

**Pastoral Ministry Team Report  
Yellowstone Presbytery Meeting October 3-4, 2025  
First Presbyterian Church – Billings, Montana**

The purpose of the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) is to come alongside churches, sessions, Pastors and CREs to provide encouragement, support, and training as we work together to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The PMT has had monthly meetings plus several special called meetings since the Presbytery meeting in May. The following actions were approved:

Motion passed to allow Kathy Goodrich to talk with Synods who have their own search programs and ask them to allow Yellowstone Presbytery to search their network for possible candidates to serve here.

Approved the covenant between Anaconda 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church and CRE Veva Larson. (see attached).

Approved the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) from the Dillon Pastor Nominating Committee,

Approved giving MWS Freeman McCall permission to labor outside presbytery bounds preaching in Cody, WY.

Approved revised guidelines for Yellowstone Presbytery Sabbatical Guidelines (see attached).

**Items for action from the Pastoral Ministry Team:**

The Pastoral Ministry Team recommends approval of MWS Nicole Melara as installed pastor of FPC Bozeman and as a member of Yellowstone Presbytery (see attached statement of faith and short Bio).

The Pastoral Ministry Team recommends approval of the terms of call for MWS Nicole Melara (see attached).

The Pastoral Ministry Team recommends approval of a 3% increase in salary minimums for 2026. And a clarification that full vacation and study leave requirements apply to all Pastors/CREs working at least 20 hours per week (see attached).

Debbie Blackburn, Co-Moderator of PMT  
Neva Rathbun, Co-Moderator of PMT

**COVENANT WITH COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER  
FOR PASTORAL SERVICES**

NAME OF CHURCH: First Presbyterian Church, Anaconda, Montana

NAME OF C.R.E: Veva Larson

SERVICE FROM: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF C.R.E:**

1. To provide a worship and teaching ministry including all service of the ministry of the Word, including the Sacraments
2. To provide pastoral services to the congregation and to the community, providing services for weddings, funerals and other pastoral activities/duties including home, hospital and nursing home visitation.
3. Moderate session and meet with Deacons
4. Assist Session members in carrying out assigned tasks, i.e. Church School, PW, VBS, Adult Bible Study, and Lunch Bunch.
5. Attend Ministerial Meetings once a month.
6. To participate in Presbytery, serving on the Teams of the Church.
7. Mentorship: Monthly meetings with assigned mentor and annually with the PMT.
8. Meet and work with mentor regularly.
9. Participate in the Dubuque/Rocky Mountain Synod CRE training in 2025 and 2026.

The salary is for a 22 hour work week not including time for travel. CRE Veva Larson will keep a log of her job activities to help determine her work schedule. Once a month, Veva will provide written reports of her activities.

**Effective July 1, 2025:**

**HOUSING ALLOWANCE: \$27,000.00**

**TRAVEL:** Voucher: Paid at the current federal rate. ( Mileage is reimbursed for job related travel. It is not for travel to and from work, Wise River to Anaconda.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES:** Expenses such as flower, gifts, etc. for visitation to someone ill or other needs. The amount will be between \$200 and \$300 and would be paid to Veva once she submits a voucher to the treasurer.



**CONTINUING EDUCATION EXPENSES: \$600.00**

**VACATION:** 4 weeks (including 4 Sundays)

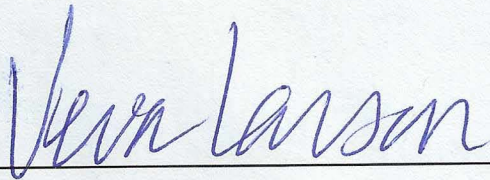
**STUDY LEAVE:** 2 week (including 1 Sunday)

We do have a Family leave policy available To Veva.

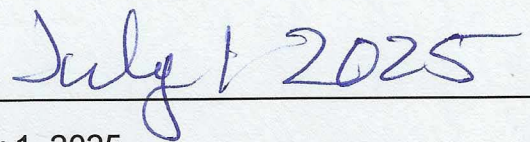
Veva was offered the Covenant pension package and accepted it. The pension package will start in January of 2026 with these options: The Defined Benefits Pension Plan, Death and Disability Plan (long term), and the Temporary Disability Plan. Based on 10% of \$27,000.00 the cost will be \$2,700.00 for the year of 2026.

