

# **SALARY and COMPENSATION GUIDELINES for ORGANISTS and CHURCH MUSICIANS**

## **American Guild of Organists – Twin Cities Chapter**

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This document is designed to help churches and synagogues determine appropriate job descriptions and salaries for organists and choir directors. Each situation is unique.

- To assist in designing a job description and contract, this document includes: items regarding the hiring process contract considerations, and position responsibilities that outline the specific parameters of the musician's employment situation.
- The *Code of Ethics* of the American Guild of Organists states the musician's responsibilities to his/her profession and employing institution.
- The various charts herein state a range of recommended salary guidelines for part-time, full time, and substitute situations. It is our hope that mutual respect and cooperation among musicians and churches/synagogues will promote the growth of faith communities through worship and music.

### **THE HIRING PROCESS**

A search committee is an effective forum for seeking and screening applicants. A committee involving the pastor and other staff members, as well as members of various church groups (e.g., the choir, pastoral council, personnel committee, worship committee) will reflect the profile and needs of the congregation and bring balance to the search process.

The inclusion of a music consultant is an option that could lend a professional dimension to the committee. A recognized organist or church music professional, unbiased toward the candidates, is often best able to assess musical qualifications, particularly in an audition.

This document addresses various issues in creating a job description and contract. The committee's first task is to prepare a job description that (1) articulates the church's concept of the role of music in worship; (2) states to whom the musician is responsible; and (3) details specific elements pertinent to the position, such as those listed in "Responsibilities of the Church Musician" (see inside page). A copy of the job description should be sent to the candidate before the interview. A salary range can be determined from the "Hourly Requirements for Typical Church Musician Responsibilities" and/or "Annual Base Salary Guidelines."

The numerous resources available to publicize a position include: *Pipenotes*, the Twin Cities AGO chapter monthly newsletter, and local newspapers. The current Twin Cities/AGO contact person (2000) is Robert Anderson (612/377-4450). *The American Organist*, the professional journal of the AGO, also lists open positions nationwide. AGO web sites, particularly that of our local chapter, may also duplicate several of these advertisement columns. National and regional denominational publications or worship offices may also be helpful resources.

An interview may include both a meeting with the pastor (or principal responsible party) and the committee, and a performance audition. The following guidelines may bear consideration:

- State any audition requirements clearly and in advance.
- The committee should be prepared to: articulate its vision for the music program; discuss the current resources of the music program in terms of volunteer and paid musicians and choirs, choral library, overall music budget, and the organ and other instruments with provisions for their maintenance; and finally, to take the candidate on a tour of the church's facilities.
- Any outstanding performance or stylistic requirements of the position should be discussed (e.g., concert series, a "contemporary service" the candidate must direct or play).
- The committee should state what the church is prepared to offer in terms of salary and benefits.
- Members of the committee may wish to hear the candidate perform a church service at that person's current church as part of the final selection process.

Each applicant should be judged on the basis of musical and personal qualifications. Ratings of individual candidates should be determined from formal training, previous experience, demonstrated ability, and from letters of recommendation. Other considerations will relate to perceptions of a "good fit" with staff and congregation, and the ability to communicate well.

A strong beginning to effective musician/clergy and musician/staff relationships can be fostered at the outset by clearly articulating expectations during the interview process. Further details of employment should be defined in the contract.

## CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS

Like many other professional positions, a positive employment situation is best initiated with a mutual understanding of responsibilities and privileges as stated in a letter of agreement or contract. This document may include the church's vision of the music ministry and a job description and further serve as a reference for future clergy, staff, and board members as the position develops and changes.

