

2022 YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION REPORT

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CHEMISTRY
STAFFING



THE YOUTH CARTEL

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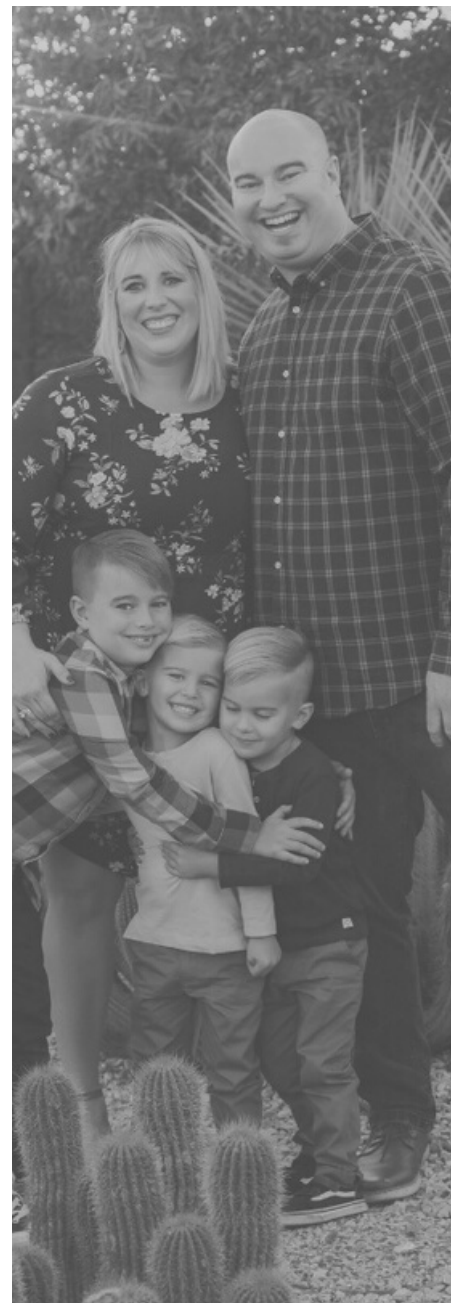


Introduction

Now in year five, The National Youth Pastor Compensation Survey has had well over 5,000 respondents over its lifetime. The survey is brought to you by Chemistry Staffing, in association with The Youth Cartel and ChurchSalary.com.

Dan Navarra is the lead researcher and author of this report and serves Chemistry Staffing as a Church Coach where he helps churches find healthy long-term fits for key roles; Dan also has over fifteen years of pastoral experience. Additionally, a special thanks is well deserved for general editing done, as always, by Mark Oestreicher of The Youth Cartel; and for special input and analysis from Aaron Hill of Christianity Today's ChurchSalary.com arm. The heart of this team has always been to empower youth workers to best understand their compensation and be equipped to have conversations about their field with their churches, ultimately leading to long-term health for both the youth workers and the ministries they lead. We really care about youth workers!

Finally, thanks to YOU, our respondents and readers. Without your transparency and time spent carefully going through the survey, these results would not have been possible.





Diving In

This year, we had 775 respondents, with 680 of them self-classifying as full-time. For our purposes, full-time is defined as being regularly scheduled for 30 hours or more per week. Also, please note that we are using the term “youth pastor” throughout as synonymous with any other term meaning an employed youth worker; it is not meant to indicate ordination or anything else other than the person who is paid to lead a youth ministry.