Presbytery permission must be granted for the above listed by the Session based on the mutually agreed upon objectives. The session will review annually the adequacy of the compensation plan set forth in this contract.

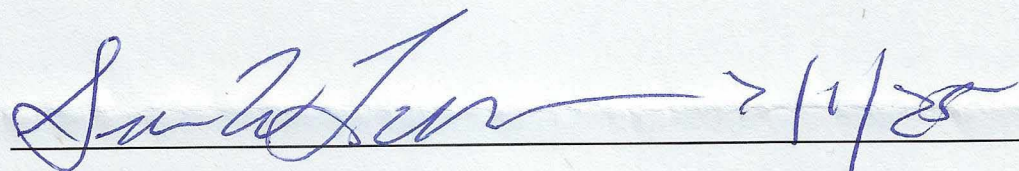
Review of this contract prior to renewal or terminations will be by the Session and the Pastoral Ministry Team. This contract will be considered ratified upon the approval of the following parties:



CRE Veva Larson



July 1, 2025



Clerk of Session Sean Larson

July 1, 2025

PMT Liaison: Julie Boksich

July 1, 2025

# **Yellowstone Presbytery Sabbatical Guidelines**

## **Policy Statement**

The Presbytery of Yellowstone and its Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) respectfully recommends to the Sessions of its Churches that Ministers of the Word and Sacrament be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three months following not less than seven continuous years of service to that respective church.

## **Rationale**

Sabbatical leave has its beginning in the Biblical concept of the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year. Biblical leaders such as Moses, Elijah, Paul, John the Baptist, etc., spent significant time in rest and reflection in preparation and continuation of their service to God. Jesus, Himself, sought time away for his own spiritual renewal and preparation during His earthly ministry.

Old Testament passages such those found in Exodus and Leviticus speak of Sabbath days and the Sabbath year. Every seven years the land itself was granted a Sabbath when the ground was untilled so that it could replenish itself.

A sabbatical will enable the minister to be renewed through the vital pursuit of continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a minister to return to the responsibilities of the parish with renewal: energy, dedication, spiritual vision, health, and effectiveness.

Through preparation and prayer, a Sabbatical leave can also provide the congregation growth opportunities, as well as, the potential for new life as leaders and volunteers assume greater responsibility for the life and wellbeing of the Church.

(Biblical References: Exodus 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1-11; Matt. 11:28-30; & Mark 6:31)

## **Pastoral Ministry Team Responsibilities**

- I. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister
- II. Serve as mediator in any concerns of Session or Minister relative to the sabbatical.
- III. Determine who will Moderate the Session in the minister's absence.
- IV. Provide guidance to the respective church in working through this process.

## **Minister Responsibilities**

- I. Prepare and bring the sabbatical proposal before the Session (at least in outline form) a minimum of six months before the proposed commencement of the sabbatical.
- II. Secure the approval of the Session for the sabbatical, as proposed, and work out the necessary coverage of the pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
- III. Assure the Session of continued services to the church for at least one year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.

- IV Bring current all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the Session before departing on the sabbatical.
- V. Submit to the PMT the formal, finalized plans and timetable for the sabbatical.
- VI. Maintain a journal of the sabbatical experiences and upon return present an oral and written overview of the sabbatical to the Session, congregation and to PMT.

### **Session Responsibilities**

- I. Receive for approval the minister's proposal for a sabbatical at least six months prior to the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
- II. Communicate to the congregation the importance of a sabbatical and its values to the church, and secure their concurrence as well as input.
- III. Request a written and oral overview of the sabbatical from the minister upon his/her return.
- IV Discuss thoroughly with the Pastoral Ministry Team how the church leadership is prepared to meet the challenges presented by the exigencies of a sabbatical leave.

\*\* A compensated sabbatical implies that the church would maintain the minister's contracted compensation package intact through the sabbatical period. It does not imply that the church would be obligated for the costs of the sabbatical itself or any of the ancillary expenses associated with the sabbatical. However accumulated Study Leave or Study Leave dollars could be incorporated into the sabbatical funding process.

Suggestion: Several private institutions as well as the General Assembly offer grants for sabbatical purposes. Before the minister makes such a request or formulates such a plan, PMT recommends that those funding sources for sabbatical assistance be explored.

