

Guidelines for Compensation of  
Church and Synagogue Musicians

2010-2011



The Harrisburg Chapter  
of the  
American Guild of Organists

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The Harrisburg Chapter of  
The American Guild of Organists  
[www.harrisburgago.com](http://www.harrisburgago.com)

National Website:  
[www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org)

### Introduction

These *Guidelines for Compensation of Church and Synagogue Musicians* were prepared by the Harrisburg Chapter of the American Guild of Organists to be used by Church and Synagogue musicians and those who hire and work with such musicians - search committees, clergy, worship committees, and church councils.

The Harrisburg Chapter consists of members from a wide geographical area in South Central Pennsylvania. The majority of church and synagogue musicians in the Harrisburg area are part-time employees, and should be compensated fairly for the hours required by their employers.

## The American Guild of Organists

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. Founded in 1896 in New York City, the AGO now serves over 20,000 members in over 350 chapters throughout the United States and in Europe. The Harrisburg Chapter counts about 135 people as members.

Membership is open to all and includes working professionals - organists, choir directors, teachers, organ builders, technicians, and suppliers to the field - as well as students, clergy, amateur musicians, and dedicated supporters.

Founded as both an educational and service organization, the Guild seeks to set and maintain high musical standards and to promote understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music.

Membership is through local chapters, which hold regular meetings featuring performances, lectures, seminars and discussions on a wide variety of topics.

AGO educational programs include a comprehensive series of examinations for professional certification and an extensive catalog of publications and audio cassette learning resources. The Guild sponsors competitions in organ and choral composition and organ performance, and national and regional conventions in alternate years.

*The American Organist Magazine*, published monthly by the AGO, is the most widely read journal devoted to organ and choral music in the world.

### Determination of Salary

Two considerations are essential in the determination of salary for the organist and/or director. The first is an understanding of the extent of the expected responsibilities, reflected in the average number of hours per week required to do the job. The second is the musician's training, skills, and experience.

The work of a church musician covers a broad spectrum of activities, some visible and some not. To be effective, visible activities such as worship services and choral rehearsals require preparation. Such preparation includes the items listed on the next page "Worksheet for Calculating the Hours per Week for a Church/Synagogue Musician."

Another method for estimating the time requirements for the preparation is to multiply the visible hours (includes worship services, pre-service warm-up, choral rehearsals, committee meetings) necessary for completing the job by 2.5 to 3.0 (organist or director only) or 3.5-4 (organist/director) to find the preparation time needed.

Example: For an organist or director spending 4 visible hours per week: multiply  $4 \times 2.5-3 = 10-12$  hours preparation time. Add the visible hours plus preparation time to find the total time.  $4 + 10 (12) = 14 (16)$  hours.

## A Worksheet For Calculating the Hours per Week for a Church / Synagogue Musician

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Hours Weekly</u>
Organ Practice	_____
Piano practice (includes learning vocal parts of anthem accompaniments)	_____
Rehearsals (including room preparation, arriving early, staying after, locking up building, etc.)	_____
Service planning, choosing music	_____
Service performance (includes setting up music and equipment, warm-up rehearsal, organ practice, clean-up afterwards)	_____
Staff and committee meetings	_____
Administrative and secretarial duties such as writing articles for newsletter and bulletin, preparing performance schedules, care of vestments, arranging car-pools, etc.	_____
Review of new compositions and editions, musical and liturgical articles and books, ordering music, library maintenance	_____
New member recruitment and program building	_____
Instrument maintenance	_____
Pastoral work: counseling, visitation	_____
Preparing and carrying out programs for the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, etc.	_____
Continuing education: workshops, professional meetings, conventions, courses, lessons	_____
Composition and arrangement of music	_____
Concert planning and performance, and supervision, additional practice time, publicity	_____
Social events: dinners, Christmas caroling, etc.	_____
Services in nursing homes	_____
Miscellaneous	_____
<b>Total hours per week</b>	_____

## AGO Certification

The AGO awards certificates to members who pass examinations given yearly at regional centers.

**1. Service Playing Certificate (SPC).** The candidate must show proficiency in playing hymns, preludes, postludes, and choir accompaniments of moderate difficulty.

**2. Colleague (CAGO).** At the organ the candidate must show skill in performing designated pieces of moderate difficulty, accompanying choral and vocal works, and hymns. Proficiency must also be shown in harmonization, transposition, and improvisation.