The contract should include a detailed list of benefits with appropriate references to an employee handbook for other governing body responsible for provision of these benefits. Such benefits should include:

- Annual review with cost-of-living and merit increase
- Annual paid vacation with provision for the hiring of a substitute
- Sick leave with pay
- Social Security
- Continuing education
- Mileage at the IRS rate for travel to workshops, conferences, or church-approved choir trips
- Budgetary provision for the proper maintenance of musical instruments
- A rehearsal room
- Adequate office and work space

Any position specifying a time commitment over 25 hours weekly should include the following provisions:

- Major medical insurance
- Pension plan
- Disability compensation
- Life insurance

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH MUSICIAN

### **Organist and/or Choir Director**

- Play, conduct, accompany rehearsals and services
- Practice repertory and technique
- Preparation of rehearsals and services: e.g., selecting and preparing music, study and preparation of scores, organizing choral and instrumental music
- Arrangement and composition of music
- Recruit, train, and supervise choirs, instrumentalists, and vocal soloists

### **Planning and Administration**

- Plan weekly services
- Plan seasonal programs and special services
- Plan concerts and festivals
- Meet with parish staff, worship boards, and other appropriate committees
- Manage music staff and other volunteers
- Serve as resource person to various church ministries such as Education and Social Outreach
- Perform secretarial duties: e.g., filing music, ordering supplies, formatting announcements and programs
- Perform custodial duties: e.g., preparing and organizing rehearsal areas
- Oversee maintenance and acquisition of all church instruments (organ, piano, synthesizer, bells, etc.)
- Pursue good public relations and program development: e.g., write articles for church bulletins and newspapers, consult and use the Internet
- Be available for social interaction and individual consultation with church members
- Be available to consult with families for funerals/memorial services
- Consult with couples to select and plan wedding music
- Understand and apply appropriate copyright regulations
- Provide for substitutes

### **Professional Development**

- Review new works, editions, and recordings; read professional journals
- Maintain and update professional competence by attending workshops, classes, conferences, conventions
- Participate in professional organizations
- Attend concerts of other organizations.

# Annual Base Salary Guidelines for Twin Cities Area Church/Temple Musicians (2009-2010)

All figures represent the *minimum* amount a musician with the indicated training and experience should be paid, based on the time requirements of the position. The salary range in each category corresponds to the hours per week range found in the left-hand column.

Hours per Week	Experience Level	No Music Degree or SPC or equivalent level of proficiency	B.A./B.S. Music or CAGO or equivalent level of proficiency	Masters in Music or AAGO or equivalent level of proficiency	Doctorate in Music or FAGO or equivalent level of proficiency
<b>\$/hour</b>	I	\$16	\$18	\$21	\$26
	II	\$17	\$20	\$22	\$28
	III	\$20	\$22	\$24	\$29
	IV	\$21	\$23	\$25	\$30
<b>8 to 12 1/4 time</b>	I	6,700 - 10,062	7,668 - 11,490	8,623 - 12,929	11,018 - 16,521
	II	7,184 - 10,776	8,140 - 12,215	9,095 - 13,654	11,490 - 17,246
	III	8,140 - 12,215	9,095 - 13,654	10,062 - 15,082	11,973 - 17,960
	IV	8,623 - 12,929	9,579 - 14,368	10,534 - 15,807	12,457 - 18,674
<b>13 to 18 3/8 time</b>	I	10,891 - 15,082	12,457 - 17,246	14,011 - 19,399	17,903 - 24,787
	II	11,674 - 16,164	13,228 - 18,317	14,783 - 20,470	18,674 - 25,858
	III	13,228 - 18,317	14,783 - 20,470	16,348 - 22,634	19,457 - 26,940
	IV	14,011 - 19,399	15,565 - 21,552	17,120 - 23,705	20,240 - 28,022
<b>19 to 24 1/2 time</b>	I	15,922 - 20,113	18,202 - 22,991	20,470 - 25,858	26,157 - 33,042
	II	17,062 - 21,552	19,342 - 24,430	21,610 - 27,297	27,297 - 34,481
	III	19,342 - 24,430	21,610 - 27,297	23,889 - 30,175	28,437 - 35,920
	IV	20,470 - 25,858	22,749 - 28,736	25,029 - 31,614	29,577 - 37,359
<b>25 to 34 3/4 time</b>	I	20,953 - 28,494	23,947 - 32,570	26,940 - 36,634	34,424 - 46,811
	II	22,450 - 30,532	25,443 - 34,608	28,437 - 38,672	35,920 - 48,849
	III	25,443 - 34,608	28,437 - 38,672	31,430 - 42,747	37,417 - 50,887
	IV	26,940 - 36,634	29,933 - 40,710	32,927 - 44,785	38,914 - 52,925
<b>35 to 45 full-time</b>	I	29,335 - 37,716	33,526 - 43,104	37,716 - 48,492	48,193 - 61,962
	II	31,430 - 40,410	35,621 - 45,798	39,812 - 51,186	50,288 - 64,656
	III	35,621 - 45,798	39,812 - 51,186	44,002 - 56,574	52,384 - 67,350
	IV	37,716 - 48,492	41,907 - 53,880	46,098 - 59,268	54,479 - 70,044

