

Convention 21 Report

Introduction

In the Fall of 2020, the Diocesan of Easton Financial Sustainability Task Force's Marketing and Communications subcommittee initiated two surveys to assist in considering future ways to serve the Eastern Shore parishes and parishioners. Bishop Santosh Marray prepared the Parousia in 2020 and the objectives of the Parousia IV describe the role of the Sustainability Task Force.¹ The Parousia document describes a ten-year project from 2020 to 2030.

Two surveys were conducted in 2020 in late September to mid-October. The target population of the *first survey* was **Diocesan clergy, current parish Senior and Junior wardens, and finance chairs and treasurers**. The target population of the *second survey* was lay leaders including **former Senior and Junior wardens, former Finance Chairs and Treasurers, Vestry members, program committee chairs and members, and other lay leaders, (e.g., Eucharistic ministers, readers, acolytes, choir, and altar guild members)**.

The most important goal of these surveys is to find out the value or importance clergy, wardens, finance chairs and treasures as well as lay leaders place on the Parousia IV initiatives.

Several steps were taken to ensure that survey responses were anonymous. No member of the Easton Diocese or the Task Force had access to or saw individual responses. Secondly, an independent third-party managed the distribution and conducted the surveys, analyzed survey data, and prepared the draft Survey Report.

Diocesan staff prepared the email data base for the surveys, which were drawn from the 2019 - 2020 Diocesan Directory. The surveys were disseminated using Survey Monkey,

¹ Parousia IV (Diocesan Financial Sustainability Task Force) is found on pages 15-17 of the [Parousia Episcopal Diocese of Easton](#), 2020.

an online application. The Bishop sent emails announcing what was coming to recipients a day or two ahead of the initial wave of each survey. Two follow-up reminders were sent to people who had yet responded before analysis of each survey began.

Survey Response Rates

The response rate was *58% for the first survey, 55% for the second survey and 57% overall*. A total of 79 recipients responded to the first survey and 35 to the second for a total number of 114 respondents.

The response rate for clergy as a subset of respondents was 100%. This response rate is significant since the views of the clergy are especially important in moving forward with the recommendations found in the Parousia document. However, Clergy did not participate in the second survey.

About a third of the respondents are current senior or junior wardens (31%), lay leaders (31%) and finance chairs or treasurers. Almost three-quarters (74%) of the lay leaders are program committee chairs.

Current Budget

Regarding the current Diocesan budget, slightly more than half of the first and second survey respondents (52%) reported that the current diocesan budget is “just right” and more than three-quarters (77%) reported that “additional funds should be sought to increase services”.

Ratings

The respondents to the first and second survey rated the importance of the proposed new Parousia initiatives. Initiatives that have an average score of 7.0 on a 10-point scale are judged to be **most important** and those with a score of 5.0 or less are judged to be least important. Clergy average ratings in Survey One are closely aligned with the

average of the total ratings across all the categories of respondents. Of the 10 proposed new Parousia initiatives the following are the 6 with the highest ratings.

1 Recruit and develop of priests and deacons for our rural areas	8.0
2 Develop a Children's Ministry for children and parents	7.9
3 Improved communications to parishes and parishioners	7.6
4 Expand services for food-deprived members of our community	7.6
5 Capital expense to repair and upgrade Camp Wright	7.5
6 Develop a Hispanic/Latino Ministry	7.0

These are the focus of the task force.

Survey Findings

The major survey findings and conclusions include: So, what did we find out.

- Slightly more than half of the respondents (54%) reported that the current diocesan budget was “just right” and that additional funds should be sought to increase diocesan services. Nonetheless, increasing parishes apportionments is a non-starter. Likewise, funding appeals to parishioners is also not supported.
- Most of Diocesan services are held as important by respondents including leadership and ministry formation and communications during the pandemic, but services such as centralized purchasing of cleaning and equipment are not. However, respondents’ comments supported the centralizing of services such as payroll and tax preparation.
- With respect to the Parousia initiatives. The recruitment and development of priests and deacons for rural areas and the development of a family, youth and children’s ministry are the **two highest rated Parousia initiatives**. Improved communications to parishioners and parishes, expanding food services to

food-deprived members of the Diocese, allocating funds to repair and upgrade Camp Wright, and the development of a Hispanic/Latino ministry were also viewed as important by respondents.

- However, expanding the team at the Diocese with a full-time CEO or Chief of Staff, expanding and remodeling the Bray House and new Diocesan technology-based support services are not supported by respondents.

The Diocese of Easton Financial Sustainability Task is preparing a report describing the survey findings, conclusions, and recommendations to include strategic objectives for important Parousia objectives as well as proposed funding campaign solutions. A draft report will be prepared in the next two months and presented to Bishop Marray, diocese of Easton Clergy, the Diocesan Council, and the Standing Committee for their review and consideration.