

# Quick Reference Guide to Diocesan Benefits & Policies

## 1 Overview

This document provides a quick reference and overview of a number of diocesan benefits, policies, and guidance to assist clergy or lay leaders. Most of this information is available on our Diocesan website ([www.diocgc.org](http://www.diocgc.org)), in our published Diocesan Convention Journal, or on the Church Pension Fund website ([www.cpg.org](http://www.cpg.org)). This is not meant to be comprehensive reference guide but should help provide practical information on a number of key items. If you have any questions or if additional information is needed, do not hesitate to contact the Duvall Center (Diocesan Office).

## 2 Medical / Dental Coverage

Our diocese provides health insurance coverage administered by the Church Pension Group (CPG) through the Episcopal Church Medical Trust. This coverage is required for all qualified permanent full-time employees (those employed to work 1,500 scheduled hours or more per year).

The amount of coverage depends on the congregation (there are Diocesan minimum coverage levels) and that “parity” is required (clergy / lay employees have same coverage opportunities). Please read our “CGC Denominational Health Plan Policy” for the specifics. Your deadline to enroll is 30 days from date of hire or date of eligibility. An employee may opt out if health benefits are available through other approved sources. Employees may change health plans during the next annual “open season” scheduled each October or if they have an approved “life event”.

### 2018 Medical Premiums

Plan	Single	Employee + 1	Family
Anthem BCBS BlueCard PPO 90	\$784	\$1411	\$2195
Anthem BCBS BlueCard PPO 80	\$711	\$1280	\$1991
Anthem BCBS BlueCard PPO 70	\$648	\$1166	\$1814
Anthem BCBS High Deductible Plan 15 <b>Recommended Plan</b>	\$586	\$1055	\$1641
Anthem BCBS High Deductible Plan 20	\$523	\$941	\$1464
Anthem BCBS High Deductible Plan 40	\$473	\$851	\$1324

### 2018 Dental Premiums

Dental coverage is a voluntary benefit and available to full-time clergy / employees; the Medical Trust provides dental benefits through the Cigna dental network. Note that this is an annual contract.

Plan	Single	Employee + 1	Family
Preventative Dental (DDPV)	\$32	\$58	\$90
Basic Dental (DD50)	\$54	\$97	\$151
Dental and Orthodontia (DD25)	\$74	\$133	\$207

### 3 Group Life / Disability Coverage

Remember that Group Term Life coverage is required for all eligible, full time employees. This coverage level is \$40,000 and is paid by the employer (church). The deadline to enroll is 60 days from date of hire or date of eligibility. Employees are eligible if they are working and compensated for a minimum of 1000 hours or more per year.

#### Group Term life insurance

Group Life Insurance	\$26.40 / month	\$40,000 coverage level
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Short Term & Long Term Disability is also available and coverage is optional. The deadline to enroll is 60 days from date of hire or eligibility for guaranteed issuance. Enrollments processed after 60 days from date of hire or date of eligibility will be subject to medical underwriting and coverage is not guaranteed.

#### Short term disability\* (Voluntary)

	Premium
Less than \$25,000	\$8.00
\$25,000 - \$44,999	\$17.50
\$45,000 and above	\$32.00

#### Long term disability\* (Voluntary)

	Lay Employees		Clergy	
	25% Option	50% Option	25% Option	50% Option
Less than \$25,000	\$12	\$18	\$14	\$23
\$25,000 – \$44,999	\$22	\$37	\$26	\$44
\$45,000 and above	\$43	\$72	\$50	\$86

\*Short and Long Term Disability Benefits are based on your salary; rates effective through Dec. 2018

### 4 Lay Employee Retirement Plans

Lay employees are able to participate in the Lay Employee Pension Plan provided by the Church Pension Fund (CPF) of the Episcopal Church. It required for all qualified permanent employees (those employed to work 1,000 scheduled hours or more per year). These plans are in the form of either a “Defined Contribution Plan” or a “Defined Benefit Plan” (most churches offer the defined contribution plan to employees).

