difficulties encountered during conversations setting clergy salaries. Two said they had not encountered any difficulty of significance. Two discussed the difficulties that can arise during pastoral transition. On this topic DS4 pointed out that just because a pastor is new to you (a local church) does not mean they are new to being a pastor. Veteran pastors receive new appointments, just like new pastors. Complications with multi-church circuits were mentioned a combined three times in response to this question and Question 4. This pointed to new alignments or new financial realities, often meaning decreased resources at one of the charges on the circuit, being pain points.

**Research Question #2: What challenges are experienced in the setting of clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference?**

**Description of Evidence**

Questionnaire Questions 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, and 15 referenced in response to Research Question #1, also offer some insight into Research Question #2. In addition to those, Questions 3 and 5 are brought to the discussion of this Research Question.

Question 3 for full-time pastors and SPRC chairs asked about the respondents' level of experience in setting salaries outside of the local church setting. The answers from clergy are in Figure 4.19, while the answers from the SPRC chairs are in Figure 4.20. A majority of clergy do not have this kind of experience, but a strong majority of SPRC chairs do have it.

Figure 4.19: (Clergy) I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual's compensation proposal.

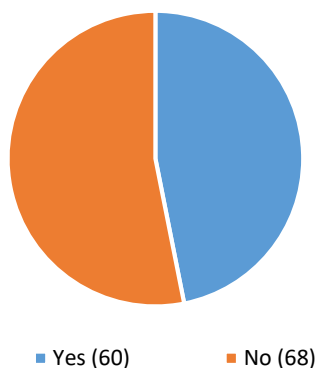
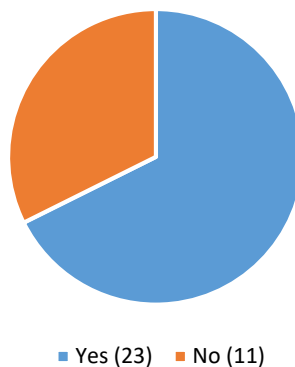


Figure 4.20: (SPRC Chairs) I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual's compensation proposal.



Question 5 asks respondents to share if they have gotten any guidance from the Conference or District on the clergy compensation setting process. Figure 4.21 contains the responses of clergy participants, and Figure 4.22 shows the responses of SPRC chairs. Strong majorities of both clergy and SPRC chairs have not gotten training or resources on handling the compensation discussion from the Conference or District.

Figure 4.21: (Clergy) Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation?

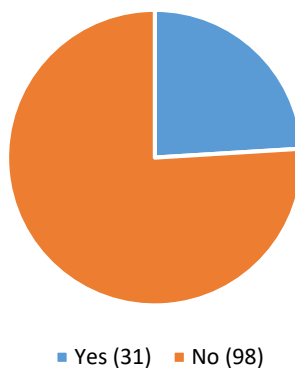
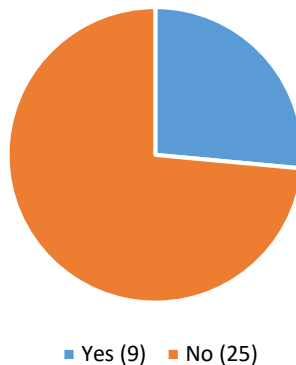


Figure 4.22: (SPRC Chairs) Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation?



Question 2, 3, and 5 from the District Superintendent interviews are reported in Research Question #1 evidence, and those answers are also applicable to this question. Question 1 from the interviews asked the District Superintendents about frequency and types of questions they receive from churches they oversee, expecting those questions to reveal fairly serious difficulties if the rise to the need of a Superintendent response. Three said there were almost never substantive questions beyond clarifying the minimum compensation guidelines, one said around 10% of churches ask questions, and two reckoned the questions to come from 40%. Of the questions asked, they almost entirely relate to churches in financial distress or experiencing a pastoral transition.

**Research Question #3: According to the literature, questionnaires, and interviews, what are the best theological and practical practices for setting clergy salaries in the**

### **Great Plains Conference?**

#### **Description of Evidence**

The Full-time Clergy and SPRC Chair Questionnaire Questions 5, 6, 8-15 all are helpful in answering this Research Question. The responses are detailed in the above



discussion. But Questions 8-12 should be particularly highlighted. While they do not ask about the efficacy of practices, the prevalence of practice gives a good idea of what can be helpful, especially when considering the majority of pastors and SPRC Chairs rated the process as healthy. These practices should form a set of basic foundations upon which more can be built, but these should be starting points in most conversations.

Question 8 asked for ranked options when looking for salaries to compare the pastor's to during the discussion of a pastor's compensation. More than 78% of the clergy respondents ranked the previous year's salary as the top item. An even 70% of SPRC chair participants made the same choice. Consideration of the starting point for discussions in most cases was clearly the previous year's compensation package. The most frequently chosen item for second in importance, though the number of participants choosing it dipped below 50%, was comparisons to pay packages at other United Methodist Churches. More than 41% of clergy chose this option as number two, and more than 40% of SPRC Chairs chose it as number two. No other choices had more than 30% of participants selecting it for comparison usage. It is worth noting that more than 15% of clergy respondents and more than 17% of SPRC Chair respondents selected none as their first option. Clearly a minority group, of both clergy and SPRC Chairs, finds little value in using comparisons in the discussion about setting a pastor's salary.

Question 9 asked respondents to identify another set of factors for discussion in clergy salary setting conversations in a ranked order. The clergy respondents rated the health of the local church budget as the top item, but by a bare majority of 50%. Their second choice was local church giving trends by slightly more than 40%. The SPRC chair respondents also chose the health of the local church budget as a priority item for

discussion with 58% picking it. The second choice of this group was also local church giving trends with 42% making it their number two selection.

Question 10 was an opportunity for open ended response asking for other factors not listed in the prior two questions that are used in clergy compensation discussions. Only three items were mentioned multiple times by the SPRC Chair respondents. With a strong showing of 7 different mentions, ideas related to merit/goals-met was the most common. References to the local church's financial health and the Conference minimum compensation standards came up 2 times each. The full-time clergy respondents offered a much broader array of answers. 22 comments connected with the Conference minimum compensation standards, while 10 brought up statements that touched on meeting goals and merit. The local church's financial health was mentioned 8 times. The pastor's recommendation was referenced 4 times, while the economy and church attendance showed up 3 times each. Four items were brought up 2 times, they include the health of the local church, the education level of the pastor, how long it had been since the last raise received, and the pay packages of other staff.

