

NOTE: Though this resolution did not reach the secretary within the canonical time frame, the Finance Committee plans to bring it forward on the convention floor. The matter is complicated. In order that you may have time to study it, I am including it as an extraordinary item, which inclusion by no means creates a precedent for bypassing the canonical time frame. --Bruce Coggin, Secretary of the Convention.

Resolution FC1 – Establishment of an Assessment Task Force

Submitted by the Finance Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth
October 30, 2014

RESOLVED that the 32nd Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth authorize formation of an Assessment Task Force to study and make recommendations for adoption at the 33rd annual meeting of the Convention in 2015 of an appropriate assessment formula and related criteria for Congregations in the Diocese, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Bishop and Standing Committee shall appoint members of the Assessment Task Force within 30 days after adjournment of this 32nd annual meeting of the Convention. The Assessment Task Force shall include:

- a. The Chair of the Finance Committee *ex officio* with vote;
- b. The Treasurer or designee *ex officio* with vote;
- c. The Bishop or designee *ex officio* without vote;
- d. Three (3) additional members of the Clergy with vote who are canonically resident in the Diocese, not under ecclesiastical discipline or having submitted application for Letters Dimissory; and
- e. Three (3) additional lay persons with vote who are Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing of a Parish or Mission of this Diocese, and be it further

RESOLVED that members shall demonstrate experience in church finance and budgeting, such as members of the Finance Committee and treasurers and rectors of churches or other church entities in the Diocese. Membership on the Task Force shall also reflect appropriate representation from the relative sizes and geography of the Congregations within the Diocese and the number of members of the churches represented on the Task Force. The Task Force may add as many consultants, without vote, as it deems needed for its work, and be it further

RESOLVED that beginning on or before January 2015 the Assessment Task Force shall meet in public session at least monthly (until its work is complete) and shall make monthly reports to the Bishop, Standing Committee, and Executive Council regarding its work, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Task Force shall have authority to conduct public hearings to report publicly and receive testimony and recommendations, conduct surveys, and interview persons inside and outside the Diocese regarding assessment formulae used by other dioceses, the minimum budget and missional needs of the Diocese, revenue sources, budget development processes, and local and broader factors affecting the ability of our churches for sustainability, viability, and ability to pay assessments for the appropriate work of the Diocese and to support their appropriate local mission and ministry. At all times the principles of transparency, participation, and accountability of all entities in the Diocese shall guide the work of the Assessment Task Force, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Assessment Task Force shall report in writing and by presentation to the Bishop, Standing Committee, and Executive Council on or before May 15, 2015 specific recommendations for (1) improved viability and sustainability of churches in the Diocese; and (2) an assessment policy, including a formula and related conditions, if any, regarding assessments of Churches for the appropriate level of financial support of the Diocese for the appropriate work of the Diocese. The Assessment Task Force shall timely submit a resolution to the 33rd annual meeting of the Convention to adopt such an assessment formula and policy and timely submit any proposals for associated changes in the Diocesan canons that may be recommended by the Assessment Task Force.

Explanation:

The original resolution was filed on the canonical deadline of 60 days before the first day of the Convention. The filing of the original resolution, which seeks to modify materially the assessment formula for 2015 and thus materially modify the anticipated revenue to the Diocese for 2015, also occurred after the proposed budget for 2015 had already been recommended by the Finance Committee and Executive Council, based on transparent assumptions for ministry and contractual support developed months ahead of time; it also was filed after deanery meetings in which the concern was not raised by the proponent or other persons. This substitute is germane to the original resolution in that it proposes a more orderly way to address the assessment formula raised in the original resolution.

In addition, the proponent has not proposed an amended budget that would reflect its proposed new assessment formula, and it works a hardship on the Convention, Executive Council, Finance Committee, and Treasurer to have to rework the budget during the Convention.

It is the Finance Committee's duty to prepare a budget that finances the Diocesan vision of mission and ministry. It is not the duty of the Finance Committee to create that vision, and in fact, it is not appropriate for the Finance Committee to do this work in a vacuum. (Thus, we have the processes in place for deanery, Executive Council, and Convention review of the budget.) As such, making significant revisions to the 2015 assessment formulae will require agreement among those whose responsibility it is to create a vision for the diocese followed by a complete reworking of the 2015 budget by the Finance Committee and other bodies. With haste, frequently come unintended consequences, if knowledgeable voices are missed. As such, the Finance Committee believes it is in the interest of the Diocese to create a Task Force that can spend 2015 obtaining a broad view of the mission and ministry of the Diocese and that will recommend changes effective in 2016.