

My report of the Finance Committee of the diocese, since the last time we met in convention a year ago in Altoona, I would describe as being one of quiet but steady consolidation, building on the work we began two or three years ago. Working in close cooperation with Bishop Scanlan, the President of the Standing Committee and the Council of Trustees, the members of the Finance Committee have worked faithfully to improve the level of transparency and accountability at all levels. The Canon to the Ordinary, Bill Graffius - who I might add works tirelessly on your behalf - in his report to Convention has set out in some detail much of the work of the finance committee in the past year, which needs no further elaboration on my part. However, it is appropriate, I believe, to comment on two initiatives the Finance Committee has begun since we last met in convention.

The first initiative is the forming of a sub-committee to consider the calculation of the Fair Share in the Diocese. If there is one thing we can all agree on, that is the Fair Share is not "fair." That being said, making the Fair Share "fair" is not as simple a task as it may seem, and many sincere attempts have been made in the past to correct that anomaly. But the undeniable fact is that for the diocese - and by the "diocese" I mean all of us - we need funding, and the bulk of that funding comes from us, the congregations that make up the diocese. Yet, the nature of the diocese has changed significantly over the years, an increasing number of parishes unable to sustain a full-time priest, matched by an increasing number of parishes seeking financial assistance from the diocese to support their ministry, are just two elements adding to the dilemma of what makes the Fair Share, "fair," and which need to be considered. The sub-committee, drawn from around the diocese, has made the sensible decision to take its time as it considers these things. In other words, we are not looking for a "quick fix" but rather an appropriate assessment of how we can reasonably meet the financial needs of the diocese.

Another initiative of the Finance Committee is the formation of a group to consider how congregations can better meet the requirement of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church with regard to financial audits. We are sensitive that this is no simple task, therefore we are working towards reasonable financial practices that recognise the nature of the parish and the requirement of the diocese and church at large. Both the initiatives on Fair Share and Parish Audits also intersect with Bishop Scanlan's commission on the revision to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese, and the Finance Committee has played an integral role in the work of that commission.

It only leaves me to extend, on your behalf, my sincere thanks to all the members of the finance committee, and the members of the Fair-Share and Audit sub-committees, for their work and their dedication in serving our Bishop and diocesan staff, and you, the people of this diocese. They are the plebs sancta Dei - the Holy Common People of God, and to God in Christ I give thanks for them all.

Sincerely,

The Rev'd Canon Stephen C. Casey
Finance Committee Chair