**3. Choir Master (ChM).** The candidate must rehearse and direct a choir in selected music, utilizing proper choir training methods, and demonstrate basic keyboard ability. The candidate must answer questions on music theory and history, Gregorian chant, and choral repertoire and training, as well as write music from dictation.

**4. Associateship (AAGO).** At the organ the candidate must show skill in performing designated pieces of recital difficulty, sight reading, realizing harmony and figured basses at sight, playing from open (vocal) scores, and transposing. The candidate must analyze excerpts from any era of music history, write music from dictation, demonstrate skills in composition, and answer questions on liturgy, organ construction, choral music, organ repertoire, and contemporary trends.

**5. Fellowship (FAGO).** Tests at the organ are similar to the AAGO but more advanced. In addition, the written tests cover orchestration and contrapuntal style.

While the AGO certificates do not equal academic degrees, someone holding a bachelor's degree in organ or sacred music should have little difficulty passing the CAGO or ChM examination; those having the master of organ or sacred music degree, the AAGO exam; and those having a doctorate in organ or sacred music, the FAGO.

**AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS**

**2010 Salary Guide for Musicians Employed by Religious Institutions**

Musicians with fewer than five years experience should be considered at the lower compensation levels; those with greater experience at the higher levels. Musicians with outstanding abilities or positions requiring exceptional performance may exceed the chart figures. Be sure your experience, background, education and certification have specific relevance to the employer.

The first figure in each box is the Base Salary (**Base**); the second figure represents benefits (**Ben**). Members should recognize that almost everything can be negotiable. Medical insurance, for example, may be less expensive for the employer to furnish than a specific salary request, and the cost of a private policy for the employee might exceed the difference between the salary offer and request. Compensation should equal the total compensation figure (**Total**).

Consult the AGO Model Contract Provisions [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org) and other resources for negotiable terms and 'talking points.'

Approximate Size Of Position (Avg. hrs./wk.)	Doctorate in Organ or Sacred Music or FAGO Certificate	Master's Degree in Organ or Sacred Music or ChM or AAGO Certificate	Bachelor's Degree in Organ or Sacred Music or CAGO Certificate	Associate Degree Private Study/Etc. or Service Playing Certificate
<b>Full Time (40 hrs.)</b>	<b>Base:</b> \$60,836 - \$81,177 <b>Ben:</b> \$20,079 - \$26,790 <b>Total:</b> \$80,915 - \$107,967	<b>Base:</b> \$54,005 - \$72,116 <b>Ben:</b> \$18,363 - \$24,516 <b>Total:</b> \$72,368 - \$96,632	<b>Base:</b> \$47,469 - \$62,498 <b>Ben:</b> \$15,662 - \$20,625 <b>Total:</b> \$63,131 - \$83,123	<b>Base:</b> \$37,599 - \$50,409 <b>Ben:</b> \$12,788 - \$17,138 <b>Total:</b> \$50,387 - \$67,547
<b>3/4 Time (30 hrs.)</b>	<b>Base:</b> \$44,605 - \$60,836 <b>Ben:</b> \$16,067 - \$21,903 <b>Total:</b> \$60,672 - \$82,739	<b>Base:</b> \$39,643 - \$54,005 <b>Ben:</b> \$14,319 - \$19,444 <b>Total:</b> \$53,962 - \$73,449	<b>Base:</b> \$34,353 - \$47,469 <b>Ben:</b> \$13,051 - \$18,034 <b>Total:</b> \$47,404 - \$65,503	<b>Base:</b> \$27,685 - \$37,599 <b>Ben:</b> \$9,968 - \$13,531 <b>Total:</b> \$37,653 - \$51,130
<b>1/2 Time (20 hrs.)</b>	<b>Base:</b> \$32,473 - \$44,605 <b>Ben:</b> \$12,012 - \$16,505 <b>Total:</b> \$44,485 - \$61,110	<b>Base:</b> \$28,856 - \$39,643 <b>Ben:</b> \$10,678 - \$14,669 <b>Total:</b> \$39,534 - \$54,312	<b>Base:</b> \$24,953 - \$34,353 <b>Ben:</b> \$9,487 - \$13,051 <b>Total:</b> \$34,440 - \$47,404	<b>Base:</b> \$20,166 - \$27,685 <b>Ben:</b> \$7,465 - \$10,242 <b>Total:</b> \$27,631 - \$37,927
<b>3/8 Time (15 hrs.)</b>	<b>Base:</b> \$23,413 - \$32,473 <b>Ben:</b> \$9,137 - \$12,656 <b>Total:</b> \$32,550 - \$45,129	<b>Base:</b> \$20,876 - \$28,888 <b>Ben:</b> \$7,936 - \$10,973 <b>Total:</b> \$28,812 - \$39,861	<b>Base:</b> 18,111 - \$24,953 <b>Ben:</b> \$6,886 - \$9,482 <b>Total:</b> \$24,997 - \$34,435	<b>Base:</b> \$14,690 - \$20,166 <b>Ben:</b> \$5,432 - \$7,465 <b>Total:</b> \$20,122 - \$27,631
<b>1/4 Time (10 hrs.)</b>	<b>Base:</b> \$17,095 - \$23,413 <b>Ben:</b> \$6,328 - \$8,661 <b>Total:</b> \$23,423 - \$32,074	<b>Base:</b> \$15,039 - \$20,876 <b>Ben:</b> \$5,717 - \$7,936 <b>Total:</b> \$20,756 - \$28,812	<b>Base:</b> \$12,985 - \$18,111 <b>Ben:</b> \$4,935 - \$6,886 <b>Total:</b> \$17,920 - \$24,997	<b>Base:</b> \$10,592 - \$14,695 <b>Ben:</b> \$4,022 - \$5,585 <b>Total:</b> \$14,614 - \$20,280