**Defined Contribution Plan:**

- A 401(a) and 403(b) retirement plan for lay employees. Employers make a 5% base contribution and match (on a 1 to 1 basis) employee contributions up to an additional 4%. The employer's maximum portion (base plus any match) is 9%. The employees choose if they want to contribute and how to allocate their funds.

**Defined Benefit Plan:**

- A plan that provides a base annual benefit throughout retirement. The Defined Benefit Plan is funded by employer assessments only; the assessment is 9% of employee eligible compensation. The amount of the benefit is determined when the employee retires.

CPG recommends that lay employees are enrolled within 30 days from date of hire. Review the "Defined Contribution Plan: Employer's Guide" for complete details or see current policy in the most recent Diocesan Journal of Convention.

## 5 Clergy Pension Plan

Church employers are required by Canon law to pay pension assessment on behalf of clergy, based on their compensation. The current assessment rate is 18% of a cleric's total assessable compensation (unless they are supplied church housing). Please visit [CPG.org](http://CPG.org) for a complete listing of all assessable compensation. Changes to the Pension Plan occurred effective January 1, 2018.

Do know the Diocese monitor's clergy pensions in arrears and will notify the church for a status if they are overdue. Failure to pay pension has impacts to both the clergy and the church. Clergy can lose short-term / long-term disability, life insurance benefits, child and pre-retirement survivor benefits, and a freeze towards credited service. Effective January 2019, a church in arrears will be charged 7% interest on the amount due.

## 6 Clergy Housing Allowance

Clergy are allowed to exclude their housing expenses from federal income tax (includes the actual costs to provide, furnish, and maintain their primary home). It is always recommend that new clergy consult their accountant to determine a proper allowance as there may be withholding / self-employment tax considerations. It is suggested that clergy initially they set their vestry resolution equal to the calculated fair market rental value to be sure they don't set the resolution too low. If the clergy has church-provided housing, the housing allowance is the fair market rental value of the church-provided housing, plus utilities if paid by church as well as any housing expenses paid individually by clergy. Visit [www.CPG.org](http://www.CPG.org) for more details.

Remember that it is not the vestry or governing board's decision as to the amount that can be designate as a housing allowance. The vestry or governing board's only responsibility is to vote its approval of that housing allowance designation and to document its action in the minutes of the meeting. The clergy determines the amount by estimating the amount they anticipate spending to provide a primary home.

## 7 Clergy Minimum Compensation

Our Diocese has a minimum compensation schedule for clergy salaries. The Standing Committee approved the last change in the initial minimum compensation schedule for full-time active clergy, effective January 1, 2017.

Years of Service in the Episcopal Ministry	Minimum Annual Salary for Full-Time Clergy
< 1 year	\$54,283
1-2	\$55,258
2-3	\$56,268
3-4	\$58,302
4+	\$59,806

It should be noted that these are minimum salary standards and not maximums; salary levels may and can be more than the minimums referenced. Churches are encouraged to provide increases for merit and / or local circumstances. Salaries lower than these minimums will be permitted only with agreement between the Bishop and the clergy involved. Those working less than full-time are expected to be compensated in proportion to the scale but may negotiate compensation and benefits with approval of the Bishop. These minimums include that portion of salary also noted as housing allowance but exclude other items such as pension or travel.

## 8 IRS Mileage Rate

The IRS publishes an annual mileage reimbursement rate each year in late December. The 2018 rate is .545 per mile. This changes each year, up or down; the Diocese does not determine this rate.

## 9 Background Checks

Background checks are required for all new employment hires and for employees & volunteers that regularly work around children/youth or if they regularly transport children/youth. Costs vary depending on amount of services requested or if out of state validation is required.

**For Clergy:** All requests will be made through the Diocese; contact Mary Poss in the Duvall Center (our Diocesan Office.) Oxford Documents is used for all our clergy background services. Do note your church will be billed for these services.

