

2019 Canonical Resolution C-1

Submitted by: Executive Board of the Diocese

RESOLVED: To enact new Canon XXXIII, Of Mission Share, as follows:

CANON XXXIII

OF MISSION SHARE

SECTION 1. Guiding Principles

- (a) The primary community in the Episcopal Church is the Diocese. The Diocese, second only to the individual baptized person, is the embodiment of the Church's entire theology and polity. The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia is the Body of Christ in this region, made up of many members, called to do the kingdom-building work of Jesus.
- (b) Members of Jesus' Body must look toward the health of that Body, seeking health in many ways: ministering to the individuals who make up the Body of Christ in the Diocese, and extending the reach of God to those outside the church walls. Proclamation of the good news of Christ, mutual support and mission are all elements of Christian calling. This work requires not only minds, hands and feet, but also resources.
- (c) The Body of Christ in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia must explore the investment of all that it has and all that it is to partner in Jesus' work and reach our calling. That exploration must include honesty and hope, so that all members of the Body are working equally toward the health and vitality of the Church.

SECTION 2. Mission Share

- (a) The Body acknowledges its responsibility to support the Diocese and to provide for the mission of the Church. Ten percent (10%), a tithe, has long been the minimum standard for individual Christian pledging; we ask this of parishioners, and it makes sense considering the Body of Christ, acknowledging the important example the missions and parishes provide to their members by practicing the tithe. Therefore, the Diocese adopts ten percent as the minimum standard for Mission Share giving to the Diocese by parishes for the support of the Body's shared ministry. The 10% minimum pledge is calculated on the basis of a three (3) year rolling average of "plate offerings, pledge payments and regular support" as reported on the Annual Parochial Report.
- (b) The Executive Board of the Diocese, through representatives of the Diocesan Stewardship Committee, is available to consult with mission and parish vestries and staff to assist with stewardship expectations, planning and encouragement.

Their aim will be to help every mission and parish thrive and pursue its ministry, while working toward the goal of a minimum 10% Mission Share to the Diocese.

- (c) Mission Share giving shall be implemented over a five (5) year period.

SECTION 3. Mission Share Accountability

- (a) In the year immediately preceding the fourth (4th) year of implementation, the Executive Board of the Diocese shall appoint a Mission Share Panel as a standing committee of the Executive Board of the Diocese. Its members shall serve for three (3) year terms to work with parishes not meeting the 10% minimum standard following the five (5) year implementation period. The Mission Share Panel shall consist of three (3) lay members and two (2) clergy members, initially appointed to staggered terms over the three year period. The Bishop Diocesan (or other designee from the Ecclesiastical Authority), the Treasurer of the Diocese, and the Chancellor shall be *ex officio* members of the Mission Share Panel.
- (b) The Mission Share Panel will work with parishes to review their resource realities and seek a pastoral and reasonable resolution while working toward the minimum standard of 10% giving to the Diocese:
 - (i) Through conversations with the parish leadership, the Mission Share Panel will ascertain any challenges or barriers to giving present in the congregation, and will work collaboratively to address those issues.
 - (ii) The Mission Share Panel, after meeting with the parish leadership, shall have authority to grant a request for a reduction of the minimum goal of the 10% Mission Share requirement on a yearly basis. The Panel shall consider, among other factors, the congregation's current monthly financial report, the level of stewardship training and education in the mission or parish, the nature of the annual stewardship campaign, any extraordinary circumstances faced by the mission or parish, and other data as considered relevant by both the leadership and the Panel. The Mission Share Panel and parish shall endeavor to work toward an agreement on the extent of any reduction.
 - (iii) The Mission Share Panel shall have the authority to work in the same way with any parishes that at any time fall below the 10% minimum standard Mission Share after having first attained the goal.
 - (iv) As a final matter, in the event of willful noncompliance as evidenced by a lack of participation and engagement in this collaborative process, the Mission Share Panel may recommend to the Bishop and Standing Committee that Canon XXXII, Of Parishes At Risk, of these Canons be invoked.
- (c) As with any pastoral relationship, the Bishop or her/his designee may always intervene pastorally with a parish to work on Mission Share.

RATIONALE: The rationale undergirding this resolution is to support the work of the Body of Christ as formed by the Diocese of Southern Virginia. This is an important moment in the life of our Diocese. It is a moment for mission and vision. As we chart the course of our life together in the years ahead, it is time to invest more deeply in the possibilities of God's Kingdom in our midst. Full participation in this plan for shared mission would result in additional resources that we would use collectively, discerning together new ministry opportunities. It would protect us against volatility and would encourage the development of parish stewardship and vitality. It would ensure the sustainability of our mission and help us journey into a bright future.

We recognize that this will not be an easy transition for some missions or parishes. It will require hard work, flexibility, compromise, and understanding from all parties. That is why there is a spirit of grace in the lines of this text, and there is also accountability. In Christ, God offers all mercy and grace. May we accept that grace together as we have meaningful conversations about the health of our parishes and the challenges they face, while also working to fulfill the call of discipleship and the church's mission in Southern Virginia.