

TASK FORCE ON NEW FUNDING FOR CLERGY FORMATION

Membership

The Rev. Brendan Barnicle, <i>Chair</i>	Oregon, VIII	2021
The Rt. Rev. Thomas Breidenthal, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Southern Ohio, V	2021
Dr. Courtney V. Cowart	New York, II	2021
Mrs. Jill Heller	Milwaukee, V	2021
The Rev. Elizabeth Henry-McKeever	Arkansas, VII	2021
The Rev. Andrew Hybl	Arkansas, VII	2021
The Rev. JoAnn Jones	Pennsylvania, III	2021
The Very Rev. Cynthia Kittredge	Texas, VII	2021
Mr. James Murphy	New York, II	2021
Mr. Joseph Swimmer	Washington, III	2021
The Rt. Rev. John Harvey Taylor	Los Angeles, VIII	2021
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, <i>Ex Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex Officio</i>	Ohio, V	

Mandate

2018-A027 New Funding for Clergy Formation

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 79th General Convention create a task force with membership appointed by the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop consisting of ten (10) representatives. The task force shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from local diocesan clergy formation programs, representatives from seminaries (particularly persons involved in tuition assistance programs), fund development professionals within The Episcopal Church, and representatives from organizations (such as the Society for the Increase of Ministry and United Thank Offering) that provide funds to assist persons in obtaining advanced theological education. The task force shall be made up of two (2) bishops, three (3) priests or deacons, and five (5) members of the laity. It shall develop and implement a plan to provide need-based scholarship funding to individuals pursuing theological education who are preparing to serve as priests or deacons in non-stipendiary, or part-time or bi-vocational ministries. This plan shall work

to expand the funding available to aspiring priests and deacons who are engaged in theological education other than full-time seminary education. In addition to considering other funding sources, the task force shall examine the possible use of donor-directed endowment funds held in trust by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society [DFMS] as a partial means to fulfill this mandate; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force shall begin on January 1, 2019, and end at the end of the 80th General Convention, unless its mandate is extended by that Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force shall communicate information about any scholarship plan to members of The Episcopal Church and provide a report to the 80th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$60,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

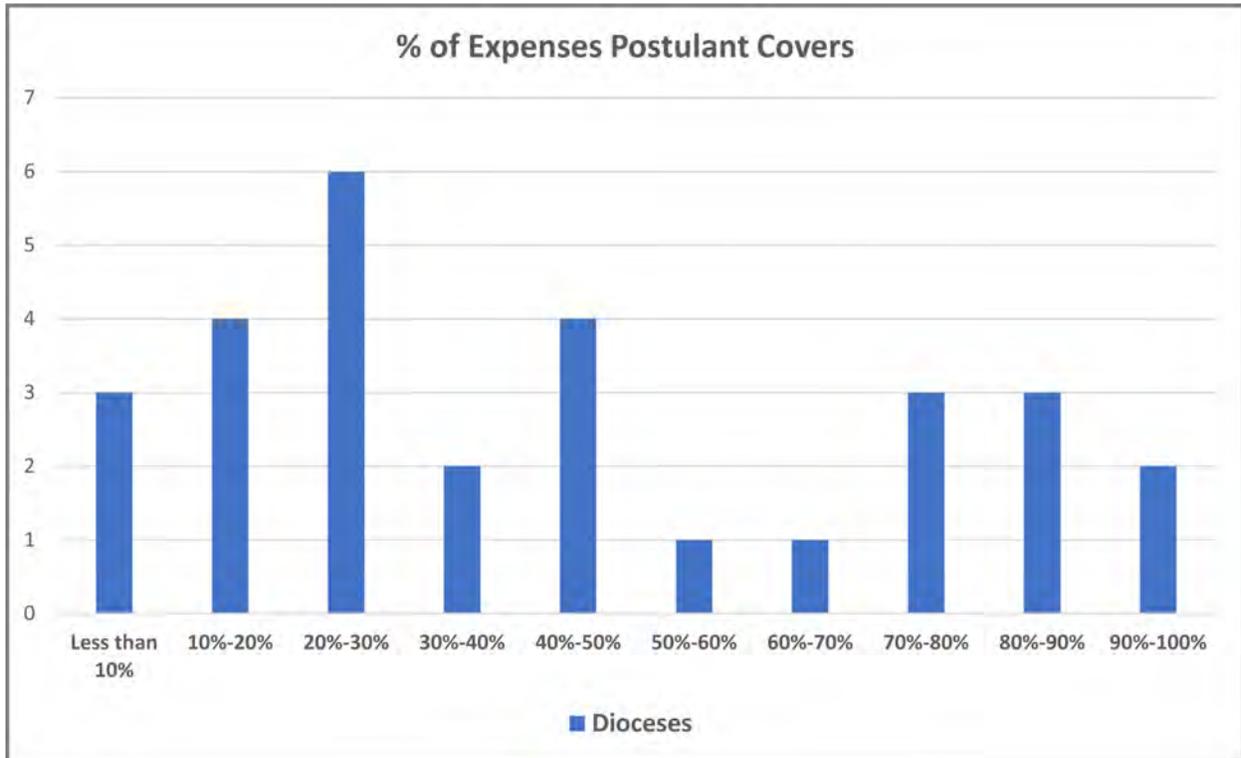
Summary of Work

The Task Force on New Funding of Clergy Formation began its work on January 30, 2019, and met again on February 25, 2019. At those initial meetings, it was clear that there was not sufficient data available to fulfill the resolutions that prompted the creation of this task force. First, it was unclear how many people are in the clergy formation process across the Episcopal Church, including people who are called to serve in part-time, non-stipendiary or bi-vocational roles. Second, it was unclear what funding is currently available for people in the formation process. Our hope was that there might be underutilized pockets of money in the Episcopal Church that could be used for clergy formation. Without existing sources of funding, the Task Force was concerned that new funding would require new fundraising, and there are already multiple fundraising demands across the Church.

