

The Archives of the Episcopal Church

Evolving Roles and Compensation of the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies

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Evolution of the Modern Role of the Presiding Bishop

As late as 1919, the role of the presiding bishop reflected the early diocesan-centered church structure in which they acted as presiding officer of the House of Bishops and as president of the chief missionary agency in New York, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS). The consolidation of agencies (education, social service, and missionary work) and structures accomplished by the National Council in 1919 brought attention to the increased complexity and workload of the presiding bishop, especially in his role as president of the consolidated DFMS operations. Some in the House of Bishops began calling attention to the unfairness of placing such a complex burden on the most senior bishop.

Presiding Bishop and Council

Canon 60, as enacted in 1919, outlined the structure of the new "Presiding Bishop and Council" with an elected Presiding Bishop who would serve as president of the National Council and "Executive Head" of all departments of the Church's mission work.¹ Under this new structure, the presiding bishop became, in effect, the church's chief executive, responsible for both pastoral and business matters. The 1919 Canons were the first to include provision for a "stipend" for the presiding bishop, who was henceforth elected.

Despite occasional structural reviews after 1919, including the period when a non-jurisdictional presiding bishop began to serve in 1947, the executive role of the presiding bishop as president of the DFMS was consistently affirmed and provided for by stipend.

In 1964, in response to requests for a definition of the church's context of responsibility and authority, the House of Bishops adopted a resolution outlining "Levels of Authority Within the Church."² That statement named the Presiding Bishop and Executive Council as the responsible representatives of the church, with authority and duty "to speak God's word to his Church and to his world" in the interim of General Convention. This was reaffirmed in 1979, when the Structure Commission republished the "levels of authority" statement, saying in its report to the General Convention that it had found the statement useful in its own work and wanted to make it readily available to the church.³

The trend towards centralized control and authority of the Executive Council resulted in changes in 1967 to Canon 2.4: Of the Presiding Bishop. The General Convention adopted wording that added "chief pastor" to the two existing titles of presiding bishop and president, and charged the office to give leadership in initiating and developing the Church's policy and strategy, and speaking God's word to the church and to the world as the representative of the church and its episcopate in its corporate capacity. In 1982 the Canon was amended again to add the title of "Primate" and to capitalize the words "Primate," and "Chief Pastor".⁴

Presiding Bishop, Primate, Chief Pastor, and President

It was generally agreed that with the creation of the Presiding Bishop and Council in 1919, the newly combined role required the full-time attention of the presiding bishop. However, the lack of a See for the presiding bishop and the perceived need for all bishops to be attached to jurisdictions meant that the elected presiding bishop divided time between the diocese and the broader responsibilities. None of the

¹ Journal, 1916, p. 513; Journal 1919, p. 48 and Constitution and Canons, pp. 154-162.

² Journal, 1964, pp. 312-313.

³ Journal, 1979, pp. AA-307-AA-308.

⁴ Journal, 1967, pp. 320-322. See also Report of the Mutual Responsibility Commission, Journal, 1967, Appendix 25.

presiding bishops prior to Henry Sherrill (1947-1959) served entirely in a full-time capacity; all of them continued, at least nominally, to be engaged in their dioceses, supplemented by support staff as needed.

In 1937, the canons were amended to address the need for the presiding bishop to devote more time to his church-wide role. In that year, Canon 17.III was amended to require the presiding bishop-elect to relinquish the administration of his diocese "sufficiently to enable him fully to perform his duties as Presiding Bishop."⁵ The matter was advanced in 1943 with designation of a cathedral seat and recognition by Canterbury.⁶ Henry Sherrill became the first full-time presiding bishop in 1947.

