

Report of the Committee on Ministers' Salaries To the One Hundred Thirty-first Council of The Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic

Dear Brethren:

Constructing salary guidelines for clergy is a difficult task. In many cases compensation of clergy is determined by the income of the congregation rather than the experience or competency of the clergyman. Sources of income vary from parish to parish. Some parishes have endowments and investments that generate income over and above parishioner contributions. Others are dependent solely upon the contributions of the parishioners. Some parishes face large overhead expenses for buildings and maintenance, some have little or no expenses. Sometimes parishes with large endowments find themselves with less income than parishes with no endowments because the people see the wealth of the church as a reason not to give to the church.

The first step to honoring God in caring for our clergy begins with honoring God in the stewardship of our individual funds. The standard of giving established in the Bible is "sacrificial giving." Sacrificial giving does not mean that we "give until it hurts." Biblical sacrifices were not always bloody. Often they were gifts expressing joy, thanksgiving, praise and the celebration of God's goodness. It is also important to understand that "sacrificial giving does not begin until the tithe is met. The tithe, or first ten percent, does not belong to us. It belongs to God. It is to be offered regardless of wealth or poverty. It is a percentage not a specific dollar amount. Thus in God's eyes, the ten dollar offering of the man who earns a hundred dollars is the same as the ten thousand dollar offering of the man who earns a hundred thousand. God does not count the way we count. He blesses our faithfulness not the amount of our contribution. Thus while the fifty thousand dollar contribution of the man earning a million may seem a great blessing to the church it is still disobedience in God's eyes.

Further, we are led to understand that God does not need our money. Rather He has established Biblical stewardship as an expression of faith that ultimately blesses the good steward. Too often we plead with people to give because the church needs the money when the simple fact is that if the people of the church were obedient in the tithe they would be better off and the church would be blessed.

The Scriptures encourage us to consider those who labor in the word and doctrine as worthy of double honor. It is the opinion of the chairman of this committee that double honor most likely refers to financial compensation and at the very least establishes the esteem and value a congregation should place upon its pastor. It appears that God desires His pastors to care for His people and His people to care for His pastors. When we do our parts, He is honored and all His people, including the clergy, are blessed.

How do we calculate double honor? One way is to establish the mean income of the congregation (That is the number in the middle between the wealthiest and the poorest of the congregation. Consideration must be given to extreme circumstances like having one very wealthy family in an otherwise poor congregation.) and double it. This equation would produce a significant difference between clergy serving poor congregations and those serving more affluent parishes. While appearing inequitable at first it is not, for God does not count dollars, and this system is reflective of a pastor who lives in the same community as his congregation. Further, while few parishes use this Biblical model it is nevertheless a fact that clergy serving congregations in more affluent areas are paid more than those serving in less affluent communities. This situation reflects not only the wealth of the congregation, but also the cost of living in the area surrounding the parish.

Each year Christianity Today surveys a broad spectrum of Churches and publishes a compensation handbook. Parishes are encouraged to survey the information they publish.

Drawing the following figures from the sample of parishes that most closely parallels those in our diocese the following figures are provided as a point of reference and are not offered as a basis for establishing minimum or maximum salaries for clergy. The average attendance of the sample is between 0 and 250 on a Sunday morning. The compensation includes cash salary, rectory, housing, pension (**for 2012 the pension contribution for the REC Plan will be 12%**), employer paid life and health insurance (**\$500.00 per year for the REC Plan.**) and funds for continuing education. It reflects the number that most concerns our parishes when they establish a budget for a pastor's salary – How much will it cost the church to pay all the expenses related to having a pastor? The salary figure does not include reimbursable expenses such as auto or office expenses. The numbers are adjusted for inflation and are broken down based upon the basic type of community where the church is located. They are based upon the salary of a full time Sr. Pastor with six years of experience and a Masters degree. The national average for all pastors in this group is \$89,500 with a range of approximately \$35,000 above or below that number.

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| Urban | \$97,750 | Suburban | \$103,250 |
| Medium City | \$92,865 | Small Town | \$ 81,100 |
| Rural | \$82,250 | | |

The committee recommends our parishes examine their budgets, giving patterns and pastor's salaries in light of this report and requests every effort be made to honor God in establishing a compensation package for those who labor in the word and doctrine.

We would also like to recommend a minimum figure for pulpit supply of \$275.00 plus travel expenses and a minimum salary for a part time interim rector of \$2000 per month, plus pension contribution and expenses.

The committee would like to recommend the publications that may be found at:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/>

Among other things they publish Church Finance Today which is a wonderful resource for treasurers and vestries.

Vestries are reminded they must record their pastor's 2012 rectory allowance in the minutes prior to the first payroll of 2012. We also continue to recommend that every parish adopt an accountable plan of reimbursement for ministry expenses.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Ven. Dr. Jon W. Abboud, Chairman