

Title Church Pension Fund Benefits for Vocational Deacons

Proposer(s) The Community of Deacons

1. WHEREAS, in the Diocese of West Missouri vocational deacons historically have served
2. in non-stipendiary (unpaid) roles and thus have not been eligible to participate in the
3. Church Pension Fund (CPF) and receive its program benefits,
- 4.
5. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 137th Convention of the Diocese of
6. West Missouri declares that it will be the policy of this Diocese that all active vocational
7. deacons under the age of 72 shall be paid a minimum compensation of \$25 per month
8. by the congregation(s) to which they are assigned, or by the Diocese (under certain
9. circumstances), or by a mutually agreeable cost split if the amount is burdensome to a
10. small parish. This minimal compensation amount is sufficient to enable deacons to
11. participate in benefits provided by the CPF.
- 12.
13. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that two or more congregations or entities served by a
14. deacon must agree in a timely manner upon the fair allocation among them of the costs
15. of the deacon's compensation and the related assessment to the CPF. Those
16. congregations must also, in a timely manner, decide on a process for paying those
17. amounts which may require one congregation to be responsible for communicating with
18. and paying the CPF.
- 19.
20. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that compensation paid under this resolution should not
21. replace payments made to a deacon, by a congregation or the Diocese for continuing
22. education, mileage, expenses for Clergy Conference or Diocesan Convention,
23. discretionary fund, or other ministry expenses.
- 24.
25. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the above is subject to an approved Letter of
26. Agreement signed by the Bishop Diocesan for each deacon that could benefit from
27. passage of this resolution.

Explanation

This resolution is in response to Resolution A135 Compensation for Non-stipendiary Clergy adopted at the 2024 General Convention. A135 required congregations and/or the diocese to make a nominal payment of \$25 (or more) a month to their vocational deacon(s), as well as a monthly assessment of 18% (\$4.50 for \$25) to the Church Pension Fund (CPF), to enable deacons to participate in programs and benefits through the CPF that they would then be eligible for.

Over 20 other Episcopal Dioceses, that we know of, have approved similar resolutions requiring minimal compensation for vocational deacon, including the Diocese of Missouri in 2024.

The cost is modest. At the \$25 a month rate, total financial impact per congregation or for the diocese would be \$354 per annum per deacon.

This resolution does not apply to deacons over the age of 72 because the rules of the Church Pension Group specify that retirement contributions cannot be made for clergy aged 72 years or older.

The example below outlines some of the benefits CPF provides to eligible clergy under this resolution. This example, provided by CPF, is based on a deacon having Total Assessable Compensation (TAC) of \$300 per year (\$25 per month), with 10 years of earned Credited Service (CS) at the time of retirement. The assumed Highest Average Compensation (HAC) is \$300 (\$25 a month). The total assessments paid over a deacon's 10-year career is \$540.

- While Active, life insurance benefit (6 x TAC): \$1,800
- When Retired, life insurance benefit (6 x HAC): \$1,800
- Annual pension benefit (2.75% x HAC x CS): \$82.50
- Annual Christmas benefit (\$25 x CS): \$250
- Resettlement benefit one-time payment at the time of retirement equal to 12 times the monthly retirement benefit with a minimum of \$2,000): \$2,000
- Invitation to CREDO and Planning for Wellness Conferences Vocational Deacons in the Episcopal Church.
- The Church Pension Fund also provides pension and retirement savings plans, health benefits, and educational services.

CREDO is a conference conducted by CPF that helps active and retired clergy by presenting a holistic approach to wellness. Participants examine and evaluate their health and wellness from spiritual, vocational, physical, emotional, and financial points of view. Many priests that have attended CREDO in the past report their wellness greatly benefitted through participation in CREDO.

In the Diocese of West Missouri, deacons currently serve in parishes and in diocesan positions without remuneration. Deacons give freely of their time - totaling hundreds of hours each month - while being unable to participate in any CPF service, benefits, or activities.

This sacrificial life comes at a cost if said deacons find themselves without adequate retirement resources, appropriate financial advice, and/or the means necessary to live a healthy ministry/life balance. Approval of this resolution would be a step forward in addressing this disparity.

It could potentially be helpful to be able to offer this benefit in our efforts to recruit younger deacons.
