Travel Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of the Diocese of the West (DOW) to reimburse travel expenses of those clergy and laity who are conducting business on behalf of the diocese. The diocese strongly encourages travelers to use travel discounts and accumulated mileage when making their travel arrangements. Travelers seeking reimbursement should incur the lowest reasonable travel expenses and exercise care to avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Reimbursement is allowed only when reimbursement has not been, and will not be, received from other sources. All business-related travel paid with DOW funds must comply with expenditure policies.

2. AUTHORIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Some clergy and laity are authorized to travel by virtue of the office they hold. These travelers include members of the Diocesan Council, Deans, department heads and some committee members. The Diocesan Budget specifies the annual travel budget for these travelers and the Finance/Budget Committee oversees those budgets on a monthly basis. The Treasurer will approve reimbursement based on the office the traveler holds and the purpose of the travel.

Anyone who does not hold any of the above positions must verify that their planned travel is eligible for reimbursement before travel arrangements are made. In the latter case, the request for reimbursement must be approved by the Finance/Budget committee and the Treasurer notified of the approval. The individual may not approve their own travel.

The Treasurer, with consent of the Finance/Budget Committee, may withhold reimbursement if there is reason to believe that an expenditure is inappropriate or extravagant.

3. PERSONAL FUNDS

Travelers who use personal funds to facilitate travel arrangements will not be reimbursed until proper documentation is submitted.
The Diocese of the West, OCA

Effective Date: 01 July 2015
Revision Date: New
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4. **Vacation in Conjunction with Business Travel**

In cases in which vacation time is added to an approved business trip, any cost variance in airfare, car rental or lodging must be clearly identified on the Travel Reimbursement Request Form. The DOW will not prepay any personal expenses with the intention of being “repaid” at a later time, nor will any personal expenses be reimbursed.

5. **Per Diem Rate**

At this time, the DOW will not use a Per Diem allowance.

6. **Policy Implementation**

Requests for reimbursement of out-of-pocket travel expenses prior to travel are to be submitted on a Travel Expense Report Form. The Treasurer may issue a prepayment for airfare, rental vehicles, conference registration fees and cash advances. The treasurer must receive the Travel Expense Report Form, the supporting receipts and/or invoices and travel approval prior to issuing a reimbursement check.

7. **Permissible Prepaid Travel Expenses**

A. **Airfare.**

Travelers are expected to obtain the lowest available airfare that reasonably meets business travel needs. An e-ticket receipt/statement or an Internet receipt/statement is required. The receipt must show the method of payment and indicate that payment was made.

Travelers are encouraged to book flights at least 30 days in advance to avoid premium airfare pricing. First-class tickets are not reimbursable. Coach class or economy tickets must be purchased for domestic flights. A higher priced coach ticket cannot be purchased for a subsequent upgrade in seating. An airline complimentary upgrade to first class is acceptable, but the fact that it is complimentary should be noted on the airline receipt. A business class ticket may be purchased at the discretion of traveler on flights exceeding 5 consecutive hours excluding layovers.

B. **Rental Vehicles.** *The DOW will pay for approved use of an economical rental vehicle.*
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C. Conference registration fees.

Conference registration fees, including business-related banquets or meals that are part of the conference registration can be prepaid directly by the Diocese of the West.

D. Travel Charged to the Diocesan Credit Card

Travelers who are authorized to use a diocesan credit card may charge travel expenses in advance of travel or while traveling. A Travel Expense Report Form is not required for travel charged to the diocesan credit card.

The Treasurer will email a statement of the traveler’s charges after the statement closing date (the 9th of the month). The traveler must reconcile their statement with receipts substantiating the expenses on the statement. The traveler must write the trip purpose and the nature of each expense legibly on a printed copy of the statement. Expenses for meals must include, if applicable, the names of the people sharing the meal with the traveler. If receipts are not routinely issued by a vendor for a particular expense and the expense is less than $50.00, the traveler must indicate “no receipt issued”. The traveler will be invoiced for all other Credit Card Charges greater than $25.00 and not supported by receipts.

In addition to those travel expenses that may be prepaid listed above, the following travel expenses may also be charged to the diocesan credit card.

E. Car Rental

The Diocese of the West (DOW) authorizes the rental of the most economic vehicle available. In certain circumstances, larger vehicles may be rented. The rental agreement/receipt must clearly show the date and the point of departure/arrival, as well as the total cost. Drivers must adhere to the rental requirements, and restrictions must be followed.