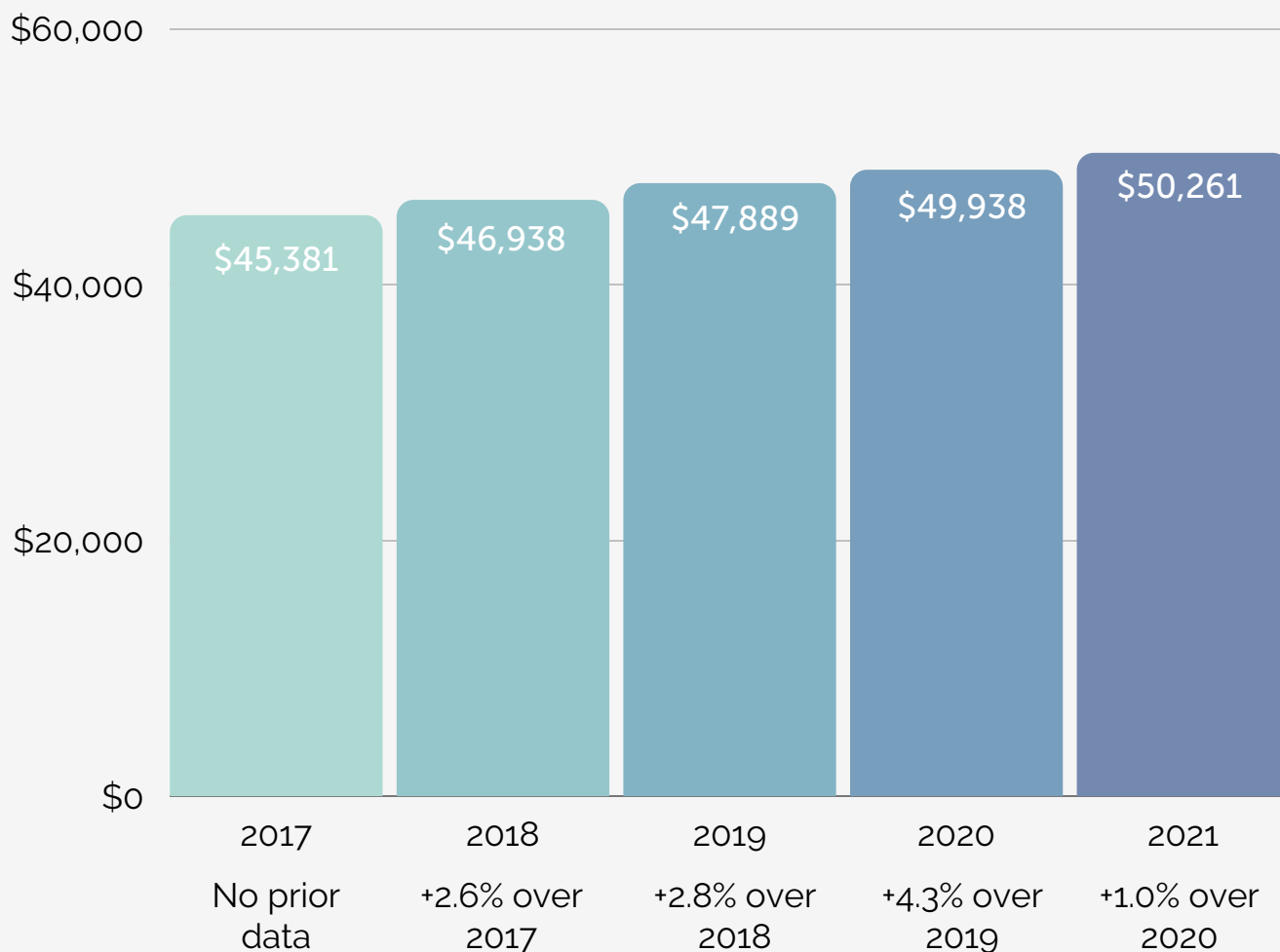
The national average salary for a full-time youth pastor in 2021 is \$50,261.

The chart at the end of this section illustrates the trend in our field over the past five years we've collected data. For reference on the growth and how it compares to the rest of the U.S. when inflation is taken into account: 2021 saw a federally-issued COLA (cost of living adjustment made to social security beneficiaries checks) of 1.3%, and in 2022 COLA will be 5.9%, which is the highest in over a decade. What this means, essentially, is that the government is saying in 2021 it was 1.3% more expensive to live in America (for those at retirement age) than in 2020. So, the 1% increase youth pastors saw in their average salaries over in 2021 over their 2020 salaries represented quite poor value, as we have measured it in past years. If you need more help understanding COLA, and specifically how it relates to church salaries, [check out this FREE ChurchSalary.com resource](#).

In 2021, 5% of all full-time youth pastors saw their compensation reduced, while 57% (370 respondents) received some type of raise to their annual salary. 35% saw no change in compensation. Of those who got a raise, exactly two-thirds of those raises were 5% or less dollars added. 32% of those who received a raise attributed their raise to COLA or wage compliance laws forcing their employer to raise their wage. 15% received a raise due to merit (congrats on your success!), while 14% received a raise due to taking on more responsibility or increased workload. 39% of youth pastors received no raise in 2021 (and the other 4% weren't sure). But when you compare this to nationwide trends, there is a cause for some alarm.



