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PART ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE VESTRY

I. THE BISHOP, THE DIOCESE AND THE PARISH

Diocese: A diocese is the fundamental geographical unit of the church. It is the only ecclesiastical entity whose boundaries are precisely defined by canon law. The Diocese of Atlanta consists of all of the upper part of the state of Georgia north of a line running on a diagonal from below Columbus and Macon to north of Augusta. Two counties and part of a third, adjacent to Chattanooga have been ceded to the Diocese of East Tennessee. The Diocese of Atlanta covers 25,000 square miles and has 56,121 baptized members currently in 93 parishes. Episcopalians in North and Middle Georgia worship in local congregations but also have a commitment to the mission and ministry of the whole diocese. The parish is by canon law subordinate to the diocese, and a congregation may call it "Episcopal" only because it is in communion with the bishop, the diocese and the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

Convocations: The Diocese of Atlanta is also subdivided into 10 regional convocations

See the Section 1 appendix page 3 to locate your parish's convocation). Each convocation is presided over by a dean, appointed by the bishop. Convocations are charged with mission development in their area, building networks of support for clergy and laity, and providing shared worship and education opportunities. Convocations meet prior to Council to elect members to the Executive Board of the diocese and to nominate people for other elected positions in the diocese.

The Bishop: The bishop is the chief pastor of the diocese, and because he is unable to be present in each congregation each Sunday, presbyters, or priests, serve as his delegates and representatives in local congregations. Clergy are not members of their congregations but are members of the diocese.

The bishop is required by canon law to visit each parish at least once every three years. The bishop's "official" visitations are regularly scheduled in a rotation throughout the diocese, but the bishop(s) come on occasions other than the official visitation to teach, preach, meet with the vestry, celebrate new ministries, dedicate new buildings, lead special worship services and confirm. The bishop's office also works with parishes in conflict and congregations seeking new clergy.

The purpose of the bishop's official visitation is to be present as the chief pastor of the diocese to teach, preach, celebrate the Eucharist, baptize and confirm if there are candidates, and examine the parish register. The bishop comes as the leader of the church in the diocese to learn of the parish's vision of mission and

ministry, to hear of the hopes and concerns of parishioners and to remind the congregation that it is part of a national and worldwide church, called to mission and ministry in some areas of the world where most members of that congregation are never likely to go.

To be a parish: Canon 30 of the Diocese of Atlanta (see page 19, of Section 1 appendix) sets forth some specific requirements for a worshipping community to be a parish: Regular worship services throughout the year, Christian education, pastoral care and visitation; stewardship of time, talents and financial resources; and evangelism and outreach to the community in which it is located. "A parish exists when the congregation....is self-supporting and also contributes proportionately of its human and financial resources to the ministry of the Diocese and the Episcopal Church." It is expected that each parish will contribute its fair share to the support of the mission which is ours in North and Middle Georgia. *(See Canon 20, page 16 of Section 1 appendix)*

Any congregation that receives financial aid from the diocese is an aided parish. If in the opinion of the bishop a congregation does not meet the basic requirements of Canon 30, he may recommend to the diocesan Council that a parish's status be changed to that of *aided parish*. The bishop is the rector of an aided parish and appoints the vicar to serve as his representative.

Property: The title to parish property is held by the vestry in trust for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta and is secured against alienation from the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta. This includes both real estate and financial resources. The rector and vestry are in charge of the property for the purpose of carrying out the mission and ministry of the congregation. The vestry is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the property. Any major architectural alteration of the property must be submitted to the diocese's Commission on Church Architecture and Church Construction, and indebtedness which would encumber or alienate the property must be approved by the bishop and the Standing Committee of the diocese. Property may not be bought or sold without the permission of the Bishop and the Standing Committee.

Parish bylaws: Parishes should be incorporated and have bylaws. A sample set of bylaws is available through the bishop's office. The chancellor of the diocese is prepared to answer any canonical or legal question a vestry may have regarding the affairs of the parish.

II. VESTRY ORGANIZATION

The canons of the church give exclusive authority over the fiscal affairs of the parish to the vestry. But vestry members are also spiritual leaders who are committed to building up the Body of Christ so that it can be an effective instrument of mission and ministry in the world.

To be elected to the vestry, one must:

- 1) Be a confirmed member of the Episcopal Church enrolled as a member of the parish, 18 years of age or older.
- 2) Have been regular in attendance at the services of the church in the year preceding election.
- 3) Made and maintained a financial commitment to the parish, known to the treasurer, in the year preceding election.

These are qualifications not only for election but for continued service on the vestry. A vestry member should lead the way in participation in the worship life and financial support of the parish.

Terms of office: The term of a vestry member is for three years, and a vestry member is not eligible for re-election in the year following the expiration of his or her term. A vestry may have not less than three nor more than 21 members. Congregations with more than 600 members may have up to 30 members on the vestry. Some very small congregations have the minimum number allowed by the canons. Since a vestry is a working body, even large congregations should not have a vestry so large as to be unwieldy. Twelve is an ideal number; 15 are a bit awkward, and anything larger is difficult to form into a working body.

