

Frequently Asked Stewardship Questions

Article 2: Support for the Diocese and the Orthodox Church in America

This is the second installment of our parish “Stewardship FAQ Document”. It deals with questions associated with support for the Diocese and the Orthodox Church in America. Specifically:

- Why do we pay “so much” to the Diocese? Why does the parish pay this? What does it go for?
- I don’t want to pay that. Can I just opt out?

A previous article discussed Parish Finances. Subsequent articles will focus on the spiritual and practical aspects of stewardship and pledging.

Why Do We Pay It?

Christ the Savior – Holy Spirit Orthodox Church is not an independent “congregation”. We are an integral, constitutive, essential parish of the Diocese of the Midwest of the Orthodox Church in America –and as a result the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church. We receive our *mandate and prerogative to exist* as a church community from our Diocesan Bishop. We are required to operate in accord with the canon law and ecclesiastical discipline of the Orthodox Church.

In short this simply means we can’t exist apart from our Diocese. We have no authority or reason for existence apart from our Bishop.

So, as to the question of why we pay to support the Diocese the simple, direct answer is that it is our responsibility to do so. Just as it is the responsibility of every parishioner to support the parish, it is the responsibility of our parish to support the Diocese and National Church. We are connected with the body of Christ through our bishop and Diocese and we have a duty to care for it.

What Does This Support Cover?

The OCA’s [Diocese of the Midwest](#) includes 11 states¹ and approximately 70 parishes and monasteries -- the largest Diocese in the OCA.

In its most basic sense the “jobs” of the Diocese are to:

- Maintain good administrative order
- Oversee proper behavior and practice among parishes in the Diocese.
- Provide assistance, resources, encouragement, and tools to help Diocesan parishes fulfill their ministry and help them grow and become more vibrant.
- Stimulate and oversee the planting of new parishes to serve those persons in areas without parishes.

¹ For those interested: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri Kansas, Nebraska and North Dakota.

Diocesan Budget

The diocesan budget is currently \$420,000 per year. It consists basically of five key areas of costs:

Cost area	% of budget	Includes
Salaries and benefits	31%	Bishop's salary/housing/benefits/insurance plus part time stipends & benefits for the Chancellor, secretary, bookkeeper; treasurer and six district deans
Facilities & Diocesan Center	15%	The Diocese owns a handsome complex in downtown Chicago that includes a church, four offices and the Bishop's residence. It is an old facility and costly. Costs include maintenance, insurance and utilities for the complex and a stipend for the property manager.
Administrative Travel	11%	For the bishop, chancellor, deans and Diocesan council meetings.
Administration & office & misc.	17%	Office supplies, postage, computers, phone, Diocesan assembly, outside services, audit; liability insurance, honoraria
Ministry	26 %	Clergy convocations, seminarian scholarships. Stipend and travel cost for Parish Development ministry leader; Parish Development grants, Mission Planting Grants, Parish development conferences, tools consulting and communications.

A few other key points can be made about the Diocesan budget.

- **Ten Percent Given Back to Parishes** -Approximately ten percent (10%) of the Diocesan budget is returned to parishes in the form Mission Grants, travel assistance and Parish Development Grants.
- **Bare Bones in Important Areas** -While the Diocesan budget may seem large it is extremely tight in numerous important areas. The diocesan budget has essentially \$0 for important efforts like youth programs, music programs, educational material development, clergy development, evangelization, and charitable outreach. All of these are central parts of the Diocese's mission.
- **We Have a "Say" in This Budget** -The Diocesan budget is recommended by the Diocesan council and discussed and approved each year at a Diocesan Assembly attended by representatives from each parish.

Orthodox Church in America

The Diocese uses approximately half of its funds (the funds received from parishes like ours) to support its work. It then pays about half of these funds to the OCA to fund the work of the National Church ([OCA](#)). We won't review the entire OCA budget but simply offer a few comments:

- **The OCA budget is supported by US territorial Dioceses only.** The OCA's three "ethnic dioceses" (Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian), as well as the Canadian diocese have, for a variety of reasons, historically paid *virtually* nothing toward the support of the OCA.
- **The OCA budget has been *significantly* reduced in recent years.** Full time staff personnel have been reduced to an absolute bare bones minimum. Department budgets are minimal.
- **Financial management and control of the OCA, a severe problem in the recent past, now appears to be very well managed.** A copy of a recent OCA treasurer's report can be found [here](#). If you take the time to read it you will find it very comprehensive and clear. Temporarily

restricted funds, such as charitable donations and other earmarked funds, are clearly accounted for .

How Do We Pay It? I don't want to pay that. Can I opt out?

While our parish's portion of the support of the Diocese and National Church budget is currently calculated on a per capita basis², paying the "assessment" is the parish's responsibility. Individuals do not pay it directly. And, they do not opt in or opt out.

Money sent to the Diocese and in turn to the National Church, is part of our *responsibility* as an Orthodox community to be connected to the living historic Church. We, as a parish, live out that connection by being active participants in Diocesan and OCA affairs -- contributing time and talent to strengthen the Diocese and its works and providing financial support to allow these parts of the Church to do their job credibly, effectively and with purpose.

² Other calculation methods, used successfully in other Dioceses, are being considered. As mentioned in a previous stewardship article our parish's responsibility for the Diocese/OCA budget amounts to about 14% of our parish budget – though increases to parish donations actually lower that percentage.