Question 11 shifted the focus to faith practices that were engaged in around the discussion of clergy compensation, once again in a ranked order of possible selections. Among the SPRC Chairs nothing received a majority of selections for the most important. The highest vote getters for most important were "review of the role and expectations of the pastor" with 36%, "prayer" with 32 %, and "open conversation" with 30%. Out of 34 respondents nothing else got more than 4 votes for any of the first three options in the ranked choice system. Similarly, the pastors did not offer a majority winner for the ranked choice selections. "Gathering to speak openly" was the most popular

choice, but only achieved 39%, while prayer with 27% and role and expectations of the pastor with 21 % again came in as the most popular other choices, both for most important and for second and third most important. The only other significant item was “use of tools developed by the UMC.”

Question 12 asked respondents about their practice of discussing clergy compensation with reference to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The overwhelming response of SPRC Chairs was the “Reason” section being primary with 54% of the selections. 27% rated “Experience” as the primary emphasis. Pastors were much more divided. 40% selected “Reason,” but 31% selected “Experience” and 24% selected “Tradition.”

The District Superintendents who were interviewed were directly asked about useful comparisons to bring up in the salary setting conversation (question four) and the general best practices they recommend (question six). A number of their responses fall into the category above that might best be described as a fully open and honest conversation. They include the following: being aware of seminary debt, understanding the breadth of a pastor’s responsibilities especially those often hidden from view, the actual changing cost of living in the community, whether the pastor can afford to be a tither, and the unique tax situation that clergy fall into. The comments about comparisons frequently mentioned the compensation relationship to the Conference minimum standards, other UMCs of similar size and community demographics, and being careful if using comparisons to have more than one. In the larger picture of the local church the District Superintendents encouraged conversations with the Finance Committee and awareness if a major giver was lost. The long-term implications of the conversation and decision need to be considered, and not just a narrow vision of the next twelve months.

These were all summed up and expanded when one interviewee said “communicate, communicate, communicate.”

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The study came to five major findings shared here.

1. SPRC chair respondents think the discussion around setting clergy compensation is going very well, while some clergy respondents struggle with the process.
2. Guidance from the Conference carries enormous weight but is lacking beyond the setting of minimum salaries.
3. The discussion around setting clergy salaries is seen as largely a practical exercise, and not a theological, biblical, or discipleship-oriented practice.
4. The female clergy respondents were more comfortable with the process than their male colleagues.
5. Making quick or broad changes to the system is not advised due to the strong majority of clergy and SPRC chairs comfortable with the current processes.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

The final chapter of this dissertation covers the important discoveries in the research, the ways those findings could apply to the practice of ministry, some of the limiting boundaries of the work, and general conclusions. Questions about how to go about the process of setting clergy salaries have varied and frequently contradictory answers, and these can lead to angst for clergy and lay boards working to set salaries. The purpose of this research is to study the theological and field-based rationale for setting clergy salaries in the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church, in order to recommend best practices for Staff Parish Relations Committees and pastors. The five major findings of the research help elucidate current practices around clergy salary setting in the Great Plains Conference. They also lead to a number of recommendations for ministry practice. But there are some limits to the study, some that were anticipated, and some that were surprising.

#### Major Findings

##### **SPRC Chairs like the current format, but full-time clergy are mixed**

As I discussed and shared the topic of my research with others, I found that my peers were exceptionally keen that this kind of work get done, though they didn't want to do it themselves. On the other hand, laity responded in more measured ways with some interest and encouragement that the work be done, but never seemed especially excited about it. Given my own position as a clergy person, I was in the camp of being excited about the work getting done. I had some personal blinders about the interest of laity in the

topic. The research exposed this by showing a complete approval of the SPRC chairs in the process of setting salaries, compared with mixed results from clergy as they reflected on the process. This can be seen in the results from Questions 13 and 14. In answers to Questions 13 and 14, 0% of SPRC chairs selected strongly disagree or disagree. In answers to Question 13, 11.8% of the clergy respondents selected strongly disagree or disagree. In answering Question 14, 28.8% of the clergy respondents selected strongly disagree or disagree. My dissertation advisor pointed out that the difference in positions of power in the negotiations tilted in favor of the SPRC chairs. This is further emphasized by the demographics showing the SPRC chairs to fall into higher age brackets than clergy. SPRC chairs also, on average, have more experience in salary discussions than pastors in general, along with experience in compensation setting practice outside of a local church.

In reviewing the literature there are a number of places that speak about this discrepancy. Hudnut-Beumler writes about the break-down that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s when clergy salaries flat-lined, then dropped, relative to the expectations that were placed on clergy. This could help explain laity getting more bang for their buck, while clergy are wrestling to remain in the middle-class, and the divide between their perceptions of the process. Holck explains this issue continues today as churches expect more from a leader than they are willing to pay for. This shift leads to increased struggle among the clergy as they seek to be remunerated appropriately.

Zech discusses a promotion tournament as the model most helpful in understanding clergy employment. The goal of the pastor is not to get paid more right now at the current job but to achieve successes so that the pastor will receive a job at a

larger church that pays a higher salary. This model benefits both clergy and laity as it ties what is seen as successful ministry to income without creating a direct bonus structure or something similar. But this is not the best way to understand clergy compensation in United Methodism due to the appointment system, where-in a pastor and a church are not free to not choose one another. However, echoes certainly exist where the pastor can look for more responsibility through a larger appointment that frequently comes with faithful success, and the church will want to pay a pastor well who is producing that faithful success. Most of the pressure remains on the pastor in this sense, because the appointment system may or may not offer an opportunity for advancement so convincing a local church to pay appropriately can be daunting, especially if their resources are close to a limit. This falls in line with the questionnaires discovering SPRC chairs being satisfied with the current system and clergy having more mixed reactions, since the pressure in a promotion tournament is on the employee. Holck and Burns both recommend seeking for adjustments and clarity in the system to move toward more of a win-win situation. This will require an openness in discussing what entails success and fruitfulness, and acquiring information before the formal meeting about denominational and conference compensation along with community income statistics.