The senior warden may be elected by the vestry, or the vestry may allow the rector to appoint the senior warden. In most parishes the rector makes the appointment. The senior warden is traditionally the "rector's warden" and should be someone who is an enthusiastic supporter and co-worker with the rector. It does not serve the best interests of the parish if the senior warden and rector are working at cross purposes.

The junior warden is traditionally the "people's warden" and is always elected by the vestry. It is not necessary, and sometimes even undesirable, for the junior warden to be responsible for parish properties. Some junior wardens are unequipped and untrained for that role. The chair of the property committee should be the person in the parish who is most knowledgeable and skilled in maintenance of building and grounds, whether a member of the vestry or not.

The clerk, or secretary, of the vestry is always elected by the vestry and need not be a member of that body.

The treasurer is elected by the vestry and need not be a member. As with all offices, the treasurer should serve a specific term, e.g., three years. Treasurers do not control parish finances but are stewards who serve under the direction of the vestry.

Most vestries have an executive board, empowered to act on behalf of the vestry in emergencies.

The vestry also elects delegates to the *annual diocesan Council*. The number of delegates is determined by the size of the congregation as set forth in the constitution of the diocese. Although other members of the parish may serve, it is best for vestry members to be delegates because it is the vestry which must have enough information to guide its decision making in funding the mission of the diocese. Many vestries elect delegates to serve one, two and three years so that their delegation to council will have continuity.

Meetings: The vestry usually meets once a month, and sometimes takes a month off during the summer. The canon law of the diocese requires that vestries meet at least six times a year. The rector may call a special meeting or such a meeting may be called by a majority of the vestry in writing. The reason for the meeting must be specified in the notice. If the parish is without a rector the senior warden may call a special meeting.

The rector presides at all vestry meetings but may, in special cases, may delegate that responsibility to the senior warden. However, since the primary role of the rector is to preside at the Eucharist and over the spiritual life of the parish, the rector should be the presiding officer at vestry meetings. When the annual compensation of the rector is being considered, it is appropriate for the rector to ask the senior warden to preside and to leave the room so that the vestry can freely discuss compensation for the coming year.

Committees: The vestry is usually organized into committees or commissions. These may include finance, education, property, evangelism, mission or outreach, stewardship, parish life and worship. At least one member of the vestry serves each of these committees, but the chair of the committee need not be a vestry person.

Every vestry organization should be constructed so as to serve the mission of the congregation. Not all vestry organizations, therefore, will follow the same pattern. In smaller congregations such a committee structure may not be possible or desirable, and the vestry may function as a committee of the whole. It is recommended that there be a vestry *commission on ministry*. This commission would help laity discern and carry out their ministry in the church and the world, recruit people for ordained ministry as deacons and priests, and evaluate the existing lay and ordained ministries in the parish. The rector and vestry recommend candidates for the discernment process (the first step toward ordination), and after candidates have completed their theological studies the rector and vestry recommend them for ordination. Vestry members should always be on the lookout for individuals in the congregation whom they think

possess the gifts for ordained leadership in the church. The parish COM would

facilitate this process.

Annual planning day or weekend: There should be an annual vestry planning weekend. This time is best utilized when it is spent at a place out of town. Planning weekends or days are most productive if an outside leader is used, but parishes can also have very productive weekends using local talent. If an outside consultant is too costly for a small congregation, diocesan staff is often available at no charge, or rectors may agree to lead one another's vestry retreat. Included in these weekends is a time of worship, Bible study, community building, fellowship, mutual ministry evaluation, review of past goals and goal setting.

III. NORMS FOR WORKING TOGETHER

Prayer: Prayer and the study of Scripture should always be a regular part of the life of the vestry. Vestry members are spiritual leaders of the congregation, and that dimension of their life and work must be nurtured and nourished. Otherwise, their work will be flat and empty. You should more more than having a perfunctory prayer at the beginning of the meeting. You should take time to reflect and listen to God before taking up the business.

Consensus decision-making: Important decisions, such as the calling of the rector or establishing a major new direction for the parish, should be made by consensus. A consensus does not mean that everyone wholeheartedly supports a decision but that everyone can live with and support it. The vestry talks together and listens to what every one has to say long enough for "clearness" to emerge. If there is not consensus, then the decision is not acted upon.

On the other hand, routine decisions should be made by a majority vote. These decisions should not take up an inordinate amount of the vestry's time through lengthy discussion and debate in order to get a consensus.

Meeting length: A vestry meeting, or any meeting for that matter, should not last more than two hours. After that time the energy level goes down and results in diminishing returns on the vestry's productivity. Items on the agenda not dealt with should be first on the agenda of the next meeting of the vestry, or authority to make the decision can be delegated to a committee.