Aaron Hill from ChurchSalary.com notes, “The core inflation figure (published for 2021 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics) in September and October was 4.6%. Salaries increased in 2021, year-over-year, by that same amount (4.6%). Workers in the service industry received an increase of 6.1%, while those in management received 3.2%. The adjustment used by the Social Security Administration (what we refer to as ‘COLA’) is subject to volatile swings caused by the price of certain goods such as gas, used cars, and hotels. However, wages to those currently working tend to increase based on core inflation.” Bottom line? Everyone is feeling the weight of the world getting more expensive. Correspondingly, wages for finding and retaining top talent (or even fast-food workers!) are rising rapidly. And, for the most part, the Church did not seem to keep up in 2021. In a year where costs for everyday items shot up nationwide at 4.6%, the youth pastor position only saw a 1% increase in average annual salary.





It's Time! We See You, Part-Time Youth Pastors



You asked, and we listened! Here's some info for those of you who aren't regularly scheduled for 30 or more hours. Youth pastors regularly scheduled to work less than 30 hours per week (hereby referred to as "part-time" for our purposes) earned an average of \$18,915 over an average of 24.6 hours per week. This amounted to an hourly wage of \$14.78 per hour, nationwide. Of the 95 youth workers who reported being part-time, exactly two-thirds (66.7%) of them self-declared as bi-vocational in our survey, while presumably the other third do not have a second job. Bi-vocational youth pastors (which make up about 10% of all youth pastors) are averaging \$16,488 as their annual compensation for their ministry role in an average of 22.95 hours per week worked (\$13.81/hour). Part-time youth workers who self-declare as NOT bi-vocational average \$23,925 in annual salary across an average of 28 hours per week (\$16.43/hour).

While not every part-time youth worker would consider themselves bi-vocational, 22% of part-time youth pastors have no "side hustle" of any type, and they earn an average of \$23,485 annually. Youth pastors who do have some sort of side hustle or second job (but don't identify as truly bi-vocational) earn an average of \$17,294 at their ministry job. Exactly half of part-time youth pastors reported having completed a four-year degree, which is interestingly consistent with the average for full-time youth pastors as well. 14% of part-time youth pastors have completed a master's or seminary degree, compared to 37% for full-time youth pastors. 14% of part-time youth pastors saw their compensation reduced in 2021, while 34% saw a raise. 30% reported being unsure of any change to their compensation, and 45% of part-time youth pastors reported seeing no adjustment to their salary.



Hours and Nights Out

In 2020 and 2021 many youth pastors noted that they were asked to take on more responsibilities at their church due to COVID. For the full-time folks, we wanted to include some details about regular hours in a work week so you can have some context about your own workload. In terms of work-life balance, 1-in-5 youth pastors reported regularly working 50 hours per week, and 10% of youth pastors report regularly working 55 hours or more per week. 19% of youth pastors work 45 hours per week, and 18% hit 40 hours right on the nose. Only about 20% of youth pastors work less than 30 hours a week. 48% of youth pastors have regularly scheduled church programs that have them out of the house for two nights per week, and 20% are out three nights a week. These nights out do not take into account “elective” activities many youth pastors attend to support students and staff. Only 29% of youth pastors are out a single night per week for church programs.

The Two Big Factors Affecting Compensation

Every year people want to see how education and tenure affect compensation, because they commonly believe these are two of the largest variables in compensation. And while these are of course important considerations, our research actually reveals that the two biggest deciding factors on how generous a church's compensation of their youth pastor are church size and overall church budget. We had 120 respondents from churches who reported a pre-COVID weekly attendance of 1,000 or more. Those youth pastors earned an average of \$56,254 while the remaining 567 respondents from churches averaging less than 1,000 earned \$48,942; or 13% less. There were 7 respondents who didn't know their church's attendance, and they earned \$43,150. Also, to further illustrate this idea, churches of 2,000 or more in weekly attendance (again, these are pre-COVID numbers), earned an average of \$58,037, compared to \$54,640 for those from churches of between 1,000 and 2,000 people. Smaller churches of 250 or less in weekly attendance have youth pastors who average \$44,249 in salary. Simple conclusion: the bigger the church, the bigger the salary you should expect. And for those of you who run relatively large ministries for your church's size, youth group size doesn't seem to have a noticeable impact on compensation.



Aaron Hill from ChurchSalary.com took a look at the numbers with next-level analytics and shared, "Based on [this survey's] data, the growth rate of a youth pastor's salary slows down (pivots) as the church grows beyond a budget of \$816,000 and an attendance average of 411 people. The average salary for pastors at this pivot point is between \$52,117 and \$53,110. To be blunt, adding families to your church (driving growth) appears to have a much bigger impact on your salary if your church falls below this pivot point (\$816,000 annual budget or 411 people in weekly attendance)."

