

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A008
Title: Study of Benefit Obligation Effects on Clergy and Lay Professional Deployment
Proposer: Secretary of General Convention
Topic: Church Pension Fund, Employee Benefits, Small Churches

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-D003 On the Topic of Creating a Clergy Retirement Contribution Fund (Rejected)
2018-A237 Study Parity Between Lay and Clergy Pensions
2006-D048 Establish Equitable Benefits for Small Church Workers

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

A008 - Study of Benefit Obligation Effects on Clergy and Lay Professional Deployment

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Secretary of General Convention

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$40,000.00

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That, the General Convention Office initiate a study, with appropriate outside consultant support, for delivery to Executive Council by September 1, 2023 and for publication that month, for the purpose of determining the extent to which the obligation to pay pension and health plan contributions for clergy and lay professionals at the current contribution rates discourages deployment of clergy and lay professionals to historically non-white and small congregations, as compared to the statistical average congregation in The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention Office and its outside consultant are authorized and encouraged to use existing appropriate data sources, including data as may be reasonably requested from the Church Pension Fund in this work, and data from other denominations; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention Office and its outside consultant be encouraged to seek additional data by means of surveys of: Bishops and Diocesan deployment personnel, and Non-white congregations, clergy, and lay leaders; and be it further

Resolved, That to the extent reasonably feasible using existing labor economic models, the Study also estimate how many more full and part-time paid clergy and lay professionals would be deployed to non-white and small congregations if these obligations were completely funded (or reimbursed) from another source; and be it further

Resolved, That for the purposes of this resolution, the term “small congregation” shall mean a congregation whose pledge and plate income is in the lowest twenty percent for their diocese, and without significant income-generating resources of their own, and the term “increasing deployment” shall mean increases in the number of personnel deployed to such congregations as well as an increase in the number of compensated hours they work; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$40,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

This resolution was referred from the 80th General Convention. It was proposed by Legislative Committee 17 - Agencies & Boards, listed as 2022-A164, and referred to Legislative Committee 17 - Agencies & Boards

Substantial anecdotal evidence suggests that the need to pay clergy and lay professional pension and health plan costs are discouraging the deployment of such clergy and lay professionals, both full time and part-time, to historically non-white and small congregations, particularly as compared to affluent suburban and predominantly white congregations. This resolution seeks to compile much more specific data about the degree to which these obligations deter such deployment, as well as how to provide meaningful relief that will increase the number of such professionals deployed, as well as increase the number of compensated hours that such part-time professionals work for these historically non-white and smaller congregations.

The General Convention Office (GCO) would supervise the Study because the GCO is experienced in conducting statistical surveys, both of The Episcopal Church and in cooperation with other denominations and academic institutions. The resolution authorizes and encourages the GCO to retain outside consultants to perform the bulk of the survey work and economic forecasting.

Remedies such as reducing pension rates and finding an alternate source to fund these pension and health plan obligations have been suggested. Before recommending which, if either, of these approaches would be best for the church, much better information is needed to see how much difference such changes would make to the actual deployment of clergy and lay professionals, both full and part-time. This study would seek to provide much better data on which to make such decisions.

The GCO would deliver the study results to Executive Council, the body best positioned to formulate carefully considered and workable policy responses to improve clergy and lay professional deployment to underserved historically non-white and smaller congregations.



Resolution Number: 2022-D003
Title: On the Topic of Creating a Clergy Retirement Contribution Fund
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring,

That the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church (the “Episcopal Church”) to conduct a study to determine if it is possible to establish a permanent Retirement Contribution Fund (the “Fund”) whereby the applicable pension contributions will be made from such fund to pay the pension contributions of a parish priest’s salary who would serve such parish but for the fact that the required pension contributions makes it unaffordable for the hiring of such priest; and be it further

Resolved, That no priest may be eligible to participate in receiving pension contributions from the Fund where hisher parish’s gross income exceeds \$250,000; and be it further

Resolved, That the study shall include discussions with dioceses to determine the feasibility of a diocese’s ability to contribute a meaningful percentage to the Fund to support a priest’s pension contribution; and be it further

Resolved, That The Church Pension Fund also be included in the discussions because of the financial expertise it would bring to the table in the management of pension contributions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Officers of the Episcopal Church and Executive Council shall refer this resolution to the appropriate Interim Body for consideration; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church shall report to the 81st General Convention on the progress that it has made during the triennium in its efforts to effectuate the purposes of this resolution.



Resolution Number: 2018-A237
Title: Study Parity Between Lay and Clergy Pensions
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention urge the Church Pension Fund to report on the current state of parity between the pensions of lay and ordained Church employees, domestic and non-domestic Church employees and Church employees of disparate incomes, with a particular focus on how those income disparities are manifested across gender and racial or ethnic lines, understanding that lower compensation directly affects pension benefits; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church Pension Fund consider supplemental models for the pension system that would benefit lay and clergy employees while the Church works toward true parity in wages and employment practices; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church Pension Fund is invited to present its findings to the 80th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 1059-1060.



Resolution Number: 2006-D048
Title: Establish Equitable Benefits for Small Church Workers
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Convention request that the CPF investigate the formula for awarding credited years of service for the Church Pension Fund participants receiving part-time compensation.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 345.