**For Lay:** Our Diocese utilizes Landrum Staffing to perform background checks. You can find the Landrum request for service form on the diocesan website (administrative resource section) or you may contact Kim in the Duval Center (Diocesan Office) for additional information. Do note your church will be billed for these services.

## 10 Safeguarding

Our Diocese is committed to providing a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment where the full work of the Church can be carried out. Sexual misconduct on the part of any clergy person, employee, or volunteer of any congregation, institution, organization, school or agency within the diocese violates the mission of the Church, is prohibited, and will not be tolerated.

To ensure all our churches have been trained about sexual abuse and harassment, The Episcopal Church has contracted with Praesidium to offer on-line training courses. Originally known as Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People, these and additional on-line courses are available at no cost. To sign up or find out more information, please visit [www.diocgc.org](http://www.diocgc.org)

Training is required to be taken by all clergy, employees, and most volunteers. This includes all paid employees, youth group directors, sunday school directors, choir directors, acolyte leaders, lay eucharistic visitors, vestry members, worship leaders, anyone going into someone's home in any role related to the church, regular church volunteers, etc.

## 11 Employee Handbook

The purpose of an employee handbook is to communicate many of your church employment practices and procedures. We have one for our Diocesan Office that can be used as a template if you so wish (visit the Resource Section on our website). Your employee handbook is a resource, not a contract of employment, and is intended to provide employees with information on a variety of employment-related matters. Keep it simple to start (office hours, work hours, holidays) and add / update as you & your team work thru any key policies that could use clarification (vacation /sick leave policy, confidentiality forms)

## 12 Travel Guidelines

The purpose of a travel and expense reimbursement guidelines is to promote responsible use of, and accountability for, funds entrusted to the Diocese / Church for its governance and mission. The Diocese has published travel policies that can be found in the Resource Section on our website. It will provide you with the appropriate guidance for most expense reimbursement circumstances (eg: will my checked baggage be paid for?) Prior to any travel for your church make sure that you look over the policy and see if any clarification is required. Better to square away any questions in advance than have an expense item declined.

## 13 Phone & Web Conferencing

The Duvall Center (Diocesan Office) is equipped for phone & video conferencing for any of your church or commission meetings in the office conference room. For video conferencing, we have a subscription to Zoom ([www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)) which allows for multi-user video conferencing with just a simple click on a link. Please call the office to reserve the conference room and let us know your needs. In addition, we can provide advice on how you can sign up for these services too. With changes in technology there are a number of no-cost / low-cost options.

## 14 Technology Discounts for Parishes

The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast has joined with Techsoup ([www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org)) to provide technology (eg. Microsoft programs) discounts on many core products. This allows for a church office that needs to purchase or upgrade to do so. Examples include: Microsoft Office 365 (no cost), Microsoft Office Standard or Pro (\$29/\$40), Operating System upgrades (\$0-15). In addition, there are other software discounts available from other technology providers. Please contact the Diocesan Office for more information on how to order thru the Diocese.

## 15 Grants and Scholarships

Our Diocese maintains a listing of key church grant opportunities on its website (under congregational resources). TEC and the Diocese publicize grants available thru the Episcopal Church at different times of the year. Most grant applications take time; any preparation should be started well in advance of the due date. In addition, many grants require approval from the Diocese; please don't wait until the last minute. We also provide information on our diocesan post-secondary education scholarship opportunities; application process opens around March and closes in May.

