



## Focus: Our Relationship with the Diocese

### ***From our church website:***

Church of the Nativity is a parish of the Diocese of North Carolina, one of 109 dioceses in 16 nations and three regions of the Episcopal Church. All are welcome to find a spiritual home in the Episcopal Church. By all, we mean ALL, no exceptions. We believe in "radical welcome." As a body, Church of the Nativity is fully loyal to and supportive of the Episcopal Church.

### **How do we interact with the Diocese of North Carolina?**

Church of the Nativity has a positive reciprocal relationship with the Diocese of North Carolina. Each month, Nativity gives a portion of our income to support the Diocese. The formula to determine the amount of giving is issued by diocesan annual convention and applied to all the churches within the diocese. Since 2011, Nativity has paid 100% of our diocesan asking. This is a major milestone in maintaining congregational health. The annual asking supports the staff at the Diocese level as well as indirectly providing funds for helping with emergency worldwide natural disasters, sponsoring mission trips, and supporting less fortunate dioceses in other parts of the world. **In 2013, Nativity is giving \$42,897.00, 11.5% of our 2011 operating revenue to the Diocese of North Carolina. Our 2014 contribution will be \$46,281.00, a figure derived from 11.25% of our 2012 operating revenue.**

In return, **the Diocese gives us monetary support and connections to enable us to promote our Outreach ministry focuses.** You will recall that we packed 10,000 meals last spring for Stop Hunger Now. The diocese gave us a grant that provided funding for a portion of these supplies. Also, Nativity has been recognized for our multi-decade commitment to the partnership between the Diocese of North Carolina and Las Comunidades Unidas, Choluteca, Honduras, for medical missions. And in March 2013, our church was awarded a grant from the Environmental Ministry of Province IV of the Episcopal Church to create an intergenerational program for families to help them understand and respond to the ecological crisis of climate change.

In addition, **we receive valuable support and training from the diocesan staff.** You may remember the many times Canon Michael Hunn visited with the vestry during the Rector search period to help guide and shape that process. In her role in congregational support, the Rev. Cathie Caimano, Regional Canon, has led several vestry retreats and Sunday morning forums here. She has also been instrumental in providing support to Stephanie as the sole priest in a growing and active parish. The Regional Youth Coach, Summerlee Walters, spent several months working with our Youth Ministry Team as they articulated their hopes and dreams for the future of our youth program.

### **Our Goals for 2014:**

**To further promote the valued relationship between Church of the Nativity and the Diocese of North Carolina, the Stewardship Ministry team firmly supports that we maintain our 100% giving commitment.**

Your prayerful pledge will enable the church to continue to foster these important ties to the Episcopal Church.

# Flourish in Faith *Stewardship Narrative Series*

Proper 24 - Luke 18: 1-8

Sunday, October 20 2013

*Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.*



I can remember the first time I heard someone suggest I should pray about my commitment to the church. Having a business degree and not much spiritual education at the time, I thought, “Why would I pray about that?” I suppose someplace in my head I understood how prayer worked, but I also suspected prayer might open a can of worms I wasn’t prepared to handle. At that time in my life, giving was a financial decision made using my head and not a spiritual decision made on my knees.

As I grew in faith, I began to hear God’s voice in my everyday life. He and I had gotten on more friendly terms, and eventually it was time to trust God with the money question. I was finally ready to listen to God’s response to how I should use the resources with which I had been blessed. I began to ask, “God, what do you want to do through me?” It was a fairly simple prayer, often with a less-than-simple answer.

The effects of this prayer and attention to God’s reply have resulted in many life changes. In fact, this prayer changed absolutely everything. No longer was I floating along in the world minding my own business. As I began playing by God’s game plan rather than my own, I became more deeply connected to God. We were now playing on the same team.

The two most significant changes were my vocation and my financial giving.

I had an MBA, two young daughters and a husband whose work took him all over the world. But God thought I should become a church consultant, which I did some seventeen years ago: the first change.

The second change was becoming a tither. Like many Christians today, my family was contributing about 2.5% of our income to church and charities—the result of our ‘financial’ decision. By our personal standards, we were being generous and doing all we felt we could do. But as we prayed about our giving, we began to feel God take the lead. God was inviting us to take the risk, to trust and to give away more money than we could have imagined. The thing is that while God may take you to a place you have never been, God is always present there with you. Tithing has become an integral part of our family and our growing relationship with God.

Even through these experiences, I often find myself rolling along trusting in myself rather than in God. I need to be reminded where to put my faith: not in the smallness of my ideas, but in the greatness of a generous God. Expressions of gratitude for the large and small blessings of everyday life help me to not lose heart, but to trust in God.

Today, my persistent prayer is, “God, help me to respond with gratitude, prayerfully listen for your voice, and faithfully go where you lead.” It’s a simple prayer, often with a less-than-simple answer.



**Kristine Miller, Member**  
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## *Reflection Questions*

- Can you recall an experience when you were persistent in prayer?
- Can you pray with a willingness to let go of the outcome?
- Do you let God in on the conversation of what your giving can be?