Behavior: Our baptismal covenant commits us to respect the dignity of every human being. This includes our fellow vestry members and the clergy. We are to speak the truth in love and to build up the body of Christ. Vestry members are obligated to speak up in the vestry meetings. Everything that needs to be said

should be said there and not in the parking lot after the meeting or in telephone conversations. If a vestry member has differences with another vestry member

or a member of the clergy, those concerns should be addressed directly to the party involved. *Triangling* is complaining to a third party in order to enlist that party's support or simply to ventilate. The best way to end triangling is for everyone to understand that anything said about anyone will be reported directly to that person.

Conflict: To be alive is to be in some degree of conflict. A certain amount of conflict is healthy and normal, but unacknowledged and unresolved conduct is destructive. We learn through conflict that grace abounds and that tensions need community. But do not let conflicts in your vestry and in your congregation go unattended. They will escalate, and it may take your parish years to recover. The bishop and his staff stand ready not only to work with you to resolve conflicts but to anticipate them and help you deal with them productively, The Bishop's Office should be contacted immediately assistance to assist parish wardens in time of conflict or pastoral need. Wardens may have access to the bishop without the rector being present, but they should know that the first person to be contacted after their visit will be the rector. Conflict cannot be resolved unless all the parties involved talk openly and honestly with one another, thereby building up the body of Christ by speaking the truth in love.

Stewardship of the vestry: As leaders of the parish and trustees of the parish resources, vestry members should exemplify responsible commitment in their own giving and in the management of the resources of the parish. Each vestry member should be committed to the tithe or to moving toward a tithe in his or her own giving. Vestry members who are unwilling to support the mission of their parish and of the church should resign their positions. We cannot expect or ask others to do what we ourselves will not do. Vestry members should understand that giving away is an essential dimension of the Gospel. A vestry is called to risk and to have a vision of the mission of the church which is beyond the immediate interests and survival needs of the local congregation. Stewardship involves not only maintaining but reaching out and giving resources away to meet the needs of God's people in the world and to extend the mission of the church. Experience has shown that only those congregations with this vision and commitment are healthy and thriving.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES & RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between the vestry and the rector is crucial. The fundamental characteristic of a healthy relationship is trust. This may not appear immediately in the pastoral relationship but must be developed and nurtured over a period of time. The early stages of a pastoral relationship are a time of testing as to whether the vestry and rector can trust one another. When trust is present, anything is possible. Without it, nothing can really happen.

A rector is called to a parish for life and the pastoral relationship may not be dissolved without the mutual consent of the vestry and the rector. If the consent is not mutual the bishop gets involved as an arbitrator to resolve the impasse. Needless to say, since the relationship is so permanent, it is to the benefit of the vestry, the rector, the bishop and all concerned to make sure that the match is an enduring one. A pastoral relationship is normally ended when the rector is called to a new parish. The vestry must give its consent to the resignation of the rector, and in these cases it almost always does.

Salary: Salary is negotiated at the time of the call. In the Diocese of Atlanta, canon law requires that any full-time cleric be paid at least the minimum salary of a transitional deacon. The current salary package is available through the diocesan deployment office. This includes the base salary and housing allowance, wages to cover one-half of the cleric's self-employment taxes, travel/auto allowance, pension assessments, major medical insurance (HMO, where available), dental insurance and a \$50,000 life insurance policy. By canon law this salary must be paid in the amount agreed upon and on the date agreed upon. Neither a vestry nor a treasurer may reduce or withhold the salary of a cleric.

Housing: Although most clergy now own their own homes, there are some advantages to the parish owning a rectory:

1. It makes the priest more mobile. He or she does not have to sell a house before accepting a call elsewhere.
2. Home owning is no longer always considered a windfall investment because houses are now appreciating at a much slower rate.
3. Owning a rectory is a good investment for a parish, because once a rectory is paid for the cash outlay for housing disappears except for maintenance.
4. If the vestry decides to sell the rectory in order to buy a different one for a new rector with differing family needs, the vestry can afford to be less rushed with regard to the sale of the old property.

There is a major proviso in this, however: the vestry should provide an equity allowance for the rector which will accrue throughout the rector's tenure so that

at retirement time or when the rector moves to a place without a rectory, he or

she will have a down payment.

Continuing education and sabbatical leave: It is expected that every cleric in the Diocese of Atlanta will have two weeks of continuing education leave annually. The bishop and vestry should have a copy of the cleric's continuing education plans. Time for continuing education may not accrue but is to be used annually. After six years of service, the cleric is entitled to three months of paid sabbatical leave (this does not include vacation time). The vestry should budget for continuing education and sabbatical leave. The unused funds in this account should accrue through the sixth year of service. Continuing education and sabbatical leave should not be considered extended vacation. This time is for professional training and enrichment and is absolutely necessary for the health, vitality and renewal of both the cleric and the congregation. This is one of the best investments of time and money a parish can make.

Letter of agreement: All financial arrangements, vacation times, continuing education time, duties and responsibilities should be carefully written down in a letter of agreement, which is drawn up at the time of the call. A sample form of this letter is available through the bishop's office and all "Letters of Agreement" must have the approval of the Bishop.

