Task Force on Sharing the Costs of Annual Council

Members

The Very Rev. Grace Burton-Edwards, Co-Chair	Chattahoochee Valley
The Very Rev. Alex Sherrill, Co-Chair	Southwest Atlanta
Mrs. Jane Brubaker	Chattahoochee Valley
The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham	Georgia Mountains
Mr. Frank Kinmonth	Georgia Mountains
The Rev. Stewart Lucas	North Atlanta
Mr. Rolando Thorne	Mid-Atlanta
The Rev. Deacon Arthur Villareal	Middle Georgia
The Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster-Weltner	*Bishop's Staff*

Mandate

R25-4 Sharing the Costs of Annual Council

Resolved, that the 119th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta, recognize the disproportionate costs incurred by parishes whose clergy and lay delegates must travel to Atlanta every year for Council. Be it further

Resolved, that the Diocese of Atlanta create a Task Force appointed by the Bishop to study this issue and bring a proposal for more equitable sharing of costs of participation in Annual Council to the 120th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta for implementation by the 121st Council of the Diocese of Atlanta. Be it further

Resolved, that the Task Force consist of at least nine persons including Diocesan staff, clergy and lay members from the Atlanta area, and clergy and lay members from both the northern and southern parts of the Diocese.

Resolved, that the Executive Board of the Diocese of Atlanta hear an interim report on the progress of this Task Force in the first half of 2026.

Summary of Work

This Task Force came about as a result of discussions with the Deans of the Diocese in 2024 and 2025. After the decision was made to hold Council in Atlanta each year, the Deans discussed ways to make Annual Council more accessible and manageable for congregations outside of the Atlanta area who would always be required to travel and pay for lodging and meal costs, while congregations closer to Atlanta would not have to assume these costs. The deans discussed several possible remedies among themselves. Because these questions were related to Annual Council as a whole, Canon Alicia and others determined that the question needed to come before Council rather than be managed simply through the planning process for Council. The Deans proposed Resolution 25-4, Sharing the Costs of Annual Council, which was approved by the 119th Annual Council of the Diocese of Atlanta.

The Rev. Grace Burton-Edwards was invited to chair the Task Force on August 15, 2026 and was charged with recruiting the required nine members. The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham, The Rev. Alex Sherrill, and The Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster-Weltner volunteered to serve. Over the next few weeks, with the help of the Deans of the Diocese, additional lay and clergy members were proposed to Bishop Wright on September 18, 2026.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held via Zoom on October 5, 2026. Canon Alicia shared information about the costs of Council. Prior to Covid, Council met at different locations throughout the Diocese. Councils held at venues not owned by the Diocese cost significantly more (often double or more). In addition, unanticipated costs at these locations often led Council to go over budget. To better manage costs, in 2022, Bishop Wright made the decision that Council would meet in Atlanta for the foreseeable future, either at the Cathedral or at Holy Innocents. No other church-owned venues are large enough to provide adequate space for worship and deliberations.

The Task Force decided to submit a continuing resolution with an updated timeline to the 120th Council. The Task Force will develop a survey to send after the 120th Council. The purpose of the survey will be to gather data about the costs of Council to congregations and ministries, whether these costs are prohibitive, and how concerned the household is about this issue. The Task Force will meet in January 2027 to review the results of the survey and begin developing proposals.

Proposed Resolutions

Extend the Commitment of the Task Force on Sharing the Costs of Annual Council

Resolved, that the 120th Annual Council of the Diocese of Atlanta extend the commitment made by the 119th Council of the Diocese of Atlanta to create a "Task Force on Sharing the Costs of Annual Council," consisting of at least nine persons including Diocesan staff, clergy and lay members from the Atlanta area, and clergy and lay members from both the northern and southern parts of the Diocese; and be it further

Resolved, that the Task Force continue to study the disproportionate costs incurred by parishes whose clergy and lay delegates must travel to Atlanta every year for Council; and be it further

Resolved, that the 120th Annual Council receive and accept the report of the Task Force; and be it further

Resolved, that the Task Force will bring one or more proposals for more equitable sharing of costs of participation in Annual Council to the 121st Council of the Diocese of Atlanta for implementation by the 122nd Council of the Diocese of Atlanta; and be it further

Resolved, that the Executive Board of the Diocese of Atlanta will hear an interim report on the progress of this Task Force in the first half of 2027.