The biblical framework for paying clergy offers a couple of insights into this finding. The clarity of instructions in the Old Testament for providing for the needs of priests and Levites was direct, clear, and detailed. There was never meant to be pressure on the priests to negotiate. This level of openness and clarity mirrors recommendations from Holck and Burns that will aid in healing the gap between clergy and SPRC chairs' comfort levels with the current process. While on the other hand, the expectation in the

New Testament was that the local community would know what to do in providing for pastors allows for more variation based on setting. But the danger of allowing for variation can lead to problems, as Horsley points out, where money can become a coercive tool used by patrons over their instructors. Authority must be used carefully, and the imbalance in power between laity and clergy in the process, showing up in their responses to satisfaction with the process, authenticates Horsley's concern.

**The Conference has a great deal of influence, but does not leverage it significantly**

As a clergy member of the Great Plains Conference, and one of its predecessor Conferences—Kansas East, I am aware that there is not significant guidance from the Conference about how to have the conversation about setting clergy salaries. We briefly talked about it in one session of our residency program. Therefore, the answers to Question 5 on the questionnaires showing that the overwhelming majority of pastors and SPRC chairs had not received any training or tools for having the conversation were not surprising. At the same time, the Conference wields enormous influence on financial matters. Setting minimum compensation rates is the most prominent role, and it often features some discussion time on the floor of the Annual Conference. Many, many responses to this study featured a mention of the minimum compensation. All sides seem very aware of it and work to stay abreast of changes. The 36 total mentions by clergy and SPRC chairs of Conference minimum salary standards in the open-ended responses Questions 10 and 15 far out-stripped the 27 mentions of the next closest item, local church financial health. Conference minimum salary standards were also mentioned 17 different times in the District Superintendent interviews, in a variety of contexts. Despite



this, 76% of clergy say they have received no training or resource tools for the clergy compensation setting process, and 73.5% of SPRC chair respondents say the same thing.

The Conference is looked to for guidance, but it has chosen not to offer detailed guidance, perhaps in an attempt to avoid micro-managing and leaving freedom to account for variations in different cultural settings across the Conference. The answers from five of the six District Superintendents to Question 4 in the interviews included some variation on the theme that comparisons to similar churches were important, but it was not possible to do a one-to-one comparison because settings were distinct, indicating a preference for this localized freedom. The very fact that so many respondents both mentioned the minimum salary guidelines while so many respondents also said the Conference had not offered them tools to have the discussion points to a disconnect. An additional place the Conference could offer some guidance is a short primer on clergy taxes and helping lay members of the committee understand the complications. Three different District Superintendents mentioned confusion about clergy tax situations among laity and clergy. Every clergy person's tax situation is different, but there are some helpful broad brush strokes that could be explained, with authority, by the Conference.

The literature review offers some places where the Conference is doing well, and a couple of places where things could be improved. The encouragement from Tellhed and Bjorklund to create a reservation salary, a floor of what will be acceptable, before entering negotiations is, to a large degree, already accomplished for pastors in the creation of a Conference wide minimum salary. This is clearly utilized by participants in the conversations based on the questionnaires. On the other side of things, both Hoge and Smith warn about pastors not being trained for these kinds of conversations, leading to

difficulties in approaching them at all, and the dangers of being seen as a greedy pastor. The Conference could alleviate some of these difficulties by offering some guidance along the lines of the questions from Hudnut-Beumler and perhaps a discussion guide about negotiating types described by Marks and Harold.

Maybe the most critical need for help for pastors and SPRC chairs, based on the questionnaire feedback, would be guiding them to see the discussion of clergy salary as more than a practical matter with its only, or primary, referent being the local church budget. The Conference is well positioned to operate in this role given the importance placed on other Conference guidance. There are numerous biblical passages that could be used to guide the conversation. Budd's emphasis on Numbers 18.8-32 could be ripe for localized review of leadership expectations. The guidance from the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian Church and to Timothy, an up and coming leader, provide a clear example of established church leadership, like the Conference, offering instruction to others under their care about providing for leadership financially. It would even be worth pointing out to everyone involved that the appointment system is a faithful way to practice Craddock's interpretation of Luke 10.7 that warns against preachers shopping around for better deals (and vice versa for churches in the appointment system).

**Setting clergy salaries is seen as and experienced as a practical exercise, not theological or Biblical**

This finding confirms my personal experiences with setting clergy salaries. I am just as complicit in that process as any lay member of the committee by spending most of my energy on examining current and estimating future church budgets and making comparisons to similar churches. The response from 100% of District Superintendents

that they have never been asked a theological question about setting clergy salaries is the most glaring notice for this. The differences in responses to Questions 13 and 14 offer the another glimpse. The clergy responses only found the process unhealthy from a practical standpoint 11.8% of the time, while 28.8% found it to be unhealthy from a biblical and theological perspective. More than 40% of clergy respondents answered that they strongly agreed the practical aspects were healthy (as compared to 48% who agreed), and only 19.2% strongly agreed the Biblical/theological aspects were healthy (as compared with 52% who agreed). And while none of the SPRC respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with either statement in Questions 13 and 14, the number who selected strongly agree fell from 64.7% on practical aspects to 38.2% on biblical and theological aspects. The small amount of time spent on the topic, less than 30 minutes according to majority of pastors and less than 1 hour according to the majority of SPRC chairs, means there is not a great deal of time to work through all the facets. The very low numbers who explain their discussions were primarily grounded in scripture displays a lack of instruction and discussion of the biblical groundings for paying clergy. The reasons for this disconnect are likely varied and complex, from concerns about biblical warnings against greed to concerns about proof-texting.