Rector's responsibilities: The canon law of the church spells this out in detail. In the Celebration of a New Ministry, the rector is given the keys to the church. This is a reminder that the rector has the control over the use of the parish facilities. The rector is responsible for the worship, music, education and spiritual welfare of the congregation.

Vestry responsibilities: The vestry has the final responsibility for the fiscal well-being of the parish property, and must see that the facilities are maintained and that all bills are paid. If there is a deficit at the end of the year, the vestry must eliminate it either by subscription from the parishioners or by personal contribution.

The vestry is responsible for seeing that each member of the parish is asked to make a financial pledge for the support of the mission of the church. The vestry approves the annual budget and is responsible for seeing that the parish's pledge to the mission of the diocese for the coming year is received at the Diocesan Offices in accordance with the deadlines in the canons. The vestry is also responsible for seeing that there is an annual audit of all financial records. The vestry is the sole representative of the congregation in its relationship with the clergy of the parish.

Full disclosure: All parish financial records, excluding individual pledge records

or records of people helped through the rector's discretionary fund should be a matter of public scrutiny. The church is a public-servant institution, and therefore

our constituency has a right to full disclosure. There should be no secret funds, and salaries of all employees should be readily available. Clerical salaries in each parish must be published annually in Annual Council Journal. Names of the clergy will be deleted in accordance with privacy laws.

Vestry meetings are usually open to members of the parish, who may observe without voice or vote. When the vestry goes into executive session to discuss personnel matters, the meeting is closed.

Collaboration: The vestry and rector work together as a team. Both the rector and the vestry should be concerned about the spiritual life of the congregation, and both should be concerned about the more mundane matters such as money and the leaky roof. When canonical rights and duties are too clearly adhered to, resentments emerge around who is treading on whose territory. The best working model for vestry and rector is the collaborative one, although both know in whose territory the buck ultimately stops.

Administrator: Some parishes have an administrator. This takes the administrative burden off the clergy and frees them to pursue their priestly and pastoral callings. A competent parish administrator can complement the work of the clergy. Good administration is good pastoral care, behind every statistic is a real flesh-and-blood person.

Assistants: The assisting clergy, youth workers, educators and organists are hired by and serve at the pleasure of the rector. The rector may ask a nominating committee to help in the selection of assistants.

Staff accountability: Clergy and lay staff should be ultimately accountable to the rector. In most cases the rector is directly involved in the administration, maintenance, education, worship and pastoral care of the congregation. It makes the working relationship very difficult if the staff is not accountable to the rector.

Hiring policy: It is a wise parish policy for members of the congregation not be employees of the parish. When the working relationship or the job performance of a staff member is unsatisfactory, needless conflict and tension develops in the life of a parish if the employee is also a member of the congregation. A firm hiring policy avoids this. Vestries and rectors may not discriminate in hiring on the basis of race, sex or age.

Employee benefits: A 1991 resolution of General Convention and our own diocesan Council mandated that all lay employees working more than 20 hours a week are included in a pension plan. Lay employees should also be included in a

health care plan. This is a moral imperative. The church has traditionally been the last institution to provide these benefits for lay employees, and if not illegal it is immoral for lay employees not to be offered health protection for their families

equal to that which is provided for the clergy. At the same time, it is fair to expect that spouses of employees, lay or ordained, who have insurance available to them through their jobs will be covered by that insurance.

The vestry should offer to contribute on a *pro rata* basis the cost of medical insurance and retirement for all part-time employees, clergy or laity. For instance, if an employee works half time, then the parish should offer to pay half of the cost his or her benefits; if three-fourths time, then three-fourths of the cost of benefits.

Sexual abuse: All parish and school employees must have the sexual abuse training in "Safeguarding God's Children" required by the diocese. An allegation of sexual abuse, which is a violation of the law, is to be reported immediately to the appropriate civil authorities and the bishop.

In the case of sexual harassment or other forms of adult misconduct, the bishop refers these matters to the Review Board. Employees who suspect that they may be victims of sexual harassment may call the bishop's office, without identifying themselves. Staff and volunteers alike should be cautioned to be always above reproach, especially when dealing with children and youth.

V. CALLING A NEW RECTOR OR VICAR

When a rector resigns, the Bishop or Deployment Officer will meet with the vestry to outline the search process in detail. The vestry will appoint a nominating committee, to work with a consultant in preparing a parish profile, screen candidates, visit and interview them and present to the vestry two or three nominees for their consideration. Unless there has been an inordinate amount of conflict or unless the rector has had an extremely long tenure, the vacancy time should be kept at a minimum. Long vacancies are usually not in the best interests of the parish. If the nominating committee works deliberately in preparing a profile and screening the candidates, a call can be made within twelve months. However, the process can take considerably longer. The bishop's office does an initial screening of all candidates and works closely with the consultant and chair of the nominating committee. Those candidates who are on the "short list" will be more intensely screened by the bishop and have background checks completed. The final nominees must have an interview with the bishop and have his approval before a final call is issued. The bishop issues the call of a vicar to an aided parish. It is a diocesan policy that an assistant in a parish may not be called as rector of the parish where he or she is currently serving. Extensive experience has taught us that the candidacy of an assistant for the rector's position short-circuits the search

process and that the role change is a very difficult one to make in the same parish. When the rector leaves, both the assistant and the parish need to move on in a new direction.