When vehicle rentals are necessary, the DOW encourages travelers to purchase collision damage waiver (CDW) and loss damage waiver (LDW) coverage. The Diocese will reimburse the cost of CDW and LDW coverage. All other insurance reimbursements will be denied.

Drivers should be aware of the extent of a coverage (if any) provided by his or her automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.
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Travelers are strongly encouraged to fill the gas tank before returning the vehicle to the rental agency to avoid service fees and more expensive fuel rates.

F. Lodging

The cost of overnight lodging (room rate, tax, tips, and internet/wireless fees) will be reimbursed to the traveler if the authorized travel is 45 miles or more from the traveler’s home or primary worksite. The DOW will reimburse lodging expenses at reasonable, single occupancy or standard business room rates. When the hotel or motel is the conference or convention site, reimbursement will be limited to the conference rate. If reimbursement is for more than the single room rate, the name of the second person must be included.

G. Personal Meals

The DOW will pay for the traveler’s personal meals taken during approved business travel. Receipts for meals, including tips are required.

H. Business Meals

The DOW will pay for business meals. Original itemized receipts and the name of those participating in the meal are required.

I. Gasoline

Original receipt required.

J. Parking

Original receipts are required for parking fees (including airport parking) totaling $25.00 or more. The lodging bill can be used as a receipt when charges are included as part of the overnight stay.

K. Tolls

Original receipts are required for tolls totaling $25.00 or more.

L. Miscellaneous transportation

Original receipts are required for taxi, bus, subway, metro, ferry and other modes of transportation if costs are $25 or more for each occurrence.
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M. Post-travel Reimbursement

It is the responsibility of the traveler to accumulate and save all receipts for a single trip and include them with a single request for reimbursement.

Requests for reimbursement of out-of-pocket travel-related expenses that include a mileage reimbursement or for which there is for more than one receipt must be submitted by email to the Diocesan Treasurer with a Travel Expense Report Form (see related document) and scanned receipts attached.

If there will be only one receipt for a trip, it may be scanned and attached to an email with a note indicating the purpose of the travel and the nature of the expense.

All forms and notes along with receipts may be mailed to the Treasurer or the Diocesan Office. Scanned copies of receipts are acceptable. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the Treasurer within one month of the trip. Reimbursement of travel expenses is based on documentation of reasonable and actual expenses supported by the original or scanned image of itemized receipts.

Post-travel reimbursements that may be paid by the DOW in addition to those above are:

a. Automobile (personally owned- domestic travel)

A valid driver’s license issued within the United States and personal automobile insurance are required for expenses to be reimbursed. Drivers should be aware of the extent of coverage (if any) provided by his or her automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.

Reimbursement for use of a personal automobile is based on the current IRS mileage rate for business. Starting point and ending point of the trip as well as total miles must be indicated on the Travel Reimbursement Form.

A trip reimbursement may not include a reimbursement for Gasoline AND mileage.

b. Conference Registration Fees

If not prepaid, the Diocese will reimburse fees, business related banquets, and meals. Receipts are required. If the conference does not provide a receipt, then a cancelled check, credit card
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A slip/statement or documentation that the amount was paid is required for reimbursement. Entertainment activities such as golf outings and sightseeing tours will not be reimbursed.

Registration fees paid directly by an individual will not be reimbursed until the conference is completed.

c. Non-reimbursable Travel Expenses.

The following will NOT be reimbursed by the Diocese.

- Airline club memberships
- Airline upgrades
- Business class for domestic flights or first class for all flights.
- Commuting between home and the primary work location.
- Costs incurred by traveler’s failure to cancel travel or hotel reservations in a timely fashion.
- Evening or formal wear expenses
- Haircuts and personal grooming
- Laundry and dry cleaning
- Passports, vaccinations and visas when not required as a specific and necessary condition of the travel assignment.
- Personal entertainment expenses, including in-flight movies, headsets, health club facilities, hotel pay-per-view movies, in-theater movies, social activities and related incidental costs. Travel accident insurance premiums or purchase of additional travel insurance.
- Other expenses not directly related to the business travel.

The Travel Expense Report Form is an Excel file which automatically calculates expense totals by day and by expense category. If miles are entered, it calculates the mileage allowance using the IRS 2015 mileage allowance.