The Pastoral Ministry Team of Yellowstone Presbytery, on review of all of the above requirements to its satisfaction, approves the sabbatical plans and outline for the Reverend/s \_\_\_\_\_ serving the \_\_\_\_\_ church.



## **Yellowstone Presbytery 2026 Proposed Minimum Salaries**

PMT recognizes that Yellowstone Presbytery continues to remain near the bottom for compensation for pastors serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Given that it is important to compensate pastors enough to live without financial stress, PMT asks that every congregation engage in meaningful discussion regarding compensation at the local level. On the next page we have provided five guiding questions to shape those conversations.

These figures represent a 3% increase in minimum effective salaries for 2026 and are based on fulltime of a 40-hour work week, which should be pro-rated for part-time positions. Please read below about CRE and part-time considerations, for optional ways you can financially assist your pastor without increasing BOP dues, and for the process to petition PMT for relief.

PMT again invites congregations who struggle to meet these minimums to petition to PMT for a reduction in the minimum effective salary you can pay a pastor. See next page for instructions for petition to PMT. In addition, PMT recommends at least a similar cost-of living adjustment for all clergy currently making above minimum.

### **Full-Time Pastor with 3 years or less (up to 36 months) of Ordained Ministry:**

Effective Salary: \$58,095

The Board of Pensions requires that the manse amount be at least 30% of all other effective salary.

Board of Pension dues will vary from pastor to pastor based on need. Full medical benefits are required for a pastor and his/her dependents based on their needs. Please contact Christine Long, Board of Pensions Church Consultant for help in establishing the correct BOP amount for your pastor at [CLong@pensions.org](mailto:CLong@pensions.org) or (215) 587-7260.

### **Full-Time Pastor with more than 3 years (37 months or more) of Ordained Ministry:**

Effective Salary: \$60,775

The Board of Pensions requires that the manse amount be at least 30% of all other effective salary item.

Board of Pension dues will vary from pastor to pastor based on need. Full medical benefits are required for a pastor and his/her dependents based on their needs. Please contact Christine Long, Board of Pensions Church Consultant for help in establishing the correct BOP amount for your pastor at [CLong@pensions.org](mailto:CLong@pensions.org) or (215) 587-7260.

### **Additional Benefits for All Pastors (regardless of years of experience)**

Continuing Education \$600/year (which can be accrued for up to three years)

Travel - Vouchered at the current federal rate

Study Leave - 2 weeks (cumulative to 6 weeks) including 2 Sundays

Vacation - 4 weeks including 4 Sundays

Family Leave Policy in accordance with Yellowstone Presbytery's Policy

## **Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)**

The CRE salary is 75% of the Full-Time Pastor salary, pro-rated for part-time.

## **Part-Time Considerations**

Part-time pastors and part-time CREs should also receive 4 weeks of vacation including 4 Sundays and 2 weeks of study leave including 2 Sundays. Part-time pastors and parttime CREs should receive \$600/year (which can be accrued for up to 3 years) for Continuing Education. The full vacation and study leave requirements apply for all Pastors/CREs who are working at least 20 hours per week.

## **Optional ways you can financially assist your pastor without increasing BOP dues:**

1. A church can reimburse a pastor up to ½ of their FICA (Social Security and Medicare) directly to the minister who does not have to report the reimbursement to BOP (called the SECA effect). It does, however, get reported to the I.R.S. as taxable income.
2. If a minister contributes to a BOP 409(3)(b) pension, the church can match the pastor's contribution, and the church match is not included in the effective salary.
3. A church can reimburse a pastor for out-of-pocket expenses with no effect on effective salary.
4. Create an FSA (Flexible Spending Account) and/or DCAP (Dependent Care) through Hello Further for your pastor.

## **Petition Process**

Churches finding themselves in a scenario where they are unable to meet these minimum salaries should research and document the actual numbers for a Master's Level teacher (including years of experience) and the police chief in your community. These numbers can be provided to PMT to petition for a lower minimum salary, but the exact numbers must be provided. All these requests will be taken seriously.

## **Questions for Congregations**

*Based on Jamie Dunlop's Budgeting for a Healthy Church*

1. Church: What do other churches in the community pay their staff?
2. Non-Church: How much does a local schoolteacher with a Master's degree, school principal or police chief make?
3. Replacement Cost: If your pastor were to leave, would you need to increase the compensation package in order to attract an individual who would do the job equally well? (Dunlop, 80)
4. Personal Budget: What makes for a sustainable family budget at different stages of life in your community (including the cost of childcare)?
5. Housing: What is the median price to purchase a home in the same zip code as the church? Could your pastor afford to live in the zip code he/she is serving?