## 16 Diocesan Convocations

Our Diocese is organized into six geographical entities called convocations, the head of which is referred to as a Dean. The purpose of convocations is to foster collegiality, collaboration, communication, and disaster response. More information on structure and purpose can be found on the diocesan website. While the structure of convocation is under review, as of January 2018, the convocational deans are as follows:

- Convocation 1: Mobile area
- Convocation 2: Eastern Shore area
- Convocation 3: Pensacola area
- Convocation 4: Dothan area
- Convocation 5: Fort Walton Beach area
- Convocation 6: Panama City area





## 17 Key Calendar Dates

There are a number of important calendar dates to keep track of, including a few key dates noted below. Please add these to your calendar with reminders as if missed, they do cause lots of extra administrative energy to follow-up on:

- Diocesan Convention: **mid-February** (2017 Convention in Dothan, AL: Feb. 23-25)
- **Parochial Reports: March 1 (required by Canon)**. This info is published in the Journal.
- Congregation Information Updates: Due in **March**. This info is published in the Journal.
- **Annual Church Audits: September 1 (required by Canon)**.
- Medical Trust Open Enrollment: October
- Diocesan Budget Pledge: Due in **December**.

## 18 Diocesan Communications

Our diocese currently publishes three e-newsletter communications: the Coastline, the Green Sheet, and Views from the Bishops Chair. By visiting our website ([www.diocgc.org](http://www.diocgc.org)) you will find the latest issues, how to sign-up to receive our e-communications and how to submit articles and events for publishing.

	<p>The Coastline is our bi-weekly e-communication loaded with the latest special interest features and opinion articles written by the people of the diocese.</p>
	<p>The Green Sheet is our monthly e-communication with announcements and events for church leaders from diocesan office and supporting programs.</p>
	<p>Views from the Bishop's Chair is written by the bishop of our diocese, The Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick and is published at his discretion.</p>
	<p><i>Faith Matters</i> is a quarterly, digital magazine sharing our life of discipleship, discernment, and development as followers of Jesus Christ.</p>

## 19 Other Publications Available

There are a number of excellent publications available to churches to assist them with their business practices. Below are three such examples that you should be aware of; they are all free and available on our website for download.

- **Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs:** Have a question about accounting for Discretionary Funds, handling Sunday offerings, record management? This manual identifies church requirements and seeks to provide helpful advice on sound, practical internal controls, accounting guidelines and business practices.
- **2018 Federal Reporting Requirements for Episcopal Churches:** An annual publication by The Episcopal Church providing in-depth information. For example, how to understand the important federal reporting obligation of withholding and reporting employee income taxes, Social Security, and Medicare taxes.
- **Safety and Insurance Handbook for Churches:** Insurance issues can range from natural disasters to embezzlement to auto accidents. This publication is meant to act as a reference and a guide. Published by the Church Insurance Agency Corp., it provides easy to understand information on the many insurance issues your church may encounter.

In addition, we have created a few topic papers that provide an overview of subjects that both clergy and vestries may find helpful:

- Topic: Clergy Taxes
- Topic: Clergy Housing Allowance
- Topic: Clergy Discretionary Funds
- Topic: Understanding

## 20 Church Insurance

Most of our churches are covered by one of the Church Insurance Companies. National canon law requires fidelity coverage; the diocese also has required minimum coverage levels. Whether requesting a certificate of coverage or submitting a claim, CIAC is your first stop for information.

From time to time we are contacted by churches about liability concerns and coverage for a number of issues. It’s not always easy to balance your church budgets, property, ministries, and events with any potential insurance liability that could arise. Insurance can get expensive and policies are sometimes confusing. Below are a few such items we receive questions about:

- **Deductibles:** Our diocese receives its fair share of hurricanes and tornadoes. If you look over your liability policy you will see a number of different deductibles, for example hurricane (7%), wind (2%). A deductible shifts a portion of the cost of the loss to the policyholder (you, the church). **The higher the deductible, the lower the premium.** Many times these deductible levels are determined by the state you live in. So let’s say your church sustained some minor wind damaged by a thunderstorm; if your building is valued at \$800,000, a wind deductible of 2% would be \$16,000. Note that the 2% is based on the value of your building, not the estimated damage expense. It’s a good idea to review your policy from time to time to better understand your coverages.
- **Auto liability insurance:** In general, remember that **“Policies follow vehicles.”** Therefore, church-owned vehicles are covered by the church’s auto insurance policy, and individuals’ personal vehicles are covered by the individuals’ personal auto insurance. If a volunteer was driving their own car on church business and gets in an accident, their personal auto policy would act as the primary coverage. If found liable, the church general liability coverage may be applied in excess. All our churches have a “hired and non-owned coverage” provision as part of their church general liability coverage.
- If volunteers are driving on church business, you should have on file: a copy of driver’s license, a copy of insurance. You should also screen volunteer drivers and check their driving history.
- If you are planning to rent a vehicle for a church function, it’s best to rent in the name of the church and it is **strongly recommended** to purchase the Liability and Physical Damage Insurance the rental agency provides.

