

Guidelines for Severance for Ordained Minister Members Serving in Called Positions

Understanding: Severance should be couched in our Reformed understanding of compassion and grace, and thus should not be considered a reward for incompetence.

1. Severance is to be considered in those instances when a minister is forced/encouraged to resign without another call with no accusations of malfeasance or misconduct against him or her. When there are accusations or charges filed or pending against a minister consideration can be given to the needs of the family even though there may be an absence of sympathy for the minister.
2. Severance is considered in lieu of Unemployment Compensation, which is available to most lay people but not to clergy in called positions.
3. Severance is considered appropriate in providing a level of transitional support to the minister and *family*.
4. Normally, severance will cease when the person obtains future employment comparable to or in excess of severance. However, if the minister obtains employment or receives a call that is not comparable to the former position then the church will make up the difference during the term of the severance package.
5. Normally, severance includes “effective salary” plus pension and health benefits (generally reported as Board of Pension dues). It may include Social Security offset, medical deductible and/or dental insurance. All of these figures will be based on the most recent terms of call on file in the office of Muskingum Valley Presbytery. The Presbytery upon recommendation of the Committee on Ministry will serve as the final arbiter of all severance packages.
6. Due consideration should be given to the church’s ability to pay severance.
7. Lump sum payments may be allowed but may have serious tax implications. Any such proposal should be reviewed by Presbytery’s Stated Clerk. The question often asked is how much severance is appropriate? The beginning point for that discussion should be the number of years the pastor has served in that particular church:
 - 1 to 3 years of service = 3 months of severance
 - 4 years of service = 4 months of severance
 - 5 years of service = 5 months of severance
 - 6+ years of service = 6 months of severance
8. Severance may be appropriate for a Commissioned Lay Pastor or Temporary Supply Pastor who has served the same church for a number of year.