

Appendix A - What the Episcopal Church Means To Me: Reflections of Task Force Members

As the members of the Mission Funding Task Force warmed to their task over the past year, one question surfaced again and again. While our task was to seek out and recommend an equitable and just funding scheme for the diocese, an underlying question -- which was not part of our task -- continued to lurk in and around our work. That question is, "Why give?" Our members determined that each individual and each parish would very likely answer this question in different ways. And so, it was determined that we would share among ourselves, and then in this Appendix offer our personal reflections on why we give. Then we can in good faith encourage others to give to the Church to support its mission and ministry.

Kenton Ball

Being an Episcopalian means my friends and I come together with other Christians to worship God, and that corporate worship of God -- in a high ageless form -- is far more important than any personal characteristic of any of us. In fact, the human personality and all the emotionalism that follows human personality is naturally de-emphasized; it is simply not important. In this context, the preoccupations and things of Earth grow dim in the light of God's glory and grace.

Being an Episcopalian means that service opportunities abound for everyone. We are not so numerous that the gifts and talents of any individual can go unused. Rather, as we worship, we come to understand that we find ourselves in service to others just as Christ found himself in the ultimate service -- his life -- to us.

David Boyd

My life in the Church as a committed Christian has been a 23 year love/(almost)hate affair! I can generally love my God, and I have come to accept and believe that God really does love me.

The Church, however, is an entirely different animal. Divinely inspired -- but all too often humanly run -- I weep with joy at what we can be, and often with pain and frustration at what we are. Whether at a Eucharist for 10,000 at General Convention, or with half a dozen hearty souls on a snowy morning in January, I am touched by the power of the Living God in the Body of Christ. And yet, no organization or institution has hurt me, or others whom I love, as deeply as the Church. So why bother?

I bother because, as imperfect as it is, the Church is the primary place where I experience God's saving love. In a "broken and sinful world", to quote our Prayer Book, I have great need to cling to and to support that which I know works. And this wonderful, crazy Church of ours works for me! Indeed, it is the place where I know that I am called to work out my salvation "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and to take my place in helping to build up the Kingdom of God.

I did not grow up in this tradition of the faith; I chose the Episcopal Church as an adult. I chose it fully aware of its warts and flaws, but believing that, for me, it makes the most sense *and* feeds my soul. I am deeply committed to our apostolic roots: that we are by our worship and polity an extension of the apostolic Church. The early Church knew dissension. I love the example of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) where the new kid, St.

Paul, was heard, accepted and respected. People could agree to disagree, focus on what they shared *and* encourage one another in their calling and ministries -- a good model for the modern church!

We are part of an historic national and worldwide Body, not better than others, but for those of us who call it home, the right place. In a denomination named for them, Bishops -- and by extension the dioceses -- are a symbol of our connection to the Apostolic Church. I do not always agree with our Bishops, sometimes I don't even like them, but if we are to be a part of this tradition, we must support them and the dioceses they lead, and allow them to help lead us in mission. I often disagree with this vote or that decision. But, just as I am a member of a democratic nation, I accept our polity. It is, after all, basically democratic. I love the checks and balances of our system, which makes us listen to the other side of an issue, gives each person the right to be heard, and does not invest absolute power in any person, office or group.

And so, I anticipate that my love/(almost) hate relationship will continue. This Church of ours is my home, a happy home, and it is my -- and each member's -- calling to pray, work and give. If we are faithful, then divine inspiration, and not human folly will shape us and lead us to be, truly, the Body of Christ.

Lou Browning

For me, our Church provides comfort, caring, companionship, understanding, and a familiar worship environment and practice just about wherever I am, as part of a large thinking community of, to a very great extent, like-minded Christians, worshipping as members of a structured historical Episcopal Church going back to Christ's Apostles and their Acts.

Gary Gabbard

Why is it important for each of us to belong to the Episcopal Church? Each year my parish, Trinity, Covington, is asked to contribute a significant portion of its income to the Diocese of Lexington, and the Diocese, in turn, is asked to contribute to the national Episcopal Church (which is part of the Anglican Communion). What does it mean to me to belong to these larger entities? What do I receive in return? Here are some of the benefits I have experienced or observed personally that immediately come to mind.

From the Anglican tradition:

- A theology that values reason as part of the basis for belief.
- An inspiring prayer book and beautiful liturgy that provide for variety, but make me feel at home in Anglican churches around the world.
- A wonderful musical tradition.

From the national Episcopal Church:

- A method for responding to disasters and helping those in need on a national and worldwide basis through the Presiding Bishop's Discretionary Fund.
- A platform to influence national and world events through the actions and statements of the National Convention and the Presiding Bishop.
- Economies of scale to provide affordable insurance and retirement programs for church employees.

- A centralized network to help match priests and parishes.
- A theology that emphasizes the inclusion of all.

From the Diocese of Lexington:

- The Cathedral Domain.
- A dynamic youth program.
- A program to provide aid to Eastern Kentucky.
- Support and guidance to parishes without priests.
- Support to new and struggling parishes.
- Support for retired priests and their families.
- Information, materials, and workshops to help develop and support parish programs.

Somehow, this mix of seemingly diverse items (none of which could be provided by an individual parish) blends together to define what being an Episcopalian means to me.