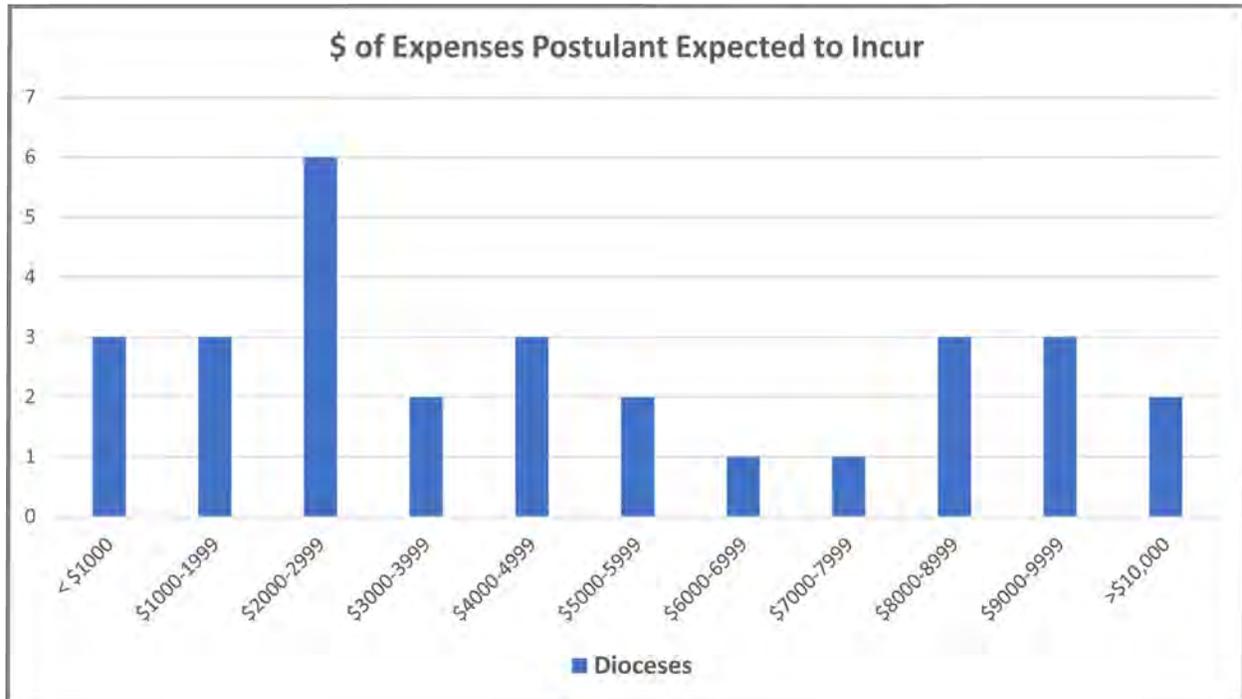
Therefore, during the April 2, 2019 meeting, the Task Force started to develop a survey that could be sent to the House of Bishops to clarify the amount of new funding that was necessary and potential sources for the funding. With the invaluable help of Brian Murray from the General Convention Office, the Task Force drafted a survey, and the survey was distributed in January of 2020. The survey closed on February 28, 2020. The survey closed just as the COVID-19 pandemic began. As a result, the Task Force did not meet again until October 2, 2020.

More importantly, the Task Force did not meet earlier because the results of the survey were inconclusive. While the results were disappointing, they also highlighted the challenges in answering the questions that the Task Force had posed to the House of Bishops. While diocese know how many postulants that they have in the formation process, the funding available to those people varies widely. 29 dioceses responded to the survey. Four dioceses clearly stated that they provide no financial assistance for people called to serve as priests or deacons in part-time, non-stipendiary or bi-vocational calls. Of those dioceses that do provide financial assistance, four dioceses fully cover all of the tuition and fees of postulants in the formation process. Four dioceses cover the cost of books. Sadly, during this time of remote learning, not a single diocese was providing funding for technology (i.e. computers and/or software) for postulants, at the time of the survey. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, those policies may have changed. Three dioceses will cover travel expenses. One diocese covers childcare and that same diocese also covers healthcare costs.

The overwhelming majority of diocese provide partial assistance for some, but not all, of the expenses of clergy formation. As a result, there is a broad range of coverage. The survey asked what percent of expenses the dioceses expected the postulant to cover personally. As the chart below demonstrates, the expectations varying dramatically.



The survey also revealed that dioceses may be underestimating the amount of money that postulants are spending for training and education. The table below shows the range of expectations.



Only three of these dioceses had local formation programs. The other diocese did not explain how they expected postulants to fund their formation. When asked about additional resources, the survey respondents pointed to seminary scholarships and Episcopal church scholarships.

As we finish our work, the Task Force on New Funding for Clergy Formation offers no resolutions, and it does not ask to continue its work. Nevertheless, the issues raised by the resolution that led to the formation of the Task Force remain as important as ever. The research from the Task Force survey paints a picture of a very fragmented approach to funding clergy formation, and it is likely to remain fragmented under the current system. This funding system raises important issues of equity, equality and church leadership. While this Task Force did not address many of these issues, it is the hope of the Task Force that the Church will continue to confront these challenges and provide access to formation for all of God's People.