Interim rector: Continuity is important when a rector leaves; that parishes should use interims. An interim is a priest who has responsibility for the worship, pastoral care, education and leadership in a parish during the interim, and exercises a continuous ministry there until the new rector is called. An interim is different from a supply priest who fills in for a single service at a time. It should be clear, however, that the wardens and vestry are the ecclesiastical authority in the parish. The interim serves at the pleasure of the vestry, within the terms and limits of the contract. The senior warden presides at vestry meetings. If the interim period is short, the vestry may opt to use a part-time interim who can be present on Sundays and provide for the essential priestly ministrations. There is many laity in most congregations who are quite competent to take over the pastoral, educational and administrative responsibilities during the interim. The interim priest is present to lead the parish during the time between the leaving of the previous rector and the arrival of the new rector, and he or she should not be distracted from priestly and pastoral duties by becoming a candidate for the rector's position. It is considered a serious violation of pastoral trust when an interim gets caught up in the political process and becomes a candidate. It is a firm policy in the Diocese of Atlanta that an interim may not become rector of the parish where he or she is serving.

VI. Questions and Answers

The following are some actual questions frequently or occasionally asked about the role and relationship of vestry, rector and diocese.

Q. The rector is out of town and the vestry wants to have a meeting to discuss the rector's salary. May they do this?

A. No. The vestry meets at regularly scheduled times. Special meetings of the vestry may be called only by the rector or by a majority of the members of the vestry in writing, stating the purpose of the meeting. The rector always presides unless the rector asks the senior warden to do so.

Q. A member of the parish wants to have a referendum on the rector's tenure at the annual parish meeting. Can this be done?

A. No. The vestry is the sole representative of the congregation in its relationship with the rector. The congregation may not vote on the clergy of the parish.

Q. Who calls a rector?

A. The rector is called by the vestry with the consent of the bishop. The congregation may neither hire nor fire a rector.

Q. May the vestry fire a rector?

A. No. A rector has life tenure, and leaves a parish only by death, resignation (with the consent of the vestry) and removal under provisions of canon law. When both parties do not agree to a termination of the pastoral relationship, the bishop is at first a mediator and as a last resort an arbitrator, in which case the bishop's decision is final and must be obeyed by both parties.

Q. Who hires the assistant?

A. The rector. The assistant always serves at the pleasure of the rector.

Q. Our organist has a Ph.D. in music and 15 years of experience in Episcopal churches. Our rector knows nothing about music and sings badly~ even in the shower. Who has the final say about music in the parish?

A. The rector.

Q. Who hires and fires the organist?

A. The rector.

Q. Who elects the vestry?

A. The congregation at the annual parish meeting. A third of the vestry is elected each year and serves for a three-year term. Vacancies are filled by the vestry.

Q. May the rector screen the list of candidates and remove those who do not agree with him or her about parish policy?

A. No. Any confirmed person who is regular in worship, is 18 years of age or older and has made and maintained a financial commitment to the parish in the previous year is eligible to serve on the vestry. There should always be opportunity for nominations to be made from the floor or for names of nominees to be submitted prior to the election, which will appear on the ballot if canonically qualified. It is very desirable for there to be at least two nominees for each vacancy to be filled.

Q. Does the congregation approve the parish budget at the annual meeting?

A. No. The vestry is fully responsible for the financial matters of the parish. At the same time it is incumbent on the vestry to give a full accounting to the congregation as to the financial health of the parish.

Q. May the treasurer or the vestry withhold the salary of the rector if

they do not believe that the rector is doing his or her job?

A. No. Canon law states that the compensation agreed upon must be paid on the date agreed upon.

Q. What if there is no money to pay the salary?

A. The vestry is responsible for paying all salaries, either through soliciting additional financial contributions from the members or through borrowing the money needed. If long-term financial viability is problematic, then the parish may need to go to a part-time priest and/or become an aided parish, in which case the bishop is the rector.

Q. May the vestry reduce the rector's salary as an expression of disapproval?

A. No. The courts have held that the compensation agreed upon by the rector and vestry is a legal contract.

Q. When the rector leaves, may the assistant be a candidate for the position of rector?

A. No. It is the policy of the bishop that assistants may not succeed to the position of rector in the parish in which they are serving.

Q. May the interim rector become a candidate for the position of rector?

A. No. It is a violation of the agreement made at the time the interim accepted the position, and it is a policy of the bishop that the interim may not become rector.

Q. How should a vestry respond to a rector who is not performing well or respond to a growing conflict between the rector and a faction of the parish?