The second factor affecting compensation is the annual budget. I'll begin by saying that 123 of 694 (18%) full-time respondents reported being unsure of their church's annual budget. Those people with some fog on that number averaged a salary of \$46,611, which would rank as the 5th lowest of 18 salary brackets we asked you all about. When you consider this, and the above number about people who don't know their church's attendance numbers, I'd really encourage you to be "in the know" about your church's metrics. Let it be said even more clearly: understanding church attendance and budgets is directly correlated to higher compensation (though, obviously we can't conclude that it is causal). Empower yourself by knowing the numbers and being able to talk coherently about them! For example, if you don't know how much debt your church has (and what the monthly impact is on the budget), you'll never fully appreciate what your boss is balancing when you ask for a raise. Don't just look at your youth budget! Sit down with somebody (executive pastor, senior pastor, administrator, etc.) and have them teach you the church budget. This is a skill of comprehension you will need for the rest of your career.

steps off soapbox; rant, over.

Churches with an annual budget of 1 million dollars or less pay their youth pastor an average of \$46,971. That's 307 of 560 (55%) of churches. Churches with more than a million-dollar budget pay their youth pastors an average of \$55,834 or a 16% difference. To further illustrate this principle, churches with an annual budget of between 1 and 2 million average \$53,544, while churches with a budget of 2 to 3 million pay \$57,707 (an 8% difference). Multi-site churches average a salary of \$52,621, while single campus churches average a salary of \$49,919 (6% less). What's the finding? Bigger churches with bigger budgets pay bigger bucks. If you want a detailed report using your exact church's budget, location, plus attendance numbers, and how they affect your salary, you can use code **YPREPORT25OFF for 25% off a downloadable PDF report at ChurchSalary.com** (expires 3/31/22).



A Look at Education and Tenure, Anyhow

Even though church size and budget are the two biggest factors affecting youth pastor salaries, education and tenure matter too! First year youth pastors (welcome aboard this crazy train!) reported an average annual salary of \$41,662 and all youth pastors in their first three years of full-time work reported a total average of \$41,455. But then, at what we refer to as the “magic three-year mark,” salary averages jump to \$45,315 for folks averaging 4-6 years of full-time ministry experience.

There's another jump to \$49,088 average for those in the 7-9 year bracket, and then year 10 we see the average salary being \$51,565.

Tenure	Average Salary	# of Responses
1-3 years	\$41,455	119
4-6 years	\$45,635	165
7-9 years	\$49,029	98
10-12 years	\$53,166	108
13-15 years	\$56,221	65
16-18 years	\$58,068	36
19-21 years	\$57,340	40
22-24 years	\$58,627	15
25+ years	\$66,177	34

As you can see, longevity as a full-time youth pastor seems to lead to increased compensation, noting that every three or so years, you can see anywhere from a 4 - 9% increase in salaries. Also, just for fun, the youth pastor with the most tenure in this year's survey came in at 38 years, and she has her doctorate! There were two people tied with the most current tenure at ONE church (23 years), and one of them had spent all 23 years at one church for their entire career, so far!

Education also matters. 87.2% of all youth pastors (both full and part-time!) have completed at least a college degree. Full-time youth pastors who have

finished their 4-year degree earned an average of \$47,661 in 2021, while those who went on to get their master's earned \$54,676, or a 12.8% increase, which is actually 2-4% lower than we have typically seen in past years. Those who have not completed a 4-year degree earned an average of \$44,968.

Check out this chart on the following page for full-time youth pastors showing averages based on the options we provided.



Education	Average Salary	# of Responses
High School	\$44,313	32
Non-Accredited Certificate	\$45,574	19
Associates Degree (AA)	\$44,472	24
Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS)	\$47,661	344
Master's/Seminary	\$54,669	261
Doctorate	\$70,391	7

Therefore, when considering both the tenure and education tables, the national base level salary for a youth pastor with minimal education and experience hovers around \$41,000-\$45,000 (without taking your state's wage laws into account). Then adding a degree and a few years of experience creates a new floor, jumping the range to around \$45,000-50,000. Seminary or grad

school graduates in a related field tack on another five grand or so. There were 8 respondents who began their employment as full-time youth pastors this year who chose to get their master's before they started full-time employment and they averaged a salary of \$45,588 in 2021 as first-year youth pastors.