## 21 Where to find Noted Resources?

RESOURCES	
Medical and Dental Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.CPG.org">www.CPG.org</a> (Church Pension Group)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> (our diocesan website – “Administrative Resources” section)</li> </ul>
Group Life / Disability Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See section 2 above</li> </ul>
Lay Employee Retirement Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See current Diocesan Annual Convention Journal for policy (resource section of website)</li> <li>• See CPG website for full info: <a href="http://www.cpg.org/active-lay-employees">www.cpg.org/active-lay-employees</a></li> </ul>
Clergy Pension Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See specifics on CPG website: <a href="http://www.cpg.org/active-clergy">www.cpg.org/active-clergy</a></li> </ul>
Clergy Housing Allowance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.cpg.org/active-clergy/learning/finance/taxes/">www.cpg.org/active-clergy/learning/finance/taxes/</a></li> </ul>



## Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See “2018 Tax Guide for Episcopal Ministers” (available on our resource section)</li> </ul>
Clergy Minimum Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See current Diocesan Annual Convention Journal for policy (resources / governance section)</li> <li>• See “Clergy Compensation Guidelines” memo also on website.</li> </ul>
IRS Mileage Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Published annually by the IRS (<a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a>)</li> <li>• Also noted in “Clergy Compensation Guidelines” memo also on website.</li> </ul>
Diocesan Regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> (see our diocesan website – “Clergy Resources”)</li> </ul>
Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> or contact Mary Poss in the Diocesan Office</li> </ul>
Background Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Duvall Center staff (clergy: Mary Poss; lay: Kim Weinstein)</li> </ul>
Employee Handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> (see our diocesan website – “Administrative Resources” section for Diocesan Office handbook)</li> <li>• Other examples from Episcopal churches readily available on internet</li> </ul>
Travel Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> (our diocesan website – “Administrative Resources” section)</li> </ul>
Phone & Web Conferencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact office staff to schedule conference room</li> <li>• Zoom (<a href="http://www.zoom.us">www.zoom.us</a>)</li> </ul>
Technology Discounts for Parishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Duvall Center (Dwight or Kim) for additional details.</li> <li>• Techsoup (<a href="http://www.techsoup.org">www.techsoup.org</a>)</li> </ul>
Grants and Scholarships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> - visit our resources section on diocesan website</li> <li>• Select opportunities highlighted on Greensheet monthly</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.episcopalchurch.org">http://www.episcopalchurch.org</a> – opportunities under Ministry tab</li> </ul>
Key Calendar Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> - visit our resources section on diocesan website</li> <li>• Reminders provided online, Coastline, Greensheet, Constant Contact communications</li> </ul>
Diocesan Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> - visit our news and events section on diocesan website</li> </ul>
Other Publications Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> - visit our resources section on diocesan website</li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.CPG.org">www.CPG.org</a></li> </ul>
Church Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.diocgc.org">www.diocgc.org</a> - visit our resources section on diocesan website or <a href="http://www.CPG.org">www.CPG.org</a></li> <li>• Church Insurance Agency: <a href="https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/property-and-casualty/overview/">https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/property-and-casualty/overview/</a></li> <li>• Service Center, call: (800) 293-3525</li> <li>• Claims Center, call: (800) 223-5705</li> </ul>