A. Members of the vestry should voice their concerns to the rector either privately or in a vestry meeting. The rector should always be part of the conversation. If this is not fruitful, wardens should contact the Bishop's office following this conversation; the bishop will contact the rector and arrange for a meeting.

Q. Must a parish financially support the mission of the diocese?

A. Yes. Canon law states that every parish must give financial support to the mission of the diocese.

Q. How much of our parish income are we expected to give to outreach and to support the mission and ministry of the diocese?

A. A guiding principle is that parishes give away as much as they spend on

themselves. This is called 50/50 giving. This principle is based on each parish's giving 25 percent of its budgeted income to the mission and ministry of the diocese and 25 percent to outreach ministries. The canon law of the diocese says that 10 percent of the average of the past three years'. This income is the minimum level of giving in support of the Ministry & Mission Budget of the diocese. *(See the appendix of this section, page 17, for the fulltext of diocesan Canon 20, on funding.)*

Q. What do we get for the money we give to the diocese?

1. You get a priest. You also have a partnership with 93+ parishes, worship communities and agencies. Every priest goes through a lengthy and costly discernment and education process. Your money pays for the recruitment, selection, training and ongoing nurture of clergy.
2. You get a bishop - that's what the word *episcopal* means. Each priest is the representative of the bishop in a local congregation, and the bishop provides oversight to clergy and congregations and shares responsibility for the mission of the church in the nation and the world. The bishop ordains, confirms, teaches, helps congregations get clergy, mediates disputes and is chief pastor of the diocese.
3. You get support and consultation for your education programs and access to a well-stocked resource center which includes videos, filmstrips, curricula and other printed resource material.
4. You get Pathways, our quarterly journal, which is received by every family in the diocese at no charge. And you have access to information on our web site at any time.
5. You get administration of the Church Pension Fund, in which all clergy and many laity participate, and our insurance programs - health, life, dental and property.
6. You get trained intervention when there is a conflict in your parish and consultation when the parish is without a rector.
7. You get a conference center and summer camp facility - Mikell - in the mountains of North Georgia.
8. You get help in planning new buildings through the diocesan Commission on Church Architecture and Church Construction, and low-interest loans to build them through the Diocesan Foundation.
9. You get help to support congregations which can't yet fully support

themselves financially.

10. You get to support outreach programs all over this diocese, which you would not be able to support and sustain by yourselves.

11. You get to support the national and world mission of our church in our own country and around the world.

12. You get to support college chaplains who minister to young adult members of our church when they are at college, as well as other students and faculty.

13. You get various workshops and educational events sponsored by the diocese:

- The annual Ministry Fair
- The Treasurers' and Financial Workshop
- A workshop on the parochial report
- Training of vergers
- The Small Church Conference
- Conferences on parish communication
- Diocesan Website.....
- Parish assistance with internet communications
- Conferences for junior-high and senior-high youth
- New clergy orientation - "Fresh Start"
- Clergy days, clergy conferences and retreats

Housing allowance

Q. The assistant wants the vestry to designate 10 0 percent of her salary for housing. Must they do this?

A. Yes. Any cleric employed by a parish may designate any percentage of his or her salary as housing, and the vestry must do this. The actual amount of housing claimed on the cleric's tax return must be the actual amount used for housing.

Q. John Smith is an ordained Methodist minister employed by St. John's to do Christian education. May he claim part of his salary as housing allowance?

A. No. The IRS maintains that in order to qualify for the housing allowance exclusion, a person must be able to do everything that an ordained person in that church is able to do.

SECTION I — APPENDIX

Revised Canon 20— Diocese of Atlanta

Resolved, that Canon 20 of the funding of the Diocese of Atlanta be changed in full with the new canon to read as follows:

Of the Funding of the Ministry and Mission of the Diocese of Atlanta

Section 1. We the people, clergy, and parishes of the Diocese of Atlanta acknowledge our need to give of our time, talent, and treasure for the work of Christ. We further embrace our strong heritage - expressed both in the Bible and in longstanding Tradition - of parishes supporting one another and joining together to accomplish the work of Christ. We acknowledge our responsibility to support the episcopacy and to provide for the mission of the Church. We recognize the tithe as the minimum standard of biblical giving, and we acknowledge the important example our parishes provide to parish members by practicing the tithe. Finally, we feel strongly the bonds we have toward one another as members of the Body of Christ. We therefore desire that funding of the ministry and mission of the Diocese be accomplished fairly and equitably, within a framework that promotes both compassion and accountability. We seek a framework in which no parish will be required to contribute more than a fair share, and no parish will be allowed to contribute less than a fair share. To these ends:

Section 2. Ten percent (a tithe) of the average of the past three years' Net Operating Revenue (as reported on the Annual Parochial Report) shall be the minimum amount each parish shall give in support of the Ministry and Mission Budget of the Diocese. On or before June 15 of each year, the Finance Committee shall give notice to each parish of its ten-percent minimum contribution (based on its Annual Parochial Report data) for the Mission and Ministry Budget of the Diocese for the upcoming year. In the event that a parish has not filed a timely Annual Parochial Report, the Finance Committee shall substitute the most recently filed parochial report for its calculations. Should the parish subsequently file an Annual Parochial Report showing Net Operating Revenues differing from that used in the computation, the Finance Committee shall adjust the required contribution to the Budget of the Diocese, as appropriate.