One clear area showing how clergy and SPRC chairs have made a mistake in thinking about clergy salary setting as primarily a practical event would be to review John Wesley's sermons and writings about money. He confronted the Christians of his day on the topic of finances repeatedly, from a deeply biblically stance. The problem of seeing finances as a practical part of life largely separate from the domain of faith is not a new one, and it must be countered. Wesley's direct style may not be the method each

pastor or SPRC chair would use, but reading portions or entire sermons together in committee could help ignite an understanding that this process is deeply theological. Many of the District Superintendents interviewed lamented that they had received no theological questions about setting clergy salaries.

The biblical text also offers a repudiation of the idea that clergy salaries are a mundane practical matter. The text from 1 Corinthians 9 particularly comes into play. As Collins, Horsley, and Hays all point out, the Apostle Paul appeals to scripture by quoting from Deuteronomy (the same thing happens in 1 Timothy 5 passage). It is important to be grounded in scripture when delving into this topic. A specific area that would be helpful for SPRC chairs and pastors to discuss could follow along Collins explication of 1 Corinthians 9 as encouraging Christians to think about compensation practices vis a vis pastors as another way the community is proclaiming gospel truth internally and externally.

### **Female pastors are more comfortable with the current process than male pastors**

This major finding was surprising. There are significant conversations and popular writing about the “stained-glass ceiling” from both major church figures and at the more local level. Direct and indirect push-back about the appropriateness of female leaders in the church is a problem the whole church must face and handle. In United Methodism, it is often remarked how few of our major pulpits are filled by female senior pastors. This mirrors the lack of female leaders and equitable compensations practices in the wider labor market. The assumption could easily be made that female clergy would be more uncomfortable with the salary setting process. But the opposite is true for clergy

respondents from the Great Plains. Female clergy members are more comfortable with the current process than male clergy members.

Parsing the data on Question 7 from the Full-Time Clergy Questionnaire cross-referenced to answers to the demographic question about gender reveals this truth. Only 19.4% of female clergy respondents rated the process as uncomfortable, and none rated it as very uncomfortable. On the other hand, 27.1% of male clergy respondents rated the process as uncomfortable, and 2.2% rated it as very uncomfortable. This carried through in responses to Questions 13 and 14. 8.6% of female clergy respondents reacted to the practical health of the most recent compensation discussions in a negative way. And 26.5% of female clergy respondents found the process was not healthy in attending to Biblical and theological principles. Only 12% of male clergy respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the process was healthy from a practical standpoint, and 30% said it was unhealthy from a Biblical and theological standpoint. Of note, 57.1% of male clergy respondents had experience setting salaries beyond the local church, while only 22.2% of female clergy respondents could say the same.

The literature review offers a number of insights into this area. In the secular world there can be significant barriers to discovering if there is a pay disparity between male and female employees due to the often confidential, or pseudo-confidential, nature of an employee's pay. The Great Plains Conference annually publishes the Conference-wide average compensation amount for clergy, and the compensation packages for any given church can be accessed through the Conference Journal. This level of transparency makes checking comparisons a relatively easy process for any clergy person. Another common danger for women is the negotiation penalty cited by Seligman and Kang.

Women who forcefully negotiate for their own salaries are often at a disadvantage. One solution to negate this penalty recommended by Zech is to move into a more collaborative salary setting process. Yet another way to help address the imbalance between compensating male and female employees is working with a reservation salary. Both of these solutions are inherently built-in, to a great degree, in the United Methodist system. The appointment of a clergy person by a Bishop means that clergy and churches are not freely choosing one another or choosing to walk away from each other, rather they must find ways to work together forcing them into a collaborative mindset. The Conference minimum provides an automatic reservation salary for all clergy, regardless of gender. This combination of collaboration and reservation salary helps explain the result of women clergy's comfort level being high.

When considering what is happening on this topic from a Biblical standpoint it is worth noting that the passage in Deuteronomy doesn't call for one kind of treatment of a male ox and another kind for a female ox. Passages about balanced scales and fairness (Prov. 11.1) and about workers' wages (Jas. 5.4) are in play on this topic also. The good news is that there is not an overwhelming discomfort with the system with gender as a dividing line, and this shows that, while there is still progress to be made, the Conference is making strides towards egalitarian ideals. Two of the District Superintendents interviewed mentioned that they watched carefully for attempts to make inappropriate decreases in salary when a female pastor was newly appointed to a church that had previously been served by a male pastor. But they had not seen any instances of that while the District was under their care.

## **Most clergy and laity are comfortable with the current process, so do not rush changes**

This finding can help explain why the Conference has not released significantly more in-depth material. There is little appetite for creating more comprehensive tools because the majority of clergy and SPRC chairs are pleased with the current process. From the almost non-existent number of questions District Superintendents receive about the clergy salary setting process to the complete approval of the process by SPRC chairs to the strong majorities of clergy respondents signaling their comfort with the system, the people of the Conference are signaling that there is not a need for whole-sale change. Question 7 from the questionnaires most clearly displays this. 73% of clergy respondents find the current process comfortable or very comfortable. And 97% of SPRC chairs say the current process is comfortable or very comfortable. The lack of interaction from clergy and lay people with District Superintendents on the topic reinforces that this is not a major pain point for most clergy or churches. That being said, there is certainly a significant enough portion of clergy who are unhappy with the current process to warrant a look at the development of additional resources. Such development and deployment should be handled with care so as not to upset a process that is working for most people involved. It is also worth keeping in mind that these are faithful servants of the gospel and should not be treated as just a few squeaky wheels to ignore.

The literature relates to this topic in a number of ways. The literature affirms that if things are going well, that is a good sign, but to be careful of the places where it is not. Oden warns that churches must beware of the stresses of personal finances derailing the effectiveness of their pastor's ministry. Piper and Outler both speak about the need for

church and pastor to find the line between extravagance and deprivation, with the clear intimation that there is significant variability based on setting and location. This will make any Conference-wide work in the Great Plains difficult given the extreme varieties of socio-economic places local churches inhabit, but it is work that should be encouraged at a local level. The same goes for the difficulties in finding the right comparisons to use when discussing salaries. And as Masaoka shares, all non-profits have a tough dance to balance priorities between paying for high-performing staff and managing a carefully designed budget. Encouraging openness and clarity while engaged in this dance will be helpful for all involved.