Minor adjustments came with the marginal growth of the bureaucracy, but it was not until 1970 that the presiding bishop's role was again examined in detail. It was a time of structural experimentation in governance - some for greater inclusivity and some to tighten control. However, the precipitating event in this review was very likely the tumult surrounding Presiding Bishop John Hines' assertive exercise of executive authority in calling for the General Convention Special Program (1969), which was perceived as threatening by a sizeable number of diocesan bishops and other members of Convention leadership. The reaction led to the creation of a separate, elected executive officer, who was tasked with managing administrative duties for the church, including many that previously fell to the presiding bishop and the secretary of the House of Deputies, an act authorized by General Convention resolution in 1970.⁷

In 1973, a report of the Committee on Church Structure recommended further clarification of the executive function of the presiding bishop. The section of the report on the presiding bishop opened by stating that: "There can be only one ultimate executive. In the Episcopal Church, that one executive should, beyond question, be the Presiding Bishop, whose duties necessarily extend far beyond the responsibility of his primary role..."⁸

The Structure Committee's recommended changes to the Canons, which would have clarified the presiding bishop's responsibility for implementation of the church's policy and strategy and at the same time empowered them to appoint executive officers to whom authority could be delegated, were not reported out by the legislative committee. Instead, Convention voted to reauthorize the Executive Office created in 1970, but to make the officer in charge an appointment of the presiding bishop and the president of the House of Deputies (rather than elected). The paid executive officer absorbed administrative functions of the secretary and treasurer of the General Convention and took charge of interim body coordination.⁹

The Structure Commission undertook to comment on the role of the Presiding Bishop in the context of other matters of authority, governance and polity. This led to a slightly different iteration of the statement on authority in 1979, which was shaped by the secretary/executive officer.¹⁰ A further attempt to clarify the role of the office occurred in 1982, with an eye on the historical evolution of the office that was influenced by the executive officer and Roland Foster's excellent 1982 history for the Structure Committee.¹¹ The Structure Committee reviewed the role of the Presiding Bishop again in 1997 and echoed Bishop Appleton Lawrence's 1964 summation that, "the present organization has become top-heavy, so that a bishop spends more time in keeping the machinery in order than in the 'care and cure of

⁵ Journal, 1937, p. 179.

⁶ Journal, 1943, p. 170, and report of the Strategy and Policy committee on "The Presiding Bishop and Diocesan Jurisdiction", p. 571."

⁷ Journal, 1970, pp. 299-300; Journal, 1970, pp. 727-729, Annex #1, Letter from the Secretary and the Treasurer to Bishop Craine.

⁸ Journal, 1973, p. 984.

⁹ Journal, 1973, p. 393.

¹⁰ Reports to General Convention 1979, pp. AA-285-286.

¹¹ Reports to General Convention 1982, pp. 334-337.

souls.’’ The committee’s canonical recommendation sought to further distinguish between the pastoral and administrative functions of the office.¹²

A reading of the literature and records of this period suggest some observations. First, there was a historical reluctance to precisely define the subset of tasks and powers within the role of the presiding bishop beyond those enumerated or broadly attributed by the constitution and canons. Second, the office of the presiding bishop, especially its relationship to the Executive Council and the General Convention, has been highly influenced by the person interpreting that role and their comfort with a collegial style of leadership. The perception that the presiding bishop understands and adheres to the canons and other rules, and seeks counsel in collegial work relationships with the Council and Convention leadership has led to genial and cooperative relationships even when the incumbents disagreed over substantive issues. At other times of stress and disagreement, however, when relationships were impaired among the leadership of the two Houses and Executive Council, proposals for structural change typically included some form of check on or correction of the presiding bishop's authority as occurred, for example, in 1970s and 2000s.¹³

Presiding Bishop’s Compensation

The salary of the presiding bishop is always referred to in the canons as a "stipend" rather than a salary. The first mention of a formal stipend appears in 1919. There, Canon 16.III states that, "The stipend of the presiding bishop and his necessary expenses shall be provided for in the budget approved by the General Convention."¹⁴ Before 1919, it was assumed that the salaries of presiding bishops came from their dioceses, although a "Standing Resolution" required the General Convention to cover the presiding bishop's incidental expenses as early as 1898.¹⁵