Fred Ruppel

As was the case with John F. Kennedy's assassination on Friday, November 22, 1963, the events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001 will remain imbedded in our personal and corporate memories for years to come. In the midst of the tragic events that unfolded on that day and for the remainder of the week, my appreciation for the Episcopal Church peaked. In the late afternoon on that fateful day I heard the first of a number of calls for corporate prayer -- on EKV's public radio station I heard the announcement that the doors were open for prayer in two Episcopal churches in Lexington, Christ Church Cathedral and Good Shepherd. In the next couple of days, I read about a joint Catholic, Episcopal, Jewish, and Muslim celebration of unity. The week was capped off with a joint service of prayer and remembrance that Friday at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. It dawned on me that our denomination, our churches, was where our nation gathered for corporate prayer. The readings of the 56,000 names inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; funerals for important dignitaries (the latest being Kathryn Graham, the editor of the Washington Post); national days of prayer -- all are held at the National Cathedral.

Having lived in the Washington, DC area for 11 of my last 22 years, I have spent many hours at the National Cathedral. My children regularly went on school trips to the Cathedral to study Gothic architecture and American history. My family regularly enjoyed picnics on the grounds, in the Bishop's Garden. I have watched black-clothed, spiked, tattooed, pierced young men and women freely roaming the building and grounds, while all but a select few individuals were shut out from entry to the equally ornate Mormon Tabernacle just a few miles away. I have seen us as inclusive in a way that makes other denominations both cringe in judgment and cry with envy.

The Episcopal Church is the church of the founding fathers of this great nation, of the revolutionaries who gained independence for this nation, of more presidents than any other denomination. I laud the Church's "three-legged stool" of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. I thrill at the great writers and theologians -- C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, John R. W. Stott -- who have come out of its Anglican tradition. But mostly I rejoice in the Episcopal Church's celebration of the Eucharist, Sunday after Sunday. Except for the occasional Morning Prayer service, I know that I will find a Eucharistic celebration when I visit any given Episcopal church on any given Sunday. I remain thankful for my Roman Catholic

roots and for a father who was locked in to that tradition. The Catholic tradition taught me self-discipline and personal responsibility and gave me a caring Spirit and a social consciousness. To this day within the Christian faith the Catholic Church remains nearly unparalleled in its social awareness. In spite of that, however, I have never regretted my decision to leave the Catholic Church, and I am confident that it is my entry into the Episcopal Church that has given me the grace to do so.

Toni Shultz

Right now - STABILITY.

The Episcopal Church as an international church is caring and changing. We have many world programs to help as many as time and money will allow. With not being in contact with a national church office on a regular basis, I can only assume our interest are being heard. Having been to the last general convention, I believe we are going into positive forward movement with a few bumps in the way.

On a local level, the Diocese of Lexington has a positive plan in progress. Having attended my present church for over 28 years, there are many relations we have had with the Diocese of Lexington.

We came into existence as a church for a retired Bishop, being built by donations from his friends and not a member of the Diocese. After several tragedies and much prayer we finally became a member of the Diocese of Lexington.

Since becoming part of the Diocese we have had excellent guidance from each Bishop and continue to move forward. We will never be a large congregation and I think that is part of our niche. Plus we occasionally give our members the 1928 Prayer Book, which is another niche. Since many of us grew up with the 1928 Prayer Book I did not see the problem. My thought is that any prayer book that has been accepted by the national church, from the beginning, should be accepted as part of our being and used occasionally for history's purpose.

Holy Communion is very important to me. Having graduated from Margaret Hall Episcopal School, and being in chapel twice a day, Holy Communion is a very important part of my life. Our Priest has a wonderful presentation and feeling while he presents Holy Communion. The most important thing is living the gospel. Episcopalians are a caring group, as I know firsthand, though we do not take change well. Which makes me all the more determined to be flexible and caring, as I try to follow the gospel.

Dan Stone

A space for my family and I to explore our gifts and limitations... A diverse community within which some share my spiritual life and practice and some do not... Thoughtful and prayerful dialogue... Wonderful and diverse music... Gifted and talented friends... Spiritual adventure...

Anisa Cottrell Willis

I came to the Episcopal Church from a pretty much fundamentalist, "congregational" church. In college I attended lots of churches—mostly the UCC and Unitarian/Universalist churches— and I really missed having communion every Sunday. The Sunday I walked into Grace-St. Luke's in Memphis, I knew I was where I belonged. I was confirmed my

senior year. I could write a book about why I have taken vows to serve Christ through the Episcopal Church, but several things stand out: the fact that I could explore and eventually live out my call to ordained ministry as a theologically “orthodox” but otherwise liberal woman, the discipline of the prayer book and the lectionary, the fact that every day members of the Anglican communion are praying with and for each other and are working together to meet the needs of people all over the world. Many of my feminist studies friends were amazed that I aligned myself with a tradition that has such a “hierarchical” polity, but I have always appreciated the Episcopate. I grew up in a church that was supposedly congregational and emphasized the “priesthood of all believers,” using different words; the result, in my experience, was that some members still had lots more power than others but just used it more covertly and therefore destructively. Instead of leadership that is discerned and raised up out of the community, there was a cult of personality. That model of congregationalism, in my experience, only resulted in isolation and fear of difference. In my experience it is human nature to use and even need authority, and when it works well the Episcopate can model a sort of accountable mutual servanthood from which the world and other denominations could really learn. The breadth of the Anglican Communion, united by our weekly celebration of the Eucharist and our common prayer, is a truly beautiful thing. Our church like any human institution has problems and even flaws, but it is my spiritual home.