Just because people are happy, does not mean everything is ok. There is a biblical mandate to speak for those who cannot (Prov. 31.8). At the same time there are dangers of disruption and biblical commands to not antagonize in the body (Eph. 4.2-3). The clarity of commands from Numbers for the support of priests and Levites leaves open the possibility for a need for enforcement but not on-going negotiation of terms, suggesting a need for the Conference to step in carefully. Paul's decision with the Corinthians to make adjustments to practices shows the need for repeated evaluations within the framework of the gospel and with care. This regular practice of adaptiveness would suite the Conference well if it pursued a more detailed engagement on the topic.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The third major finding, viewing the process as a primarily practical exercise, is a glaring weakness for the Church. The Church must find ways to remember that budgets are moral and theological documents and to encourage laity and clergy to see then that



way. Any guidance provided by judicatory bodies must come with clear biblical and theological rationale at the forefront.

Major findings two and three should encourage judicatories and leaders to carefully consider how to improve the process. There are problems when portions of the clergy are experiencing systems as unhealthy while the lay leadership finds them to be functioning well. However, finding five suggests moving cautiously forward. In addition, the limited amount of time currently spent on clergy salary setting discussions does not allow for a significantly comprehensive multi-session study curriculum. Instead a careful, direct, and summarized approach to helping clergy and SPRC chairs gradually reset the process is advised.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are a number of limitations to this study. There is a general lack of other academic research on the topic. While many popular leaders and publications have recommendations, full scale research has not been conducted. If the research field grows, it will be possible to test and refine the topic to a much greater degree. The Covid-19 pandemic with its shutdowns and uncertainty, especially in the financial pictures of congregations, may have skewed the results since the data collection was done in the fall of 2020. A greater response rate from SPRC chairs would help flesh out their responses, but gathering their contact information would be a challenge. The open-ended response sections captured an idea that was not in the other questions about merit and goals being included in the conversation. An additional question or a rework of a few questions to include this topic would help. The study is also limited by the geography, and it would be fascinating to see a similar study conducted in other UMC Conferences.

### **Unexpected Observations**

The lack of literature and research on the topic was surprising. While it seems like everyone has advice, there is little in the way of research on this topic that impacts every clergy person and every church. The disparity between clergy and SPRC chairs shown by major finding was a jarring realization. I had assumed a more even experience, both positive and negative. The absence of Conference guidance on the process of setting clergy salaries was not a surprise to me having been a member of the Conference for a decade, but the level of power ascribed to the guidance that was received was eye opening. The Conference can wield significant influence in this area. The discovery that male clergy were more uncomfortable with the process than female clergy was also highly unexpected.

### **Recommendations**

Additional similar studies should be conducted in different UMC Conferences to see if there are distinct cultural variances in the results. In particular, the low number of ethnic minority participants could be partially corrected by studying a more diverse Conference. Perhaps the study could be used with a Conference from a traditionally minority Wesleyan denomination like the AME, AMEZ, or the CME. There may be enough theological and practical overlap that distinctive cultural practices could be discerned. This could help refine the questions and the findings. Another study conducted in the Great Plains Conference after the Covid-19 pandemic is over and settled could help clarify if there were stressors that caused answer variations. Research on the practice of goal setting and evaluations for pastors with the SPRC could be combined with a study

on how those practices impact clergy salary setting conversations in both helpful and unhelpful ways.

Yet another avenue for study would be to use the questionnaires with part-time clergy and their SPRC chairs to discern if there are significant differences in the clergy compensation setting conversation in those settings. Another area for study would be clergy in non-local church positions, like chaplains, but a different questionnaire would need to be developed for their unique settings.

Another next step to would be to use the research to begin to form the basis of guidance and training offered to SPRC chairs and pastors on the process of setting clergy salaries. This training should offer specific emphasis on the biblical and theological grounding for paying clergy. The research could be used to create a one-page document that could be offered to pastors, SPRC chairs, and District Superintendents to supply the Church with guidance on the conversations around setting clergy salary. A sample version has been included in the appendix.

### **Postscript**

I have heard repeatedly that pastors need to have the right questions. This process has taught me that the same is true for researchers. Defining and refining questions is a vital part of the process, and not one that can be skimmed on.

I had an experience at a previous church I served of going through a visioning process for where God was calling us next in ministry. I had some preconceived ideas of what that could and should look like. Thankfully I resisted the urge to tilt the process in light of my ideas and allowed it to play out naturally through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. My preconceptions were not bad or evil, they just were not the right next

steps God was calling us into. I am hopeful this research has been undertaken in the same way. That prayer and the Holy Spirit have guided and shaped the work, so that my preconceptions of what was happening in terms of clergy salary setting conversations and the needed fixes were set to the side, so that a fuller and more accurate explication of the topic could be recorded.

## APPENDIXES

### A. Questionnaire for Full-Time Clergy

1. I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual's compensation proposal. Yes/No
2. Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference (with just the Administrative Council) or at an all-church conference (with all professing members)? Charge Conference/All-church Conference
3. Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation? Yes/No
4. How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session? Multiple choice: less than 30 minutes, 30 minutes to 1 hour, more than 1 hour
5. What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings – Forced choice Likert scale: Very Uncomfortable/Uncomfortable/Comfortable/Very Comfortable
6. We use the following factors to help determine clergy compensation - Ranked choice (1 being most important/frequent and 6 being least): comparisons to other churches in the community, comparisons to other UMCs, comparisons to other known salaries in the community (school administrators, etc.), comparisons to church members' incomes, pastor's compensation last year, none of these
7. We use the following factors to help determine clergy compensation - Ranked choice (1 being the most important/frequent and 5 being the least): local church giving trends, health of the local church budget, health of the local economy, discussion of clergy taxes, Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) raises in the community, other [blank space], none of these
8. We utilize this other factor in helping determine clergy compensation. [fillable blank]
9. We use the following discipleship practices to guide the process of setting clergy salaries. Ranked choice (1 being the most important/frequent and 10 being the least): reflection on scripture about money, reflection on scripture about paying religious leaders, prayer, fasting, gathering together to speak openly, discussion of the example set to the wider community, use of tools developed by the UMC, use of tool developed by non-UMC faith groups, review the impact of past compensation practices on marginalized people (especially by race and gender), review of the role and expectations of the pastor
10. We primarily use this part of what is often referred to as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral when discussing clergy compensation ["Our theological task, in both its critical and constructive aspects, focuses on disciplined study of the Bible... [Christian] tradition provides both a source and a measure of authentic Christian witness, though its authority derives from its faithfulness to the biblical message... a cogent account of the Christian faith require[s] the use of reason,

both to understand Scripture and to relate the biblical message to wider fields of knowledge... looking for confirmations of the biblical witness in human experience, especially the experiences of regeneration and sanctification, but also in the “common sense” knowledge of everyday experience. (2016 Book of Discipline paragraph 105)] Multiple choice: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

