Small Church Equity Task Force Report
October 30, 2025
To: Diocese of East Tennessee Bishop & Council
RE: Resolution #2023-07

Bishop & Council,

In the hearing of stories and gathering data over our two-year scope of work, the Small Church Equity Task Force offers the following. Clergy well-being (a sense of genuine care) and parish vitality are at the heart of how clergy leadership experience value across the diocese. Compensation, a factor in this 'value equation,' was explored per Resolution #2023-07.

Per the resolution, the required statistics, as reported last convention, indicate our diocese performing at or above TEC in all comparable categories (ASA, annual operating income, and total full-time clergy compensation.) The following table compares the median and average full-time salary with benefits, the Net Operating Income, and the ratio (Salary/NOI) between small and large parishes (break point of ASA 75.) The data is from the 2022 survey sent to all parishes in the diocese.

	ASA > = 75			ASA < 75		
	FT Salary	NOI	% NOI	FT Salary	NOI	% NOI
Median	$100,610	$575,116	17%	$73,193	$162,490	45%
Average	$120,847	$856,145	14%	$69,965	$219,765	32%

The practical, economic reality of the paid vocation of a priest remains a part of our tradition but, over the years, stories reveal a much-needed evolution from the traditional supply/full-time model. Conversations reveal the diocese's implementation and support of innovative clergy models. A task that requires conversation and tailored efforts over traditional models.

Through discovery, the task force heard voices speaking about curate support, merged parishes, closed parishes, diocesan resources, and tailored compensation structures between parish and priest, a unique work of listening, trust, and support. A small parish with less resources than others does not equate to a non-viable parish; the Spirit stirring in parishes listens little to economic statistics. The more restrictive budgets of small parishes do reveal an active interest in resource and expertise sharing, both in need and willingness to share.

Conversations centered around compensation revealed a need for vestry knowledge and involvement in cost-of-living adjustments, especially for small parishes for all paid employees. Discovery did not voice or reveal options for diocesan-wide models for priests in all size parishes.

Compensation appears to be only part of a sense of value. In short, a one-size fits all approach to clergy compensation was not heard nor supported by the sharing.

The recommended actions to the Bishop & Council are as follows.

- Compensation and Transparency
    - An annual resource of minimum clergy salary information sent to treasurer's and senior wardens.
    - A recommendation to include key deadlines (SCSC, audits, parochial, etc.) be included in this planning resource.
- Continued diocesan offerings of innovation.

The Small Church Equity Task Force respectfully submits this final report of the work pertaining to Resolution #2023-07.

Sincerely,
The Small Church Equity Task Force.