

September 2, 2020

Dear Bishop:

The past few months have been both challenging and inspiring. I have watched dioceses around our Church, as well as my colleagues at the Church Pension Group (CPG), figure out new ways to support the people we serve amid an ongoing pandemic and continuing conversations about systemic racism. Many are exhausted, anxious, but pitching in to help alleviate the stress that so many are feeling.

While all working remotely, we at CPG continue to support the benefits, property and casualty insurance, and publishing needs of your diocese. We have offered financial support, hosted virtual events related to wellness and socially responsible investing, published safety tips for parishes that wish to reopen, and made Church Publishing resources available without charge. In addition, your chaplains to the retired have done a [wonderful job](#) of checking in with retired clergy and surviving spouses to make sure that they have what they need from us.

As a reminder, we have a dedicated [COVID-19 Support Resources section](#) on our website that offers details on our response to the pandemic. I would like to update you on two recent decisions that are part of our efforts to adapt to the changing environment:

### **Clergy Pension Assessment Waivers Now Available for Up to Four Months**

None of us expected this pandemic to be as disruptive as it has been for so many people and for so long. Earlier this year, we announced that we would be accepting applications for [temporary waivers](#) of clergy pension assessments for up to two months. Given the duration of the pandemic and the impact it continues to have on struggling congregations, *we have extended the potential waiver period to four months*. Diocesan Bishops of The Episcopal Church can apply for waivers of clergy pension assessments one month at a time up to the four-month limit per cleric. Credited service will continue to accrue during the waiver periods.

Some of you already have applied for waivers for some of your clerics. You can use the same process to request additional waivers up to the four-month limit. Note that the original financial need criteria continue to apply. Please do not hesitate to contact your [IBAMS account manager](#) if you have any questions.

**Defense of Negligence Claims Related to COVID-19**

Several congregations have asked if the Church Insurance Companies will defend against, and cover liabilities associated with, negligence claims related to COVID-19. As you may know, we have a responsibility to pay claims in accordance with our insurance contracts. Given the unusual nature of the pandemic, it is too early to know if COVID-19 constitutes an “occurrence” that would trigger coverage of negligence claims under our policies.

Nevertheless, the Church Insurance Companies will provide a defense and cover the defense costs of such claims, unless circumstances come to light that make it clear that the claim is not covered. (Liability coverage for damages would depend on the facts and circumstances of the particular claim.) Please contact Church Insurance immediately if an institution in your diocese is faced with a coronavirus-related negligence claim. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your [Church Insurance representative](#).

I remain energized by the resilience and innovation of our Church at this time, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you. We seek always to earn your ongoing confidence and support.

Please stay safe, well, and in touch!

Faithfully,



Mary Kate Wold  
CEO and President