It is the policy of the American Guild of Organists not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

For assistance in calculating the difference in the cost of living between geographic areas consult <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/>  
For example, if you want to calculate the difference for NYC compared to National:

For the most recent data comparison

- Under Current CPI Economic News Releases click on Current CPI (HTML) (the first line).
- Click on "Table 1".
- In the column labeled November 2009 (most recent data) read first line "All items"  
216.330 = National Average on November 2009 data. (Note: It is updated monthly.)
- Go back to original screen.
- Under "CPI News Releases" click on "CPI News Release Issued by Regional Offices";  
and click on "New York - Northern New Jersey"
- Read the number for November 2009--238.777 = NYC based on Nov. 2009 data.
- Divide 238.777/216.330 = 1.104
- Subtract 1.0 and multiply x 100 to convert to percentage.

**Conclusion:** Based on the most recent available data, NYC CPI is 10.4% higher than the National Average.

Updated 1/5/2010

**For completely up-to-date information on this salary guide, visit [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org)**

## Benefits

***Benefits listed below are for full and part-time musicians.***

Longevity increments and cost of living adjustments  
Matching Social Security contributions  
Vacation - minimum four weeks with pay (church pays the substitute)  
Sick leave - four weeks with pay (church pays substitute)  
Continuing Education (minimum \$600 annually)  
Professional dues and subscriptions paid  
Organ music allowance

***Benefits listed below are recommended for full-time musicians and might be considered for part-time musicians.***

Pension/Retirement plans  
Medical/Hospital Insurance, Dental, Vision  
Life Insurance  
Disability Insurance  
Maternity/Paternity Leave

### **Other Fees**

- The range of fees are for musicians with degrees in organ or church music or AGO certification.
- Fees vary regionally. The lowest figures reflect smaller, rural areas of the country.
- Fees will also vary based on training, experience, availability, responsibility, and dates required.

### **Substitutes**

- Single service (organist or director only, no separate rehearsal): \$100 - \$225
- Additional services (organist or director only) not requiring additional preparation: \$50 - \$125 per additional service
- Single service (organist/director combination, no separate rehearsal): \$150 - \$275
- Additional services (organist/director combination) not requiring additional preparation: \$75 - \$175 per additional service
- Rehearsal fees range from \$25 - \$100 per hour, depending on whether the substitute is organist only, director only, or an organist/director combination and the preparation required.
- Mileage at the rate set by the IRS is charged if visits to church for practice, rehearsal, and service exceed 20 miles per round trip. (visit IRS.gov to search for current rate)
- The charge for contracting singers/instrumentalists is \$15 - \$35 per person hired.
- There is a document on the national website about substitutes: <http://www.agohq.org/profession/pdfs/GuidelinesforEngSubs.pdf>

## **Weddings**

- Service fees are \$100 - \$350 (service only).
- Wedding rehearsal with bridal party is \$50 - \$100 per hour.
- Additional rehearsals are \$30 - \$50 per hour.
- Mileage at the rate set by the IRS is charged if visits to church for practice, rehearsal, and service exceed 20 miles per round trip.
- The charge for contracting singers/instrumentalists is \$15 - \$35 per person hired.