Below, find a table that shows how education and tenure affect average salaries. Of note, the "No 4-year degree" field becomes very scattered at the 13-year mark, where the salaries are all over the place in the data set and begin to be very uncorrelated. This is mostly due to sample size, where there were only a total of 13 full-time respondents who had at least 13 years of full-time vocational experience and had not at least completed their four-year college degree (amounting to 1.8% of all full-time youth pastors). Therefore, I chose to leave those fields blank, as their salaries very much seem to be exceptions to the dominating pattern of tenure + education = higher salary.

Education	1-3 yrs	4-6 yrs	7-9 yrs	10-12 yrs	13-15 yrs	16-19 yrs	20-22 yrs	23+ yrs
No 4-yr Degree	\$35,929	\$44,051	\$41,665	\$46,442				
4-yr Degree	\$41,712	\$44,490	\$47,168	\$50,667	\$53,463	\$51,459	\$57,973	\$57,130
Seminary/Masters	\$43,316	\$48,393	\$52,233	\$56,920	\$58,593	\$63,613	\$58,665	\$68,922

As you can see, there really seems to be a cap on average salary of \$58,000 if you don't continue on to get your master's. But a master's opens pastors up to earning a similar amount at years 10-12 as a 20+ year veteran earns without their master's, with additional increases coming throughout that second decade.



Benefits: The Great Variable

Every year we get youth workers asking about benefits. It's helpful to note that the salary numbers we report every year are intended to include zero benefit values or contributions the church makes to an employee. The reason we haven't historically done much reporting on benefits is because the dollar values of benefits are highly variable and dependent based on family size, church size, location, and more. To be clear, some churches may have a relatively lower base pay compared to another church down the street, but offer incredible health and retirement benefits so that the overall value of the compensation "package" is actually very lucrative. Here are some simple bullet points on percentages of youth pastors who receive common benefits. This list includes both part-time and full-time youth pastors.

- 88% accrue paid vacation days
- 30% receive vision care paid for by their church
- 36% receive dental care paid for by their church
- 21% receive disability paid for by their church
- 36% receive cell phone benefits of some sort
- 57% receive a conference budget
- 20% receive tuition support of some sort
- 27% receive retirement contributions without necessary contributions from an employee
- 31% receive some sort of retirement contribution matching
- 79% receive paid holidays
- 52% have 100% of their health insurance premium paid by their employer
- 23% have 100% of their dependents' insurance premium paid by their employer
- 7% receive a part of their dependents' insurance premium paid by their employer
- 22% have a church-paid life insurance policy
- 29% receive paid paternity or maternity leave above and beyond other forms of PTO
- 35% accrue paid sick time
- 30% are qualify for, or are given, some sort of paid sabbatical leave
- 5% of youth pastors reported receiving no benefits (majority were part-time employees)



Maternity & Paternity Benefits:

New to the survey this year was a space where youth workers were given the chance to write about their church's maternity and paternity leave policies. One of the things we have heard over the years in the feedback section of the survey is that youth pastors have wanted to hear what churches are doing to care for their staff in this area, as many youth pastors are in the beginning stages of starting a family while doing youth ministry. We were thrilled to have 62% of youth pastors offer some sort of input, and we spent time reading through every single one of your comments and stories. While there were some bright spots, honestly, overall, it felt sad and sobering to read.

There were many of you who shared that your church had a policy that was simple, giving a certain amount of time off for having a child (paid or unpaid policies were both out there). There were also many churches that either have unofficial policies that were quite generous or some other variation of "my pastor told me to do [fill in the blank] and it was good enough." Anecdotally speaking, many churches seem to be very unofficial and loose about some form of family leave for their employees. There were at least 100 responses that resembled some sort of "it's a case-by-case basis." And many others where the church required some form of using paid vacation benefits.

I would encourage pastors who are reading this report, and who don't have a "minimum" supportive policy in their employee handbook specifically dealing with maternity and paternity leave to create one with their governing board. It's also important to note differences in policies for men and women, and expectations for employees who are "out" but still being asked to answer emails or work remotely. How is the time logged? What is fair for everyone on your staff? One of the ways churches can care for their emerging pastoral leaders is by being generous beyond the scope of their policy; but with no policy in place, you open yourself up to different employees being treated differently without clear cause or method; and that can be tricky. Some churches choose to have a "family leave" policy which covers a broader spectrum of benefit. This is a great idea because it allows employees to care for sick family members, get time away for foster parenting needs or adoption, attend out of town funerals, give space to grieve extended family loss, and can sometimes be used prior to a baby's arrival. (Continued on 12)



When interviewing Gen X and Z potential candidates and reviewing the benefits your church offers, this is a great way to set your church apart from others who don't have a strong supportive policy.