### Certification/Education Levels

SPC: Service Playing Certificate  
CAGO: Colleague of the American Guild of Organists  
AAGO: Associate of the American Guild of Organists  
FAGO: Fellow of the American Guild of Organists

### Experience Level

I 1-4 years  
II 5-12 years  
III 13-20 years  
IV over 20 years

Additional adjustments: If the position is full time, benefits should be paid. The above figures do not include benefits. If the position is part time, and if, by mutual agreement, fringe benefits are not provided, additional compensation should be given. This will allow the person to provide for his or her own needs. An adjustment of 20% should be considered in lieu of fringe benefits.

**Minimum Compensation Guidelines for**  
**WEDDINGS, FUNERALS, AND SUBSTITUTE SERVICES**

American Guild of Organists, Twin Cities Chapter (May 2009)

The regular organist of a church shall play for all weddings and funerals or memorial services held in the employing institution. If the regular organist is unavailable for these services, a substitute organist may be employed. If the regular organist is available and an outside organist is requested by the family, the incumbent organist must be consulted and is entitled to the regular wedding or funeral fee.

<b>2009 WEDDING AND FUNERAL FEE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
Type of Service Rendered	Suggested minimum compensation
<b>WEDDING SERVICE</b> Includes a scheduled one-hour service-planning consultation, a 15-minute organ prelude, processional and recessional/postlude music, accompaniment of soloists/instrumentalists during the service, brief rehearsal preceding the service, and other music requisite to the service or liturgy.	\$200-225
<b>WEDDING REHEARSAL</b> Wedding party; one hour.	\$85
<b>FUNERALS &amp; MEMORIAL SERVICES</b> The church should be responsible for notifying the family of this fee. Personal consultation with the family, special music preparation, or rehearsal with soloists aside from a brief rehearsal preceding the service would count as an additional rehearsal.	\$125-150
<b>REHEARSAL with SOLOISTS/INSTRUMENTALISTS, ADDITIONAL PREPARATION TIME for weddings/funerals</b> Per hour, other than the wedding rehearsal or the <i>brief</i> rehearsal preceding the ceremony.	\$85

Substitutes are generally considered to be independent contractors. The church music budget should include funds for payment of a substitute during the musician's vacation, approved leaves of absence, study leave, and sick leave. This will be paid by the church. For time away beyond that stipulated in the contract, the substitute will be paid by the musician. **Payment to a substitute should be made at the time services are provided, unless other arrangements are made.**

<b>2009 SUBSTITUTE FEE RECOMMENDATIONS (per service)</b>	
Type of Service Rendered	Suggested minimum compensation
<b>CHURCH SERVICE, Organist only</b> Includes organ practice, conference with regular organist and clergy, the service (with liturgy, prelude and postlude music), and <i>brief</i> rehearsal with a cantor/soloist/ensemble.	\$150-175
<b>CHURCH SERVICE, Choir Director only</b>	\$95-110
<b>CHURCH SERVICE/ Organist/Director</b> Includes the same duties as listed above and rehearsal before the service.	\$200-225
<b>ADDITIONAL DUPLICATE SERVICE</b> Per additional consecutive identical service. A duplicate service on another day should be compensated at the rate of a first service.	Add 65%
<b>ADDITIONAL CHOIR (soloist/cantor, ensemble) REHEARSAL</b> Per hour; other than the <i>brief</i> rehearsal preceding the service.	
Accompanist:	\$85
Director:	\$95-110
Combined:	\$110-135

## Hourly Requirements for Typical Church Musician Responsibilities

The typical responsibilities included in a job description for a Church Musician are listed here, and numbers on the chart represent the average time expectation, in general. Larger programs will normally involve a larger time commitment because of the greater complexity in the program and the challenges of more difficult music. Planners should remember that a musician's work time is divided between "visible" tasks, such as directing the choir or playing the organ; and more time-consuming "invisible" tasks, such as studying new music to present to the choir, practicing the organ and piano, preparing the rehearsal room, recruiting volunteers, maintaining the music library, making calls to coordinate musicians, etc.

