



The Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

October 13, 2023

Dear Esteemed Members of our Parish Councils,

Christ is in our midst! As many of our parish councils are preparing their budgets for 2024, I am writing to remind you to review the priest's compensation package to insure the parish is properly caring for the clergy (and their families) that cares for you. This year we have all been keenly aware of the increased price of housing, gasoline, groceries, etc. The hostilities in Ukraine and Israel continue to increase the cost of fossil fuels which also increases the cost of all other items across the board. The Cost of Living increase only allows for our clergy to maintain the same standard of living as the previous year. The Cost of Living increase for 2024 is 3.2% (<https://blog.ssa.gov/social-security-benefits-increase-in-2024/>). Therefore, as the Social Security Administration is our guideline, every priest should minimally receive an automatic 3.2% increase, effective January 1, 2024 regardless of your Annual Meeting date. *The Cost of living increase is not a matter of debate, but to be adjusted in your upcoming budget as a given. The increase is to be added to the proposed budget for your Annual Meeting automatically. Your Annual Assembly may adjust other budget items, but not reduce the priest's compensation or lessen the COLA increase.* Keep in mind that this increase reflects what all of us are already experiencing in 2023 and does make up for lost ground over the past year. *We also discovered that the Median Income figures previously provided were from dated sources and not reflective of the incremental Cost of Living Increases for several years, so we have revised the format of the spreadsheet for greater accuracy. All parishes should use the Median Income for their area for 2024 as the minimum for new clergy.*

Also attached is the Clergy Compensation Guidelines and Median Income for Cities and Counties of the Diocese. As you wish for your own family members with advanced degrees to be compensated for their education, knowledge, talents and experience, please do so for your priest. A cost of living increase is not a raise, as a raise recognizes years of service, outstanding performance and gratitude.

No priest should be below the Median Income for your locality of where the majority of your parishioners live. Parishes that serve multiple counties should factor in the median income for the greater metropolitan area and counties served. Also, keep in mind your priest's years of service as well as merit increases. We have quality priests in our Diocese and we want to keep them. There are many places in the United States where the Median Income is significantly higher, which makes it difficult for us to attract new priests to the Diocese, especially if our parishes are not compensating clergy adequately. Please do not embarrass or humiliate your priest, by having to ask for what should be freely and lovingly given without hesitation.

Finally, as a reminder, the OCA Pension Board now requires each parish to contribute 12% on the priest's stipend as well as the housing allowance or the value of the housing provided to the OCA Pension Plan. Likewise, the parish is to compute the Social Security based on the same. The clergy are required to contribute to the pension plan and Social Security based upon the same figures as well.

Given the rapid changes in the costs of living, all parish councils should take seriously their responsibility to insure recurring costs, such as insurance, gas, oil, electricity are investigated. Thank you for insuring your priest and his family may live with dignity and placed on equal footing with those he serves.

Your Unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

CC: Council Chairs and Treasurers of the Diocese

Clergy of the Diocese