

If the rector/dean began with a clean slate ... and took the realistic employment budget/metric for the coming 18 months (July, 2020 thru December, 2021) and the essential/strategic initiatives and goals for those same 18 months, what is the ideal and affordable employment for the congregation? Now, since "ideal" is usually not possible, given the present staffing realities, how close to the ideal can the rector/dean get in the next number of months. How this is slightly different from the norm is to focus on what is "essential" and what is "affordable." Most rectors/deans ride out a present employment reality, attempting to come closer to the ideal within some years ... In this case, the rector/dean doesn't have the luxury of time, and, quite frankly, the "essentials" have changed dramatically. For example, the electronic communication and I.T. staffing needs have grown exponentially, and the in-person welcoming ministries have reduced to nearly nothing.

This period is not designed for the weak-hearted ... leaders will have to make tough decisions within a short time frame. Of course, being compassionate is always part of our enterprise. I'm not suggesting being "hard asses," but I am encouraging leaders to act ... and to act with an 18-month purpose. The reality is that maybe one-third of Episcopal churches will not survive this pandemic, diocesan and congregational staffs will be smaller (in some cases, much smaller), including fewer paid clergy, and overall budgets for mission and ministry will reduce maybe by as much as half of what they were.

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