At the January, 1920 meeting of the new National Council, before the roles of presiding bishop and Council president were combined, the members approved provision of an "adequate" salary for the president. The presiding bishop at that time received his salary from the diocese. The National Council provided a salary (set at \$15,000) for the president, who was a different bishop from 1919 to 1926.¹⁶

Prior to the 1943 requirement that elected presiding bishops resign their jurisdictions, the presiding bishop's salary sometimes was paid by the National Council, sometimes by the diocese, and perhaps sometimes by both (depending on diocesan and personal resources). After the election of Presiding Bishop John Murray in 1925, the role and salary of National Council (DFMS) President were eventually assigned to him in 1927, although he continued to receive compensation from the diocese for expenses relating to diocesan work.¹⁷ Bishop James Perry, who served in the role from 1930-1937, announced that he intended to take primarily his diocesan salary, drawing on the President's salary only when away from the diocese for long periods. Bishop Henry Tucker (1938-1946) received no compensation from his diocese except for expenses related to visitations, and it was he who finally and forthrightly told the Joint Committee on Strategy and Policy that he thought he should "be relieved of all diocesan responsibility."¹⁸

¹² Reports to General Convention 1997, pp. 484-486.

¹³ See for example: *The Acts of Convention*, 2012-D073; Executive Council Minutes, Jan. 31, 2009, pp. 9-10; Executive Council Minutes, Mar. 19-21, 2015, pp. 22-24; Sally Johnson, "The Work of the House of Bishops," *Shared Governance*, pp. 29-45.

¹⁴ Constitution and Canons, Journal, 1919, Canon 16.III, p. 65.

¹⁵ Constitution and Canons, Journal, 1898, p. 149.

¹⁶ National Council Minutes, January 1920, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Journal, 1925, pp. 29, 53. The General Convention assigned the PB's salary to the National Council budget in his role as president, and set it at \$25,000 plus \$5,000 for housing and expense.

¹⁸ Journal, 1943, p. 571.

An important adjustment was made to the presiding bishop's stipend in 1934, probably in reaction to the national economic depression. Facing a shortfall in the mission quota offering, the National Council found it prudent to recognize that the dual role of presiding bishop as both chief pastor of the General Convention (understood to be the whole church) and National Council president characterized The Episcopal Church's unified governance and that the position could not be relegated to a "program" element of the National Council's mission budget. Thus, the National Council petitioned General Convention to provide for part of the presiding bishop's salary (about 80%) from the General Convention assessment or "Expense Budget," which Convention did, effective January 1, 1935.¹⁹ By 1940, the General Convention had assumed the Presiding Bishop's full salary as part of the General Convention Expense budget.²⁰

Role of the President of the House of Deputies

Before 1964, there was neither mention of a continuing role nor provision made for support of the president's position in the House of Deputies between Conventions. Rather, when the House met, its secretary, who was, with the treasurer, the only other continuing officer, called the House to order and certified the presence of a quorum, after which the House elected its presiding officer. That officer's term expired upon the convening of the succeeding meeting of the General Convention.²¹

The primary role of the President of the House of Deputies was originally to preside over meetings of the House and ensure that necessary work was accomplished during the interim. In 1967, Canon 4 was amended by adding a new Section 1 that changed the composition of the Executive Council to include the President of the House of Deputies as Vice-Chair.²² Joint Rule 1 was also amended in the same year to make the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies *ex officio* members of every Joint Committee and Joint Commission with the right, but not the obligation to attend meetings with seat and vote.²³ In 1997, the Canon I.3 was revised to name the President of the House of Deputies as one of the vice-presidents of the DFMS (the other vice president being the chief operating officer).²⁴

