

THE DIOCESE and YOUR PARISH

There is only one Church in the Diocese of New Jersey. There are 158 local manifestations of that one Church, but there is only *one* Church. This reality means that a large part of our stewardship of God's resources has to do with looking after and funding and praying for people we rarely if ever meet. When we do our part as a parish (one of those 150-odd manifestations of the one Church in the Diocese of New Jersey) by making our *Fair Share* commitment to the diocesan budget, we honor our commitment to that one Church.

Persons unaware or perhaps new to The Episcopal Church may ask, "*What do we get for our Diocesan Pledge?*" While this is a self-referent question, it's a natural one. Our diocesan offering is not about us.

A more accurate question is "*What do we do give when we make our Fair Share gift to the diocesan budget?*" It's about that one Church in New Jersey, whether we receive any direct benefit from the gift or not.

The Church does not do business *quid pro quo*, expecting funding to go out *only* when there is an intended benefit or at least fund replacement. We make our offering because we are a part of one Body — the Church — and by supporting the diocese through our annual gift, we take our responsible part as members of a larger household.

All that said, here are some of the things you "get" for your diocesan pledge:

You get a priest. All dioceses play a part in the education and the placement of clergy. That education is staggeringly expensive. Priests are priests of the whole Church, not of the parish only, and we as the Church take corporate, not local, responsibility for selection, education, and placement of clergy throughout the one Church in the Diocese of New Jersey.

You get a bishop. That's what it means to be an "Episcopal" Church. The Bishop is the chief pastor of the Diocese, the principal pastor to the clergy, the overseer, and in some cases *corporation sole* of the Church. The Bishop mediates disputes, ordains, confirms, serves clergy, and is the living symbol of unity of the Church. When our bishops meet as a House, or at a Lambeth Conference, it is our Bishop who speaks with the voice of New Jersey.

You get administrative support that simply cannot be done effectively at the parochial level, such as administration of insurances of Church property and clergy, Church Pension Fund accounting and questions, coordination among parishes seeking to do joint ministries, accounting and management of diocesan funds, and a host of other staffing functions.

You get to do the missionary work and ministry you say you want to do, in ways that are impractical to achieve at the parochial level. Funding for small parishes and missions who could not survive without the help, funding for ministries both within and beyond the diocesan boundaries (including college chaplaincies), after-school programs for children of the inner cities, and support of the worldwide mission and ministry of the Church come out of our diocesan pledge.

You get communications, which means diocesan email lists, a timely and informative diocesan website, online registration for all events, workshops, seminars in the Diocese, downloadable PDF forms and information of importance. Want to know more? See newjersey.anglican.org/Resources/EmailLists.html and sign up for lists that interest you.

You get interim ministry in a vacancy and you enable the training and coordination of that same professional ministry to other churches when they're searching for full-time ordained leadership.

You get diocesan resources, in the forms of youth work, consultation on best practices in Christian formation, stewardship, buildings and grounds, as well as access to restricted funds of the diocese by which parishes and missions may apply for and receive loans and grants.

This isn't an exhaustive list, but it goes far to demonstrate that our participation in the Diocese of New Jersey is part of our identity and what makes us an Episcopal Church.