11. The most recent clergy compensation conversation was healthy (open, honest, clear, and well-balanced) in practical terms. – Forced choice Likert scale: Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree
12. Do you feel the most recent clergy compensation conversation/process attended to Biblical and theological principles in a healthy way (open, honest, clear, and well-balanced)? – Forced choice Likert scale: Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree
13. What else related to the process of setting clergy salaries would you like to share? [fillable blank space]
14. What is your gender? Male/Female
15. What is your race? Asian/Black/Hispanic/White/Other
16. What age group best describes you? 18-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60-69/70+
17. Which District are you in? Blue River/Dodge City/Elkhorn Valley/Five Rivers/Flint Hills/Gateway/Great West/Hays/Hutchinson/Kansas City/Missouri River/Parsons/Prairie Rivers/Salina/Topeka/Wichita East/Wichita West
18. What is the setting of your local church (using Census Bureau categories)? Urban (population greater than 50,000), Urban Cluster (2,500 to 50,000 population), Rural (all other)
19. Are there multiple full-time pastors on staff at the church? Yes/No
20. How many years have you served in leadership on the SPRC: [fillable blank space]
21. How many years have you been a UMC pastor? [fillable blank space]
22. How many years have you been serving the local church where you currently serve?

## B. Questionnaire for SPRC Chairs

1. I have experience, beyond the local church, overseeing the setting of an individual's compensation proposal. Yes/No
2. Does your church finalize clergy compensation with a vote at a charge conference (with just the Administrative Council) or at an all-church conference (with all professing members)? Charge Conference/All-church Conference
3. Have you received any training or resources from the Conference or District on how to lead the clergy compensation setting conversation? Yes/No
4. How much time did your SPRC spend talking about clergy compensation in the most recent compensation setting session? Multiple choice: less than 30 minutes, 30 minutes to 1 hour, more than 1 hour
5. What is your comfort level in talking about clergy compensation in SPRC meetings – Forced choice Likert scale: Very Uncomfortable/Uncomfortable/Comfortable/Very Comfortable
6. We use the following factors to help determine clergy compensation - Ranked choice (1 being most important/frequent and 6 being least): comparisons to other churches in the community, comparisons to other UMCs, comparisons to other known salaries in the community (school administrators, etc.), comparisons to church members' incomes, pastor's compensation last year, none of these
7. We use the following factors to help determine clergy compensation - Ranked choice (1 being the most important/frequent and 5 being the least): local church giving trends, health of the local church budget, health of the local economy, discussion of clergy taxes, Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) raises in the community, other [blank space], none of these
8. We utilize this other factor in helping determine clergy compensation. [fillable blank]
9. We use the following discipleship practices to guide the process of setting clergy salaries. Ranked choice (1 being the most important/frequent and 10 being the least): reflection on scripture about money, reflection on scripture about paying religious leaders, prayer, fasting, gathering together to speak openly, discussion of the example set to the wider community, use of tools developed by the UMC, use of tool developed by non-UMC faith groups, review the impact of past compensation practices on marginalized people (especially by race and gender), review of the role and expectations of the pastor
10. We primarily use this part of what is often referred to as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral when discussing clergy compensation ["Our theological task, in both its critical and constructive aspects, focuses on disciplined study of the Bible... [Christian] tradition provides both a source and a measure of authentic Christian witness, though its authority derives from its faithfulness to the biblical message... a cogent account of the Christian faith require[s] the use of reason, both to understand Scripture and to relate the biblical message to wider fields of knowledge... looking for confirmations of the biblical witness in human

experience, especially the experiences of regeneration and sanctification, but also in the “common sense” knowledge of everyday experience. (2016 Book of Discipline paragraph 105)] Multiple choice: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

11. The most recent clergy compensation conversation was healthy (open, honest, clear, and well-balanced) in practical terms. – Forced choice Likert scale: Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree
12. Do you feel the most recent clergy compensation conversation/process attended to Biblical and theological principles in a healthy way (open, honest, clear, and well-balanced)? – Forced choice Likert scale: Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree
13. What else related to the process of setting clergy salaries would you like to share? [fillable blank space]
14. What is your gender? Male/Female
15. What is your race? Asian/Black/Hispanic/White/Other
16. What age group best describes you? 18-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60-69/70+
17. Which District are you in? Blue River/Dodge City/Elkhorn Valley/Five Rivers/Flint Hills/Gateway/Great West/Hays/Hutchinson/Kansas City/Missouri River/Parsons/Prairie Rivers/Salina/Topeka/Wichita East/Wichita West
18. What is the setting of your local church (using Census Bureau categories)? Urban (population greater than 50,000), Urban Cluster (2,500 to 50,000 population), Rural (all other)
19. Are there multiple full-time pastors on staff at the church? Yes/No
20. How many years have you served in leadership on the SPRC: [fillable blank space]
21. How many years has your pastor been serving the local church where you are on Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)? [fillable blank space]



### C. Interview Questions for District Superintendents

1. What percentage of the churches in your district(s) ask you substantive questions about clergy compensation any given year? Are there commonalities among those questions?
2. What theological questions are you most often asked about setting clergy salaries?
3. What practical questions are you most often asked about setting clergy salaries?
4. What salary comparisons do you recommend SPRCs and pastors review when having clergy salary discussions?
5. What are the some of factors in the most contentious conversations about setting clergy salaries?
6. What are the best practices for a healthy clergy salary setting process?
7. What is your gender? Male/Female
8. What is your race? Asian/Black/Hispanic/White/Other
9. What age group best describes you? 18-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60-69/70+
10. Which District are you in? Blue River/Dodge City/Elkhorn Valley/Five Rivers/Flint Hills/Gateway/Great West/Hays/Hutchinson/Kansas City/Missouri River/Parsons/Prairie Rivers/Salina/Topeka/Wichita East/Wichita West
11. What is the primary setting of the District you serve (using Census Bureau categories)? Urban (population greater than 50,000), Urban Cluster (2,500 to 50,000 population), Rural (all other)
12. Are there multiple full-time pastors on staff at the church? Yes/No
13. How many years have you served in leadership on the SPRC: [fillable blank space]
14. How many years have you been a UMC pastor? [fillable blank space]
15. How many years have you been serving the District where you currently serve?