PMT is interested in knowing these numbers, so we would welcome your committees to share these numbers back to PMT, so that they can better inform our conversations for future minimum salary guidelines.



## Meet Reverend Nicole Melara

C(USA) Minister of Word & Sacrament,  
Interim Pastor, Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church,  
Crystal Lake, IL

Pastor Nicole is a native of eastern Pennsylvania and has been serving in ordained ministry for 18 years. She is a graduate of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, PA, and reached the level of PhD Candidate in Religious Studies (Global Ethic specialty) at Temple University. She is an adjunct professor of Philosophy at Northampton Community College, where she teaches Death & Dying, Intro to Philosophy and Ethics and Moral Problems to online students. After finishing her doctoral coursework, she relocated to Milwaukee to continue her life's education. She has served a number of churches as a transitional leader. She has also served as the Moderator of Milwaukee Presbytery's Commission for Congregational Vitality and Blackhawk Presbytery's Vision and Assembly Planning Committee. Also, in Blackhawk Presbytery, she served on the Commission on Ministry (Transitions subcommittee), the Land and Name Acknowledgement Team and the Matthew 25 Committee, among other leadership roles.

Nicole is a lover of art and cultural studies, hiking, camping and reading. She enjoys playing hymns on French Horn and Trumpet. She is the mother of a young-adult woman and the ma'amaw of two dogs. Nicole is passionate about spiritual growth and understanding, service toward faith formation, the study and practice of ethics and the translation of belief into a lived faith. She is a devoted disciple and follower of Christ Jesus, who loves her. She is grateful for his call and for the constant adventure it brings.



A Statement of Faith  
by Rev. Nicole Melara, PC(USA)

I believe in the Triune God, who created all things and is creating all things new, who was known to all creation and known especially to the creation made in God's own image - humankind. All things were created and called Good by our Creator. When humankind disobeyed God, Creation was broken. From that moment, God has been working to reconcile creation unto Godself.

In the fullness of time, the law and the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God's only son, our savior and our Lord, fully human and fully divine. In his love for us and for Creation, God Incarnate, was born and was obedient, even to death on the cross. But, before his death, Jesus lived. He demonstrated life in the kingdom of God. He showed us how to live in reconciling grace, in love for God and in love for our neighbor as ourselves. He called us to his ministry, proclaiming the Good News of forgiveness and healing, caring for the disenfranchised, the hurting and those in need. He commanded us to love one another and commissioned us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the light of the world, and the darkness of death did not overcome him. For on the third day, after his death, he rose again and proved that God's love is stronger than all the sin Christ Jesus took to the grave on our behalf. He will come again at the end of the age as a bridegroom comes to claim his bride. The church and Creation will be made new.

Until then, Christ's people receive the sacraments of baptism and communion, marking the forgiveness of sins and the ingrafting of all in the Spirit. We celebrate communion by remembering our Lord and being lifted to commune with him in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God. It was delivered to us in the fiery wind of Pentecost and present to us today, inspiring and sustaining all believers. The Spirit binds us as a family of faith, intercedes and advocates for us and our holy wellbeing, blesses us with gifts for ministry, guides us in prayer and illuminates scripture for searching hearts.

In gratitude, I respond to Christ's call through trust and obedience. I ask the Spirit to inspire my gifts and inform my leadership. I understand my faith best through the tenets of the Reformed tradition, and I hold fast to the heritage present in the Book of Confessions, Part 1, of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). My pastoral ministry is defined by Part 2 of the PC(USA)'s Constitution, The Book of Order. In

response to Christ's call on my life, I seek to live out my ordination vows, to serve the church and her people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love.

Christ Jesus is my good shepherd. He brings abundant life. In him, I rejoice! In life, in death, in life beyond death, he is with me. I am not alone. In the Spirit, I give thanks to God in whom I live and move and have my being. I am alive today by God's good grace. Thanks be to God! Amen.