Section 3. For most parishes, the ten-percent minimum will be an appropriate fair share. For some parishes an appropriate fair-share may be a voluntary contribution of more than ten-percent. Because of extenuating circumstances, a parish may be unable to give the ten-percent minimum and shall be afforded an appeal opportunity as described herein. Not later than August 15, all parishes shall acknowledge, in writing to the Director of Finance, their commitment to give ten-percent, more than ten percent, or state their intent to appeal.

Section 4. Any parish believing that, for good cause, it will be unable to give a minimum of ten percent to the Budget of the Diocese may file a written appeal signed by the Rector (or Vicar) and Senior Warden not later than August 15 with an Assessment Appeal Board. The Assessment Appeal Board shall meet with representatives of the parish filing an appeal. The parish will be given an opportunity to request a reduction from the ten-percent minimum contribution for the year in question. The Assessment Appeal Board shall operate pursuant to guidelines and timelines provided by the Executive Board. In making its determination, the Assessment Appeal Board shall consider, among other factors, the parish's current

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monthly financial report, the level of stewardship training and education in the parish, the nature of the annual stewardship campaign in the parish, any extraordinary circumstances faced by the parish, and other data as considered relevant by the parish and the Assessment Appeal Board. After such review, the Assessment Appeal Board may reduce the percentage of the assessment for that parish for that year or affirm that ten percent is a minimum assessment. Such decision, and the reasons therefore, shall be communicated in writing to the Rector (or Vicar) and Senior Warden, the Bishop, Executive Board, and the Director of Finance of the Diocese. In the event that the Assessment Appeal Board grants a reduction, that Board shall refer the parish to the Commission on Stewardship and the Commission for Congregational Growth and Development. These Commissions will assist the parish leadership in developing a plan to enhance stewardship and enable the parish to increase its giving to the ten-percent minimum.

Section 5. In the event that annual contributions from any parish fall short of the minimum ten-percent or the reduced amount set by the Assessment Appeal Board, at the next Annual Council of the Diocese the cleric and lay delegates of that parish will be denied vote on all matters of business and denied voice regarding matters related to finance or the expenditure of diocesan funds. In addition, such parishes shall not call any assistant or associate clergy, nor fill vacancies for such clergy. In the second successive year of not contributing the fair-share amount, any such parish shall, by operation of this canon, have its status changed to that of an Aided Parish of this Diocese.

Section 6. The Assessment Appeal Board shall consist of three lay and three cleric members. The Executive Board, with the consent of the Bishop, shall appoint these six members of the Assessment Appeal Board for a three year term. Initially, the Executive Board shall establish staggered classes of this board, with two people sitting for a one year term, two people for a two year term, and the final two for a full three year term. Thereafter, the Executive Board shall appoint two members each year to serve a full three year term. The Bishop shall appoint annually a convener as a seventh member, who will vote only to break ties. The Executive Board will make a good faith effort to appoint members of the Assessment Appeal Board as follows: two will be appointed from parishes having Net Operating Revenues in the upper one-third of the diocese, two will be appointed from parishes having Net Operating Revenues in the middle one-third of the diocese, and two will be appointed from parishes having Net Operating Revenues in the lower one-third of the diocese. In addition, the Executive Board will make a good faith effort to ensure broad geographical representation on the Assessment Appeal Board.

Section 7. Every congregation in the Diocese shall include in its annual budget the amount of its fair-share contribution (assessment) for the support of the Mission and Ministry Budget of the Diocese. A portion of the annual contribution is to be paid to the Diocese on or before the twentieth day of each month.

Section 8: The Executive Board shall prepare a tentative Diocesan Mission and Ministry Budget and send it to each Vestry. Each Vestry shall, by a date set by the Executive Board, consider the mission and ministry priorities of the Diocese and report recommended changes in the Ministry and Mission Budget to the Executive Board. The Executive Board, in its discretion, may develop additional means of soliciting recommendations from the people and parishes of the Diocese. When the process for receiving such recommendations is ended, the Executive Board, with the assistance of the chairs of Diocesan commissions, committees,

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and the Diocesan staff, shall develop a Proposed Ministry and Mission Budget that reflects the mission priorities of the Diocese.

Section 9. Council shall consider the Proposed Mission and Ministry Budget, make amendments as desired, and approve and return the resulting Proposed Mission and Ministry Budget to the Executive Board. Using the Proposed Mission and Ministry Budget approved by Council, the Executive Board shall establish and adopt the Mission and Ministry Budget in its final form. Copies of the budget in its final form shall be mailed to all Vestries. The Executive Board shall give direction to and administer the gross amounts budgeted through its various departments. The Treasurer shall make a detailed financial status report for the previous and current year to Council in session.