## D. Consent Form

### INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Andy Hargrove as part of a degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are either a full-time clergy person in the Great Plains Conference, you are a SPRC chair from a charge with a full-time clergy person in the Great Plains Conference, or you are a District Superintendent in the Great Plains Conference. The Great Plains Resident Bishop, Bishop Saenz, has given his permission for me to conduct this research as an independent researcher, but this is not a Conference initiated or run program. You are not required to participate.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a one-time questionnaire on your experiences with the process of clergy salary setting.

You may tell your family that you are in the study. Otherwise your participation in this study is confidential. All reports used in the study will be de-identified using a numerical coding system.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in the study, please tell Andy Hargrove ([andy.hargrove@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:andy.hargrove@asburyseminary.edu)). If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Andy Hargrove questions about anything in this study.

Moving forward from this screen indicates that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not progress beyond this screen. You may also opt out at any later time without repercussion. Participation in the study is your choice. By proceeding, you agree that you have been informed about the purpose of the study and how to participate.

Please respond Yes to continue or No to discontinue.

## E. Sample Clergy Compensation Discussion Guide

### **Information to gather and share with all before the meeting**

What is the minimum salary in the Great Plains Conference and did it change this year (if so, by what percentage)? (Available in the Conference Journal published on the Conference website)

Does our parsonage meet the Conference standards? In the case of a housing allowance: What is the average cost of housing that meets the Conference standards for a parsonage? (Conference standards are available in the Conference Journal) (Ask a local realtor for ranges)

What are pastors of UMCs that are similar in size and community-type earning? (Request this information from your District Superintendent.)

What is the average household income in your community? (MissionInsite is a useful tool available to all churches in the Great Plains Conference)

What COLA (cost of living adjustments) are being given in your community? (Ask business leaders, school leaders, etc.)

What has happened with the local church budget in the last year?

### **Meeting Agenda**

1. Always begin and end with prayer.
2. Review basic ground rules: if you have a covenant together, quickly read over it, otherwise read through the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Acknowledge that talking about money can be hard and disconcerting.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 and reflect on it together. Be clear that this discussion has both practical and theological considerations.
4. Keep these questions before the group throughout the clergy compensation discussion.
  - a. Is the pastor earning enough to live here and be a tithing leader of the church?
  - b. Is the housing or housing allowance provided at least on par with the average housing costs in the community?
  - c. Is the pay package (salary + housing) based on the church's ability to pay or the costs of living in our community?
  - d. Is the pay package (salary + housing) fair, avoiding feelings of bitterness due to inadequacy and avoiding engendering pride due to excess?
  - e. In what ways has our pastor been successful in the last year? Have goals been set and met? Why or why not? Is the church compensating at a level that is appropriate for the skills and work required for the goals being set?

## WORKS CITED

- Adler, Lou. *Hire with Your Head*. 3rd ed., John Wiley & Sons, 2007.
- Amerongen, Loretta Mary. *The Impact of the Board of Directors on Top Management Compensation*. 1996. University of Alberta, PhD dissertation. *ProQuest*.
- Bailey, Carol A. *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research*. 2nd ed., Pine Forge Press, 2007.
- Banks, Adelle M. "Study: Southern Pastors Garner Top Salaries." *Christian Century*, vol. 131, no. 21 2014, p. 18.
- Bassler, Jouette M. *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Bell, Judith, and Stephen Waters. *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers, Vol. 6*. McGraw-Hill Education, 2014.
- Berger, Hilbert J. *Time to Negotiate*. Friendship Press, 1973.
- Bickers, Dennis W. *The Healthy Pastor: Easing the Pressures of Ministry: Asbury Scholar*. Nazarene Publishing House, 2010.
- "Blessed Are the Poor Pastors?" *Christianity Today*, vol. 60, no. 6, 2016, p. 18.
- Bosse, Douglas A. and Robert A. Phillips. "Agency Theory And Bounded Self-Interest." *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 41, no 2, pp. 276-297.
- Bovon, Francois. *Luke 2*. Fortress Press, 2013.
- Briggs, David. "Long-Term Study Shows Wage Gap for Clergy Is Being Narrowed." *Christian Century*, vol. 133, no. 19, 2016, pp. 16-17.
- Brinckerhoff, Peter C. *Mission-Based Management*. Alpine Guild, 1994.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Deuteronomy*. Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Budd, Philip J. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 5*. Word, Inc., 1984.
- Burns, Bob, et al. *Resilient Ministry*. InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- Clements, Ronald E. "The book of Deuteronomy" *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume II*. Edited by Leander Keck. Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Collins, Raymond F. *First Corinthians*. Edited by Daniel J. Harrington, The Liturgical Press, 1999.