(For example, a person who plays 2 rehearsals and 2 services each week should look under the column designated "4.")

<b>*Time Spent by Church Musicians in Their Work (a general guide)</b>						
Number of services played and choirs rehearsed per week		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Organist/Pianist	Hours per Week	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29
Choir Director		6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 25
Combined Organist/Director		12 - 14	16 - 20	24 - 28	32 - 39	46 - 50

- Add 10 – 15 hours per week as needed, for a variety of administrative tasks that are often included in the church musician's responsibilities; worship planning, staff and committee meetings, administering a music budget, supervising volunteers or other staff, program or concert preparation, secretarial duties, and other staff expectations.

## AGO Code of Ethics (Approved by National Council 11/15/99)

**Preamble:** The purpose of the American Guild of Organists is to promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles, to encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music, and to provide a forum for mutual support, inspiration, education, and certification of Guild members. Voting members are entitled to enjoy the privileges and are expected to accept the responsibilities of membership in the Guild. Members shall be considered equally for Guild offices and participation in Guild activities. These are the rules that shall be considered binding upon all voting members in good standing.

**RULE 1.** Members shall promote good working relationships within the American Guild of Organists and shall respect the employment of colleagues. Members shall address differences between themselves and other members by following the procedures outlined in the *Discipline*.

**RULE 2.** Members shall not seek or appear to be seeking employment for themselves, a student or a colleague, in a position held by someone else. Members shall apply for employment only for a position which has been officially and publicly declared vacant by announcement of the vacancy, with the knowledge of the incumbent musician.

**RULE 3.** In cases pending under the *Procedures* or in cases where the National Council has determined that a position has been made vacant by wrongful termination of a member of the American Guild of Organists, members shall not seek or accept regular or permanent employment for themselves, a student or colleague at that institution until the National Council is satisfied that differences between the Guild and the institution have been resolved.

**RULE 4.** Before accepting an engagement for a wedding, funeral, or other service, members shall obtain the approval of the incumbent musician. In cases where this engagement has been requested by a third party, it is appropriate for the third party to offer the incumbent his/her customary fee. It is the responsibility of members to inform the third party of this rule.

**RULE 5.** Members shall conduct professional activities with truthfulness, honesty and integrity, and shall maintain sensitivity in matters of a personal or confidential nature.

**RULE 6.** Members shall not discriminate against others on the basis of race, national origin, age, religious affiliation, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or medical condition (including, but not limited to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

## AGO Code of Professional Standards (Approved by National Council 11/15/99)

### **Skills:**

- i. Members develop and maintain skills in performance, improvisation, service playing, conducting, arranging, and composing commensurate with their duties.
- ii. Members stay abreast of current developments in liturgy, hymnody, performance practice, and musicology through continuing education.
- iii. Members become knowledgeable in the liturgy and worship traditions of the institutions they serve.
- iv. Members acquire business, administrative and interpersonal skills to perform their duties.

### **Employment Matters:**

- i. Members agree to employment only after reaching a clear understanding of the position, the employer's expectations, and the lines of accountability.
- ii. Members request written contracts that protect employee and employer.
- iii. Members maintain courteous and respectful relationships with other staff members and members of their congregations, making an effort to resolve potential conflicts as soon as they become evident.
- iv. Members address differences with employing institutions through appropriate channels, including, but not limited to, their contract, the institution's personnel policies manual, and the Guild's *Procedures for Dealing with Complaints about Termination*.

### **Respect for Colleagues:**

- i. Members supervise other musicians in a professional and courteous manner.
- ii. Members respect the intellectual property rights of composers, authors and publishers by complying with the Copyright Law and licensing requirements regarding reproduction recording, distribution, broadcasting and performing rights.
- iii. Members address differences with other members of the American Guild of Organists by following the procedures outlined in the *Discipline*.
- iv. Members do not discriminate against others on the basis of race, national origin, age, religious affiliation, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or medical condition (including, but not limited to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

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