Section 10. This canon shall take effect on January 1, 2006 in preparation for the 2007 budget year.

CANON 30

Of Parishes and Aided Parishes

Section 1. Any congregation in which the Sacraments are regularly administered, the Gospel preached, and the Ministry and Mission of Jesus Christ actively pursued according to the Doctrine and Discipline of the Episcopal Church, the said congregation also being in communion with the Bishop and the Council of The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta and contributing of its time, talents, and financial resources to the support of the Diocese of Atlanta and to the Episcopal Church, shall constitute a Parish in the Diocese of Atlanta with the approval of the Bishop and the Diocesan Council. Active pursuit of the Ministry and Mission of Jesus Christ includes the following items as a minimum:

- (a). Regular Worship services throughout the year;
- (b). Christian education;
- (c). Pastoral care and visitation;
- (d). Stewardship of time, talents, and financial resources;
- (e). Evangelization; and
- (f). Outreach to the community in which it is located.

Section 2. For administrative purposes, there shall be two categories of Parish in the Diocese of Atlanta: Parish and Aided Parish.

(a). A Parish exists when the congregation, in addition to fulfilling its ministry and mission to the people of God in its community, is self-supporting and also contributes proportionately of its human and financial resources to the ministry and mission of the Diocese and of The Episcopal Church.

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(b). An Aided Parish exists when the Diocese of Atlanta or another Parish provides financial assistance to enable it to pursue and implement its ministry and mission.

(c). Whenever the term "Parish" is used in these Canons, it shall include both administrative categories of Parish except in those cases where a provision is made for Aided Parishes. In such excepted cases, the provisions applying to an Aided Parish shall apply to Aided Parishes alone.

(d). An administrative category shall not be changed without securing the approval of the Bishop.

Section 3. Each Parish shall be under the pastoral care and supervision of a Minister canonically resident in the Diocese of Atlanta or licensed by the Bishop of Atlanta. Any Minister in Holy Orders who shall be assigned the care of a Parish not an Aided Parish shall be canonically resident in the Diocese of Atlanta.

Section 4. A Parish may be established in the Diocese of Atlanta in the following manner:

(a). The Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta may desire to establish a Parish in a given location and contact people in that area, including a reasonable number of Communicants of The Episcopal Church. Alternatively, a reasonable number of Communicants of The Episcopal Church, which includes at least three (3) confirmed communicants aged 18 years or over, may desire to establish a Parish. In either case, the people and the Bishop meet and consult together. If the people and the Bishop desire to continue the endeavor, the Bishop may authorize the people to meet as a worshipping community subject to the Canons of The Episcopal Church and of The Diocese of Atlanta and to any requirements the Bishop of Atlanta may further set forth in writing. The Bishop may assign a Minister to lead the group during this time. When the people desire to establish a Parish, they may apply to the Bishop for permission to make application to the Council. Upon approval by the Bishop, the people may then petition the Council as set forth in subsection (b) below.

(b). After receiving the Bishop's approval, the people desiring to establish a Parish shall submit three copies of the following petition at least forty days and not more than ninety days before the Diocesan Council to be held next thereafter. The petition shall be submitted through the Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta who shall refer it to the Diocesan Council with any recommendations. The petition shall be signed by not less than three members of the group aged eighteen years or over who are confirmed communicants of The Episcopal Church. Any Minister in charge of the group, shall approve the petition by signature thereon.

PETITION

We whose names are hereunto signed, and who are confirmed communicants of The Episcopal Church or who are desirous of being confirmed communicants of the Episcopal Church, deeply sensible of the truth of the Christian Religion and conscientiously attached to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Church known as the Protestant

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Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and being desirous of further establishing its authority and securing its holy influences for ourselves, our families, and neighbors and those who come after us, do hereby respectfully petition the Ecclesiastical Authority and the Council of the Diocese of Atlanta that we be granted the status of a Parish of The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta, under the name and title of N and we do hereby solemnly promise and declare that the said Parish shall forever be held under the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese of Atlanta, the authority of which we do recognize, and to the liturgy, doctrine, discipline, rites and usages of The Episcopal Church in the United States of America we promise for ourselves and our successors corporate obedience and conformity at all times, so help us God. Furthermore, we solemnly engage and stipulate that all real and personal property of which the Parish is or may become possessed is held in trust for this Church and the Diocese of Atlanta and shall be secured against alienation from the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta unless such alienation shall be in conformity with its Canons."

(c). The Bishop shall refer the petition to the Council of the Diocese with any recommendations. The Council of the Diocese meeting next after the submission of the petition shall act on it. Upon approval by the Council of the petition for admission as a Parish, the group is thereupon admitted into union with the Bishop and the Council as a Parish. Its administrative status as a Parish or an Aided Parish is determined by the criteria in Section 2 of this Canon.

(d). Whenever an administrative category is changed from Aided Parish to Parish, the Presiding Officer of the Council at which this takes place shall advise Council of the fact.