Wage Gaps

We want to make sure to include two factors which we consistently see contribute to gaps in wage among youth pastors: gender and denomination. In this year's survey of full-time youth pastors, we had 166 female and 514 male respondents. The gender pay gap landed at 12.8% this year, with women earning an average annual salary of \$45,228, while men earned an average of \$51,886. This number has held fairly consistent over the past three years we've reported on it; ranging between 12% to 15%. Of note for 2021's data is that unlike in years prior where first-year females were out-earning their male counterparts, this year the average first-year male youth pastor saw a salary slightly more than \$3,000 over their female counterparts. However, our data from the past has not been a fluke: all males in

Denomination	Salary	+/- of Nat Avg	# of Responses
Assemblies of God	\$47,542	-5.4%	19
Baptist	\$52,406	+4.2%	187
Christian & Missionary Alliance	\$47,646	-5.2%	7
Church of Christ	\$54,475	+2.4%	22
Episcopal/Anglican	\$50,038	-0.2%	8
Evangelical Covenant	\$44,968	-10.3%	9
Evangelical Free	\$57,041	+12.1%	21
Lutheran	\$52,032	+3.6%	17
Methodist	\$45,251	-10.8%	128
Nazarene/Orthodox	\$45,712	-9.0%	10
Non-Denominational	\$51,577	+3.3%	146
Presbyterian/Reformed	\$51,130	+1.9%	71
Wesleyan	\$40,222	-24.7%	9

their first three years (or less) of ministry earned an average salary of \$41,193, while women in the same time period held a slight edge with an average of \$42,037.

As far as denominations go, there is a clear gap in pay between the various groups our survey included. This year, we will share several denominations' data, and how it compares to the national average salary (\$50,261). We are only including denominations with at least seven respondents.



The following chart highlights the gender wage gap as it relates to several denominations with at least seven female respondents. The methodist denomination had 77 full-time female respondents compared to 55 male, to lead this year's survey data. Presbyterians had 31 female to 40 male, followed by non-denominational (16:134), Baptist (8:182), and Lutheran (7:10). No other denominational group had more than five female respondents. As far as denominations go, there is a clear gap in pay between the various groups our survey included. This year, we will share several denomination's data, and how it compares to the national average salary (\$50,261).

We are only including denominations with at least seven respondents.

Denomination	Male	Female	% Gap
Baptist	\$52,667	\$46,331	12%
Lutheran	\$59,126	\$41,898	30%
Methodist	\$47,575	\$43,712	8%
Non-Denominational	\$52,294	\$45,011	13.9%
Presbyterian/Reformed	\$53,547	\$48,011	11%





Conclusions

A big glaring result of us adding a “not sure” option to many questions this year is that many youth pastors seem to be in the fog on key metrics they can use to measure the viability of their church and corresponding compensation. You can be sure that your church's financials and attendance are disclosed somewhere: just ask the right person to see them. If church leadership doesn't want you to see info like this, that's a red flag! Also, pay attention to how your church's year-end giving was for 2021. Many churches that are used to December giving being a huge month may experience a noticeable (10+%) decrease that may be a precursor of financial struggles to come in 2022. Be aware of how things are going beyond the youth ministry department at your church, and be prepared for ramifications of shrinking budgets following COVID.

There continues to be a trend of the compensation floor rising for youth pastors. This year's first-year salary average of \$41,662 somewhat compares favorably to past years: \$38,540 for 2020 and \$39,225 for 2019. What this means is that the entry point is rising for breaking into youth ministry; and many churches are being shocked by this news as the team at Chemistry Staffing talks to churches about making hires. It wasn't too long ago that a church could hire a first-year \$30,000 youth pastor in many states and it was considered fair and reasonable compensation. But with the floor rising nationwide, churches are learning quickly that they need to find larger salaries to fill that position. This will inevitably create equitability problems with other staff members at the church if not tended to carefully, and is impacting veteran youth pastors as well who aren't seeing their experience and education worth quite as much as it used to, compared to rookie youth pastors. We already saw that a master's degree is worth around 2-4% less of a raise this year over those who only hold a 4-year degree when compared to last year's results. I would expect this trend to continue unless churches take seriously the call to examine their payroll ranges on an ongoing basis to forecast adjustments that all staff positions will need to keep up with inflation in the coming years.

As is our tradition, I want to leave you with a blessing as you begin 2022. Colossians 3:16-17 encourages us ...



"And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

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