## **Funerals or Memorial Services**

*The employing institution is responsible for communicating the organist's fee to the funeral director and for ensuring that remuneration is received. It is recommended that the musician confirm that the funeral director is aware of the proper fee.*

- Service fees are \$100 - \$225 (service only).
- Rehearsals \$25 - \$100 per hour, depending on the difficulty of the music and the participation of choirs, soloists, or instrumentalists.
- Mileage at the rate as set by the IRS is charged if visits to church for practice, rehearsal, and service exceed 20 miles per round trip. (visit IRS.gov to search for current rate)
- The charge for contracting singers/instrumentalists is \$15 - \$35 per person hired.

## **Independent Contractors**

Occasionally churches or synagogues will hire musicians as independent contractors instead of employees. According to the IRS, workers are generally considered employees if they:

- Must comply with the employer's instructions about the work.
- Receive training from or at the direction of the employer.
- Provide services that are integrated into the business.
- Provide services that must be rendered personally.
- Are aided by assistants who are hired, supervised, and paid by the employer.
- Have a continuing working relationship with the employer.
- Must follow set hours of work.
- Work full-time for an employer.
- Do their work on the employer's premises.
- Must do their work in a set sequence set by the employer.
- Must submit regular reports to the employer.
- Receive payments of regular amounts at set intervals.
- Receive payments for business travel expenses.
- Rely on the employer to furnish tools and materials.
- Lack a major investment in the facilities or equipment used to perform the services.
- Cannot make a profit or suffer a loss from their services.
- Work for one employer at a time.
- Do not offer their services to the general public.
- Can be fired by the employer.
- May quit work at any time without incurring liability.

According to these guidelines, the majority of church and synagogue musicians are employees.

## Suggestions for Interviews and Auditions

An interview for any position is most informative if all parties can clearly articulate their expectations. Prior to announcing a job opening, determine the expectations of the position and the approximate number of hours per week to complete the job. Written job descriptions and identical audition requirements (including copies of any anthems) should be sent to all candidates in advance.

The interview may consist of following.

- A short program of at least two contrasting pieces can indicate an organist's general facility and musicianship. Practice time should be available in advance of the audition. Service-playing, such as hymns and accompaniments, should also be demonstrated.
- If the candidate is asked to play or conduct a choir at the interview, they should be compensated with a professional fee.
- The committee should lead a tour of the building and discuss topics such as the choral library contents, maintenance of the organ and other instruments, the musician's office, the music budget, and the availability of secretarial help.
- Compensation should be openly discussed, stating what is being offered, in what increments it will be paid, the taxes and pension withheld, vacation time, and benefits. All responsibilities should be clearly outlined in the job description, including lines of communication and accountability.
- The national website offers information under Career development: <http://www.agohq.org/profession/index.html>

## Sample Contract

*The following is a sample contract for use by musicians in religious institutions. It should be used as a guide, adaptable to each situation. It includes items of importance to organists, choir directors, singers, instrumentalists and employing institutions.*

NAME OF INSTITUTION \_\_\_\_\_

INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF POSITION \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Effective on \_\_\_\_\_, and until the termination of this agreement as hereinafter provided  
\_\_\_\_\_ shall act as \_\_\_\_\_.

The above named person shall have the following duties and responsibilities.

1. Provide organ music and direct the choir(s) at the service(s) regularly scheduled on \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Select appropriate organ and choral music for each service.
3. Provide organ and choral music for the following additional services during the year \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Have responsibility for the leadership of the following choirs \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Rehearse once weekly (or as otherwise specified) with each of the following choirs \_\_\_\_\_. During the summer months the choir schedule shall be \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Cooperate with the clergy and/or the music committee in the area of general planning and leadership of the institution's music program. Be directly responsible to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Be responsible for the purchase of all necessary music and music supplies and the hiring of instrumental and vocal soloists. Expenditures in this area shall not exceed the amount provided in the budget. The budget in the coming year for these expenses is \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Be permitted to use the facilities of the institution (organs, pianos) for private teaching. Times of lessons and use of facilities must be scheduled in advance through the office so as not to conflict with the needs of the institution.
9. Report to the appropriate committee the condition and needs for the maintenance of the organ(s) and piano(s).
10. The musician shall perform at all weddings requiring organ music held within the institution. The services of other organists may be used only with permission of the regular organist. For a short program of organ music preceding the wedding ceremony and performing at the wedding ceremony the fee shall be \$ \_\_\_\_\_. For attendance at the wedding rehearsal the fee shall be \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Additional remuneration shall be made for special music, or if attendance at extra rehearsals is required.
11. The musician, if available, shall provide music for funeral services held within the church or synagogue. The fee for such a service shall be \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

