

The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
Report of Commission on Personnel (2024)

The Diocesan Commission on Personnel began in 1974 by an act of diocesan convention. Its purpose is to consider compensation and benefits for clergy and other church employees and to make recommendations that seek justice, equity, and fair compensation. The Commission's work focuses on human resources issues: creating and consulting on personnel policies for the diocese and congregations, benefits recommendations for clergy and lay employees, and the clergy compensation scale.

Your Diocesan Commission on Personnel continues to take up, along with the good support, input, and guidance of our Canon for Human Resources, Dede Moore, and our Canon to the Ordinary, The Rev. Cn. Arienne Davison, ongoing resource support for congregations in the form of an [annual update to congregations](#). Through this annual update, congregations can stay current with changes in Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave, changes to Washington State Minimum Wage and Overtime rules, updates to the [Personnel Handbook Template](#), and encouraging wellness for all lay and clergy employees through use of the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).

Benefits recommendations this year include **selection of base medical and dental plans** for 2025 (with updates to both medical and dental plans - see diocesan resource website). Medical premiums for the base plan increased a modest 3% from 2024 and basic dental premiums, less than 2%. The Commission **proposes a 3.8% COLA** for 2025 clergy and bishop's staff salaries (see Resolutions Committee Report).

In 2019, the Commission began a critical analysis of the **clergy compensation scale**, considering geographic differences in cost of living in our diocese as well as re-evaluating the structure of the scale itself. We presented a proposed salary scale revision at the 2023 Convention, and sought feedback both at the 2024 Diocese of Olympia Clergy Conference, as well as preparing and sending a survey out diocesan-wide. We received some feedback, which was varied and led the Commission to realize that 2024 was not the year to vote on the salary scale revision that was proposed at the 2023 convention. We did, however, realize that we could continue to focus our efforts on the creation of a **geographic differential**, which is where we have spent a good deal of the commission's time in 2024.

Regarding the **geographic differential**, the Commission has worked from the premise that housing cost should be about 30% of a person's income. There are locations in the Diocese of Olympia where the current salary scale makes salaries feasible for that percentage of income, and there are a few that are below 30%, but especially in our very urban areas, the cost of housing considerably exceeds 30%. The Commission has examined census, Mission Insite, and Church Pension Group data to be able to gather the median housing cost in the zip code for each congregation and merged that with the average household income in each of those zip codes, along with the congregational

grade. We are in process of creating a trial formula for a few congregations to apply in concept in order that the Commission can see on paper (without a financial implication at this time) if the formula creates the desired outcome, in order that our congregations can be as sustainable as possible, and our clergy can either afford to live closer to their congregations, or it is determined that it is not feasible for the congregation to have their clergy person living as close by because of housing costs. It is the hope of the Commission to have a more information to present to the 2025 Convention on this matter.

Considering clergy compensation led the Commission to questions of **compensation equity among clergy**. In 2021, the commission collected and analyzed data about clergy demographics (age, race, gender, LGBTQ identity, disability, neurodivergence) as well as wage and congregational size. Updates and new data categories were collected from clergy in 2023, and an update to that information is still forthcoming, later in 2024, or early 2025, as an update to the 2021 report.

Congregational grades use congregational data to calculate a ‘grade’ for clergy compensation. Congregational grades for 2025 will be calculated on congregational data from 2023. 2025 congregational grades should be published soon after Convention 2024.

Special Report Regarding Convention 2023’s Resolution #3: Enhance Access to the Denominational Health Plan (DHP)

In 2023, the Diocese of Olympia’s Convention passed Resolution 3: “Enhance Access to the Denominational Health Plan” as a response to the 2021 Convention’s Resolution 6, a multi-step action working to address implicit bias and structural injustice in our practices, policies, and benefit plans. One of the actions requested in 2021’s Resolution 6 read: “**Resolved**, that the Personnel Commission develop Advisory Policies that ensure the availability of medical benefits to clergy working in Bishop’s Designated Mission Stations and specialized ministries;”. After research and input over 2022 and 2023, the Personnel Commission realized that the only way that access could be enhanced was by action of General Convention, and Olympia’s 2023 Convention passed this resolution to present to the 2024 General Convention in Louisville, Kentucky: “Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 81st General Convention authorize the Church Pension Group to reduce the number of annual hours worked to gain self-funded eligibility and access to the Denominational Health Plan to 500 hours annually.” Please read the full explanation of the resolution [HERE](#), to show how lowering the access to the DHP could address the desired actions in the 2021 resolution.

Olympia’s 2023 resolution was properly submitted to General Convention and assigned as Resolution C014. It was thoroughly reviewed by the assigned Legislative Committee (Committee #12, Agencies and Boards), as well as thoroughly reviewed by the leadership of the Church Pension Group, who administers the Episcopal Church Medical Trust (ECMT). After those reviews, both of those entities contacted the leadership of the Olympia Personnel Commission to share that the proposed resolution would raise costs

for all who had medical insurance policies through the ECMT to the point that it would create a large burden across the church. Given that policy costs are already high, it was decided by the Legislative Committee to reject the resolution. On the positive side, the Church Pension Group was able to hear the concerns of the Diocese of Olympia, especially on behalf of ethnically diverse faith communities whose clergy were often non-stipendiary or low-stipendiary, that they may gain access to health benefits. They shared with us about efforts in the Episcopal Church in the Navajoland (now the Missionary Diocese of the Navajoland and in the Episcopal Churches in the Dakotas who are having similar access and cost challenges and the efforts the wider Church is undertaking, and will be looking for ways that healthcare access can be enhanced, even with the incredibly high cost of health care across the board.

A long term goal of the Personnel Commission is to seek endowed funding to offset the cost of medical insurance, and this is something that may assist congregations of all sizes, in that if the congregation is not bearing the financial cost of medical insurance, they may be able to compensate for the currently required access point of 1000 hours annually to the DHP, but this is indeed a long-term goal.

The Commission thanks outgoing member The Rev. Rich Weyls, who completes his term as of Convention 2024, and thanks Diane Santiago who is completing one term, and will be serving a second term.

The Commission offers consultation to clergy and congregations about all matters related to human resources. Please contact Dede Moore, Canon for Human Resources, Governance, and Convention or the Rev. Cn. Elise Johnstone, chair (elise@sjbwestseattle.org) with any questions.

Respectfully submitted by the Rev. Cn. Elise Johnstone, chair.

On behalf of commission members:
the Rev. Canon Elise Johnstone
Ms. Karla Koon
the Rev. Mike Mayor
Ms. Diane Santiago
Ms. Julene Levin
the Rev. Rich Weyls
the Rev. Canon Arienne Davison, ex officio
Canon Dede Moore, ex officio (dmoore@ecww.org)