The current role of the President of the House of Deputies is outlined in the Constitution and Canons.²⁵ The President presides over the House of Deputies, serves as the Vice-Chair of the Executive Council and as one of two Vice-Presidents of the DFMS. The president makes the majority of appointments to interim bodies and has been increasingly involved in their deliberations since 1990. According to one House observer in 2012, "The role of the President has come to include being a spokesperson for The Episcopal Church both at home and abroad."²⁶

Compensation of the President of the House of Deputies

Regarding expenses and compensation for the President of the House of Deputies, Canon I.1.8 was amended in 1970 to allow for "the necessary expenses of the President of the House of Deputies, including the staff and advisory Council required by him to assist him in the performance of the duties

¹⁹ Council Minutes, April, 1934, p. 5. The General Convention amended Canon 17.IV to assign some responsibility for the presiding bishop's stipend and expenses to the General Convention Expense budget and added Section VII to Canon 49 requiring diocesan payment of the Convention Expense assessment. Twenty percent of the salary budget was still allocated from the 1934 Mission Program Budget. Journal, 1934, pp. 361-362 and National Council Minutes, February, 1935, pp. 5. See also for comparison: Journal, 1937, 399f.

²⁰ Journal, 1940, Treasurer's Report, p. 380.

²¹ Constitution and Canons 1961, Canon I.1.1(a), p. 1.

²² Journal, 1967, pp. 324-325.

²³ Journal, 1967, p. 452;

²⁴ *Acts of Convention*, 1997-A190.

²⁵ For duties of the President of the House of Deputies, see Constitution and Canons 2015 *inter alia*, especially Canons I.1.2(c),(o); I.3 (DFMS Art.III); I.4.2(f)-(h); I.4.4; II.3.6(c); RHD IX.A; I.4.2(b).

²⁶ Jim Simons, "The Presiding Officers," *Shared Governance*, NY: Church Publishing, 2012 (63-67), p. 67.

and matters relating to the office."²⁷ Additional support for the president came with the creation of the Executive Office in 1970, which included coordinating the work for the House of Deputies and the interim bodies.²⁸

At the 1997 General Convention, two resolutions were submitted to provide a stipend for the President of the House of Deputies. The first was an Executive Council proposal to amend the canons to allow for a stipend/salary for the president. The resolution passed the Deputies, but was rejected by Bishops.²⁹ The second resolution was an amendment to the Executive Council's Budget of The Episcopal Church to provide for "the stipend and expenses of the President of the House of Deputies." This amendment was made as a line entry in the 1997 budget resolution by the Program, Budget and Finance Committee to the Convention. Neither House gave notice to this change in their debate in adopting the resolution.³⁰

Successive attempts were made to create a stipend. In 2000, the Structure Commission forwarded a resolution to provide a part-time stipend to assist those who could not otherwise support both an existing position or retirement allowance, noting however that "it would be inappropriate to fund or possibly encourage persons to seek a full-time and fully stipendiary position."³¹ The proposed stipend was 40% of the salary of the Chief Operating Officer. That resolution (2000-A121) to amend Canon I.1.1 was adopted by the House of Deputies but ultimately rejected by non-concurrence.

In 2009, a proposal for a stipend for the President of the House of Deputies came forward through the Executive Council budget process, but was dropped by the Program, Budget, and Finance Committee, at least in part due to the 24% reduction in budget that occurred at Convention in that Great Recession year. In 2015, General Convention passed resolution D013 relating to the Church budget, which included resolves noting the increased workload assumed by the President of the House of Deputies and acknowledging the view that the lack of compensation limited potential candidates for the position.³²

²⁷ Journal, 1970, p. 223.

²⁸ Journal, 1970, pp. 299-300; pp. 727-729.

²⁹ *Acts of Convention*, 1997-A209.

³⁰ *Acts of Convention*, 1997-A209.

³¹ Reports to General Convention 2000, pp. 483-484. The salary was set in the canonical resolution.

³² *Acts of Convention*, 2015-D013.