



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

"CELEBRATING GOD'S ABUNDANCE"

Central Payroll System General Information and Instructions **Effective January 1, 2026**

Agency Agreement

The Central Payroll System is operated as a service to the parishes and missions of the diocese. The input of payroll information takes place at the Diocesan administrative offices and is then transmitted to Checkwriters, a local payroll service, where the printing of checks, direct deposits and payroll tax reporting is done. Under the current arrangement, the Diocese, through its agency function, provides this service to parishes and missions. **Here's how it works:**

- **The parish is the employer and is responsible for notifying the Diocesan Payroll Department, in writing, of any changes to employment status.** . We accept written changes through the use of the [Diocesan Central Payroll Authorization Form](#), via mail or email and we ask that payroll information be received at the diocesan offices 4 business days before the actual payroll date, this is the "Run Date". Any changes received after that date will not be processed until the next payroll period. If a special payroll run is required, there is a fee that must then be passed along to the parish.

The parish, as the employer, is responsible for tracking sick time, vacation and holidays at the local level. We do not track this through the payroll system and urge each parish to have a system of tracking this information for each individual that you employ.

- Each parish reimburses the Diocesan payroll account through an electronic banking system maintained by the Diocesan administrative offices for all clergy/lay salaries and the employer's share of lay social security, clergy social security add-on, lay pension and clergy 403(b) contributions. A summary of these charges entitled "Church Summary Special Listing" is provided to the treasurer following each payroll run which **1)** provides the figures needed for the treasurer to verify payroll costs for each pay period and **2)** serves as a basis for verifying the amount withdrawn from the parish account via electronic funds transfer (EFT). The EFT is processed on the first business day following each payroll.
- The parish also reimburses the Diocesan payroll account via (EFT) for group benefits such as medical/dental insurance provided to clergy and lay employees as well as clergy pension assessments. A separate sheet with itemized costs of these benefits is included with the second payroll mailing of each month.

2026 Payroll Run Date Schedule

The diocese contracts with an outside payroll processor requiring that payroll be processed 4 business days before the pay date of the payroll, we refer to this as the "Run Date". The "Run Date" is the date that payroll information is input here at the Diocesan administrative offices and transmitted to our payroll service for processing. By allowing 4 days processing time, this ensures that all direct deposit information is transmitted to each employee account for timely credit on the scheduled pay date. The "Run Dates" are influenced by weekends and holidays.

We require that all payroll changes such as new hires, terminations and time sheets for hourly employees be received no later than 4 business days before the pay date which is referred to as the "Run Date". Any payroll changes received after that date will not be processed until the next payroll period. The 2026 Pay Date and Run Date schedule will be forwarded to you in November for your new year planning.

Clergy Compensation

Clergy FICA- Clergy paid through the diocesan payroll system receive a "grant" (referred to as Social Security Add-On" and/or Clergy FICA) toward the applicable self-employed social security tax. Clergy are considered to be self-employed for purposes of Social Security and as a result, clergy are subject to a 15.30% self-employment tax rate. The amount on which the self-employment tax is calculated consists of cash salary + fair market rental value of church-provided housing and/or actual housing allowance paid.

The Clergy FICA/S. Sec. Add-on is calculated as follows:

Cash Stipend \$31,000.
plus: Vestry approved Housing Allowance or Fair Rental Value of Unfurnished Rectory plus utilities
\$24,000.

Social Security Base
\$55,000.

x 15.30% Self-Employed Rate
\$8,415.00/2=1/2 **Social Security**
"Add-On"/Clergy FICA
\$4,207.50

assessment calculation. Please contact Susan Olbon with questions about clergy compensation at 413-417-2429 or solbon@diocesewma.org

Massachusetts Minimum Wage

Please be mindful that the minimum wage in Massachusetts is \$15.00 per hour as of 1/1/2023.

Lay Compensation

Lay FICA-As of January 1, 2026, the total rate for social security tax continues to be 7.65% for lay employees. This means that as the employer, each church is responsible for their 7.65% employer share of the social security tax. This amount appears on the "Church Summary Special Listing" that is sent to the parish treasurer following each payroll run.

The annual "add-on" amount is added to the cash stipend and is subject to federal and state income taxes and is also part of the clergy pension

Annual Salary Information

Notice of annual salary information should be sent, in writing, to the Diocesan Payroll Department as close to the first of the year as possible. You can submit changes by using a Central Payroll Authorization Form which can be downloaded from the Diocesan website www.diocesewma.org under Parish Treasurer Resources or on church letterhead via email to Melanie Stone mstone@diocesewma.org

www.irs.gov for Form W-4, www.dor.state.ma.us/ for Form M-4.

Direct Deposit/Paperless Payroll

We offer direct deposit to employees paid through the Central Diocesan Payroll system. Under this program, the employee's net pay is deposited to his/her account automatically each payday. Please invite your employees to contact the Diocesan Payroll Office for details on how to sign up for this program.

If you should have any questions, please contact Melanie Stone at (413) 372-8682 or 800-332-8513, Ext. 125 or email mstone@diocesewma.org

Variable Work Hour Employees

In most instances, part-time employees work a predetermined number of hours per week and therefore, can readily be paid fixed amounts. There are instances of employees who work varying hours. If you have an employee that is working variable hours, we must be informed in writing of actual hours worked. Please email a completed time sheet to the Diocesan Payroll Office to mstone@diocesewma.org



Pay Frequency/Tax Status

The salary base and the taxes withheld will be based on 1/26 of the annualized salary. In effect, this means that all salaries will be annualized and reduced to a bi-weekly base (1/26). **Bi-weekly pay is issued on every other Friday.** In the event that a payroll date falls on a holiday or a weekend, the payroll is issued in time to arrive on the business day immediately preceding.

Withholding Taxes- Federal and state withholdings are calculated automatically by the payroll software on the basis of an individual's withholding status (single, married) and number of exemptions listed on the Form W-4 and Form M-4. Persons requiring additional withholding are advised to revise the tax forms on file through the Diocesan Payroll Department. These withholding forms are available from the Diocesan Payroll Department or online at