- Collins, Raymond F. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*. Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Craddock, Fred B. *Luke*. Westminster John Knox, 1990.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design*. 3rd ed., Sage Publications, 2009.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. "The Gospel of Luke." *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume IX*. Edited Leander Keck. Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Curhan, Jared R., et al. "Getting Off on the Right Foot: Subjective Value Versus Economic Value in Predicting Longitudinal Job Outcomes from Job Offer Negotiations." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2009, pp. 524–34, doi:10.1037/a0013746.
- Dilday, Robert. "Deciding on Pastor's Pay Still Tough, Experts Say." *Christian Century*, vol. 130, no. 21, 2013, pp. 15-16.
- Dozeman, Thomas B. "The book of Numbers" *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume II*. Edited by Leander Keck. Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Dunn, James D. G. "The first and second letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus" *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume XI*. Edited by Leander Keck. Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Friedeman, Matt. *Accountability Connection*. Victor Books, 1992.
- Graham, Jennifer R. *An Examination of United Methodist Clergy*. 2007. University of Texas at Arlington, MA thesis. *ProQuest*.
- Haney, Becky Roselius. "The Relationship between Labor Market Structure and Clergy Compensation in Protestant Denominations." *Atlantic Economic Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2008, pp. 65–75, doi:10.1007/s11293-007-9090-x.
- Hartzell, Jay C., et al. "Is a Higher Calling Enough? Incentive Compensation in the Church." *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2010, pp. 509–39, doi:10.1086/652461.
- Harvey, Nicholas L. B. *Towards a Theory of Clergy Executive Compensation*. 2011. Georgia State University, PhD dissertation. *ProQuest*.
- Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians*. Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Heller, R., and T. Hindle. *Essential Manager's Manual*. Edited by David Tombesi-Walton, 1st ed., DK Publishing, 1998.

- Hernandez, Morela, et al. "Bargaining While Black: The Role of Race in Salary Negotiations." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 104, no. 4, 2018, pp. 581-92, doi:10.1037/apl0000363.
- Hoge, Dean, et al. *Plain Talk about Churches and Money*. Alban Institute, 1997.
- Holck, Manfred. *How to Pay Your Pastor More and Balance the Budget, Too*. Church Management Inc., 1988.
- Horrell, David G. "Disciplining Performance and 'Placing' the Church: Widows, Elders and Slaves in the Household of God." *1 Timothy Reconsidered*, edited by Karl Paul Donfried, Leuven: Peeters, 2008, pp. 109-34.
- Horsley, Richard A. *1 Corinthians*. Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Hudnut-Beumler, James. *Generous Saints: Congregations Rethinking Ethics and Money*. Alban Institute, 1999.
- Jeffery, David Lyle. *Luke*. Brazos Press, 2012.
- Jones, Scott J. *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*. Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Jull, A. J. Timothy, et al. "New Ways of Seeing Qualitative Research." *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 60, no. 05, 2018, pp. v-xiii, doi:10.1017/RDC.2018.126.
- Kaden, Stacey. *Donor and Grantor Reactions to CEO Compensation in Nonprofit Organizations*. 2014. University of Arkansas, PhD dissertation. *ProQuest*.
- Kang, Gerui (Grace), et al. "How Do Interviewers Respond to Applicants' Initiation of Salary Negotiation? An Exploratory Study on the Role of Gender and Personality." *Evidence-Based HRM*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 145-58, doi:10.1108/EBHRM-11-2013-0034.
- Keck, David. *Healthy Churches, Faithful Pastors: Covenant Expectations for Thriving Together*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.
- Lozano, Fernando, and Jessica Shiwen Cheng. "Religious Workers' Density and the Racial Earnings Gap." *American Economic Review*, vol. 106, no. 5, 2016, pp. 355-59, doi:10.1257/aer.p20161116.
- Masaoka, Jan. *The Nonprofit's Guide to Human Resources: Managing Your Employees and Volunteers*. NOLO, 2011.
- Merritt, Carol Howard. "Harvest in Due Time." *Christian Century*, vol. 133, no. 3, 2016, p. 45.

- Monatana, Patrick J., and Bruce H. Charnov. *Management*. 5th ed., Barron's Educational Series, 2015.
- Ngewa, Samuel. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Zondervan, 2009.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*. Harper & Row, 1956.
- Oden, Thomas C. *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Westminster John Knox, 1989.
- Olson, Dennis T. *Numbers*. Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- "The Pay Gap at Church." *Christian Century*, vol. 133, no. 4, 2016, p. 7. Piper, John. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*. Broadman & Holman, 2002.
- Prendergast, Canice. "The Tenuous Trade-off between Risk and Incentives: Asbury Scholar." *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 110, no. 5, 2002, pp. 1071–102.
- Rainer, Art. *The Minister's Salary and Other Challenges in Ministry Finance*. Rainer Publishing, 2015.
- Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob. *Journeying with God: A Commentary on the Book of Numbers*. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Sampley, J. Paul. "The first letter to the Corinthians *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume X*. Edited by Leander Keck. Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Schuchmann, Jennifer. "What to Pay the Pastor: Asbury Scholar." *Your Church*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2000, pp. 22-24.
- Seligman, Laura D., et al. "Preparing Women in Academic Psychology for Their First Compensation Negotiation: A Panel Perspective of Challenges and Recommendations." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2018, pp. 282–89, doi:10.1037/pro0000204.
- Smith, Christian, et al. *Passing the Plate*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Spain, Seth M., et al. "The Dark Side of Personality at Work Dark Personality: What Is Known." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 60, no. August 2013, 2014, pp. 41–60.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *Luke*. Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Tellhed, Una, and Fredrik Björklund. "Stereotype Threat in Salary Negotiations Is Mediated by Reservation Salary." *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2011, pp. 185–95, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9450.2010.00855.x.

- Throop, John R. "Giving the Pastor a Fair Shake: Asbury Scholar." *Your Church*, vol. 47, no 2, 2001, pp. 41-43.
- Tigay, Jeffery H. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*. The Jewish Publication Society, 1996.
- Toyne, Michael F. *An Analysis of Agent Compensation for Risk Bearing*. 1991. University of Arkansas, PhD dissertation. *ProQuest*.
- Winston, Bruce E. "The Place for Qualitative Research Methods in the Study of Servant Leadership." *Servant Leadership: Developments in Theory and Research*, edited by Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 180–91. Young, Frances. *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Zech, Charles. "The Agency Relationship in Churches: An Empirical Analysis." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2007, pp. 727–46, doi:10.1111/j.1536-7150.2007.00537.x.
- Zech, Charles E. "Four Economic Models of Organization Applied to Religious Congregations." *Sacred Companies: Organizational Aspects of Religion and Religious Aspects of Organizations*, edited by N.J. Demerath III et al., Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 256–68.