## Pastoral Terms of Call

The First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman MT belonging to Yellowstone Presbytery, being well satisfied with your qualification for ministry and confident that we have been led to you by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual interests of our church and fruitful for the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly calls you, Reverend Nicole Melara to undertake the office of Pastor of this congregation, beginning November 24, 2025, promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support encouragement and allegiance in the Lord. That you may be free to devote full-time to the ministry of Word and Sacrament among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to pay you in regular monthly payments the following effective salary and following vouchered expenses:

Effective salary \$92,000 broken out between Cash and housing allowance.

BOP Pension and Health Includes family medical total \$32,870

Reimbursable expenses:

Automobile expense \$1,000 (current Federal mileage rate)

Professional expenses (Discretionary) \$1,000

SECA Allowance \$7,038

Continuing Education \$2,000

Total \$135,908

One Time Moving Costs up to \$8,000.

Shared Equity Agreement for purchase of Home will also be agreed to in a separate document.

Paid Vacation 4 Weeks including 4 Sundays

Paid continuing Education 3 Weeks including 3 Sundays

Family Leave Policy as adopted by Yellowstone Presbytery

After each 5 years of service, the congregation will provide for a three consecutive month Clergy Renewal Leave (sabbatical), continuing the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation.

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this 28 day of September, 2025.  
Deborah Ent pnc Mary M. Hestner pnc Mikhael Hall PNC  
Konnie Beck, clerk of Session William Anderson Ji Jia pnc  
Nicole C. Haynes PNC

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended this call for ministerial services, I do certify that the call has been made in all respect according to the presbytery policy and the Form of Government, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

Vote of the congregation at the meeting was 92 in favor of the candidate and 0 opposed.

(signed) Rev. Ashley Bink moderator of the meeting

Certification of Call

A. Action by Presbytery of Call 1. The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ has reviewed and approved this call. Date of action \_\_\_\_\_ (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Stated Clerk or Authorized Signer

B. Action by the Minister's/Candidate's Presbytery 1. The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ finds it expedient (not expedient) to release \_\_\_\_\_ to accept this call. Date of action \_\_\_\_\_ (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Stated Clerk or Authorized Signer

C. Acceptance of the Call This is to certify that I have received and accepted the call. Date of action 9/28/25 (Signed) Rev. Frank K. [Signature] Minister

Complete and sign four original copies. When all parties have signed, an original copy goes to 1) the minister, 2) the calling church, 3) the presbytery of call and 4) the minister's presbytery of membership/care.



## Pastor Job Description and Job Duties:

The pastor will be responsible to:

- Plan, prepare, and lead the worship services and the technology team
- Administer the sacraments and officiate at weddings, baptisms, and funerals
- Be a teacher of the Word by providing spiritual and administrative leadership to the congregation, including its Christian Education ministries, and Rockhaven Camp
- Lead new members class
- Serve as Primary staff liaison to Table & Grace Campus Ministry communicating regularly with Table & Grace's Campus Pastor
- Encourage and support youth and adult engagement in mission and service
- Supervise the staff as head of staff and administration
- Moderate Session and Congregational meetings, train newly elected officers
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the Endowment Board of Trustees, committees of Session, the Deacons, and the Rockhaven Operations Board
- Engage in pastoral care, such as hospital visitations when allowed, be aware of and provide support for those with special concerns and struggles and coordinate with the deacons regarding congregational care concerns and visitations.
- Disciple, equip, empower and challenge members and friends of the congregation to grow deeper in faith, discover and identify their individual gifts, and participate in ministry and mission; enabling them to know they are valued and needed in this body of Christ and sent into the world as Christ's ambassadors
- Author PresbEnews articles and other church communications as needed/appropriate
- Be an active member of Yellowstone Presbytery
- Inspire, guide, assist and be the leader/facilitator of the congregation in forming a vision for the future
- Lead and equip the church in understanding, engagement with, and mission in the wider community
- Nurture one's own physical and spiritual life and love for God, engaging in regular spiritual practices, including Sabbath keeping, and praying for the congregation and community.

The congregation and session will be responsible to:

- Partner with the pastor in the shared work of the church
- Pursue an active faith life, seeking to continually grow in faith and respond to God's callings
- Support the pastor in his/her ministry
- Provide regular financial compensation according to the terms outlined below
- Provide a performance review to the pastor at least annually
- Pray for the pastor
- Participate in the wider ministry and mission of Yellowstone Presbytery, when needed/as appropriate