In consideration of the foregoing, the above named institution shall agree to the following obligations and responsibilities:

1. A salary of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year shall be provided, payable \_\_\_\_\_, and reviewed annually at the time of preparation of the institutional budget in order to consider adjustment due to cost of living, merit and longevity and/or proper reflection of further educational credentials or additional duties on the part of the musician.
2. The Clergy and/or appropriate committees of the institution shall cooperate with the musician in the area of general planning and leadership of the institution's music program. The committee so involved is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The institution shall provide funds for the proper care of organ, piano, and other instruments.
4. Guest organists or recitalists shall not be engaged to perform musical functions without prior approval by the regular organist.
5. The musician shall be granted vacation (with full salary) of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks annually; and shall assist the institution in arranging for a substitute.
6. The musician shall be eligible for \_\_\_\_\_ sick leave per year.
7. The institution shall provide the following fringe benefits for the above named person and family.
8. The institution shall grant the above named person a minimum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annually for all expenses of an educational activity.

**TERMINATION:**

This agreement may be terminated by either party, provided written notice is given ninety (90) days prior to the date of termination.

**CODE OF ETHICS:**

Parties to this agreement shall have familiarized themselves with the provisions of the Code of Ethics of the American Guild of Organists, the rules of which are hereby incorporated as part of this agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Church

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Musician

## **THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS CODE OF ETHICS**

*Preamble: Founded as an educational and collegial organization, the American Guild of Organists strives to support its members in their professional lives and work. In keeping with this goal, and recognizing the diversity of its membership, the Guild establishes the following rules of conduct, which shall be considered binding upon all members in good standing.*

### **Rule 1. All individuals shall be eligible for membership and participation in the American Guild of Organists.**

The Guild-its Headquarters, Regions, Districts, and Chapters shall not discriminate 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).

All 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. Members shall abide by the Code of Ethics, the Code of Professional Standards, the By-Laws of the American Guild of Organists and the Operating Procedures of their local Chapters.

The Guild's referrals and recommendations for prospective employment shall be based solely upon professional competence and availability.

The Guild shall consider members' physical disabilities when choosing sites for its activities, and it shall endeavor to make printed material accessible to members with visual disabilities.

### **Rule 2. Members shall strive to promote good working relationships within this organization and within their employing institutions.**

Members shall observe both the spirit and the letter of this Code of Ethics in their dealings with the Guild, with individual members and with musicians under their supervision. In their relationships with employing institutions, members shall abide by the Code.

Members shall address differences of opinion within this organization through appropriate channels, including its Discipline. Members shall address differences of opinion with employing institutions through appropriate channels, as provided by their individual employment agreements and the Guild's Procedures for Dealing with Complaints about Employment Matters.

### **Rule 3. Members shall respect the employment of colleagues.**

Members shall not apply for a position, appearing to be soliciting a position, engage in discussion about possible employment or attempt to place a student or colleague in a position until the incumbent shall have resigned or been notified of termination by the institution. It is the responsibility of the members to determine whether the incumbent has been notified. Furthermore, members shall not undermine or attempt to dislocate an incumbent.

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 (see Procedures for Dealing with Complaints about Employment Matters), members shall not seek employment or attempt to place a student or colleague in the position until the National Council has declared that differences between the Guild and the institution have been resolved.

A member may accept a performing engagement only when such an engagement has been approved by the incumbent musician. It is the responsibility of the member to determine whether approval has been granted. In cases where such a performing engagement, for a wedding, funeral or other occasional service, has been requested by a third party, it is appropriate for the third party to offer the incumbent the customary fee as a professional courtesy.

### **Rule 4. Members shall respect the legal rights of others.**

Members shall respect the property rights of composers, authors, and publishers by being aware of and complying with the Copyright Law and attendant procedures regarding performance, reproduction and recording rights.

Members shall respect the employment rights of others by being aware of and complying with all laws and procedures pertaining to immigration and work permits.