IN ALL OF TODAY’S UNCERTAINTY AND DISRUPTION...

Shaped by God Together will change many things, but the need for local leaders, both clergy and lay, to help church communities to flourish will always remain.

When the Diocesan Synod meets in October, one of their key considerations will be trying to work out how much paid ministry, and ministry support, we can plan for. Parish Contribution, as our largest and most flexible income source, is the key factor in trying to work out what is affordable.

A BIT OF CONTEXT...

Having come together in recent years to reverse the long-term decline in Parish Contribution, the impact of Covid caused a drop in income of nearly £0.5m in 2020. Even if all commitments for 2021 are paid we will still be £1m short of what would have been received if Contributions had kept pace with inflation from 2014.

Over the last decade the shortfall of income compared to the cost of ministry has been subsidised using reserves, but it is no longer viable or responsible to ignore this structural deficit. Having made central savings of over £1m, and with plans for further savings that will reduce the number of central staff employed by the Diocesan Board of Finance, we face the reality that unless significant increase from Parish Contribution is achieved, balancing the budget will involve cuts to clergy numbers.

IN ALL OF TODAY’S UNCERTAINTY AND DISRUPTION...

we are called to trust that the future of the church is safe in God’s hands: without God our churches cannot grow, thrive, and be places of welcome and blessing for others.

But the future of the church is also in our hands: God has called us to a role of stewardship and care. It is our responsibility to offer what we have to God to pay for the ministry that we, and others in our communities, receive. This is our Parish Contribution.

STEPPING FORWARD...

So this year, your Parish Contribution commitment matters as never before, as it gives a crucial guide to what paid ministry we can afford in the future.

The total amount committed will directly determine whether we grow paid ministry, can sustain the levels we have, or are forced to make greater reductions.

The future really is in your hands.

This is our Parish Contribution.
THE FINANCIAL STRUGGLES OF THE LAST 18 MONTHS HAVE PUT INTO EVEN SHARPER FOCUS THE NEED FOR EVERY CHURCH TO GIVE GENEROSLY, REALISTICALLY AND PRAYERFULLY.

“For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.” 2 Corinthians 9:10

GENEROSLY Giving generously is not about trying to comply with a fixed figure but is measured by what we give out of the resources that are available to us. In the last year there have been examples of generosity where churches have paid their contribution in one sum to support the cash flow of the diocese, used reserves to meet their commitment, or paid additional amounts to support other churches in more difficult circumstances.

We know that Covid has had a varying impact on church finances with some being hit very badly and others who ended 2020 with a surplus in their accounts. It is important to look honestly at what resources we have and to discern, with God, what a generous gift would be.

REALISTIC Over the last few years many people have asked for more guidance as to what constitutes a ‘realistic’ commitment. In future years we hope to provide localised calculations of ordained and lay ministry, but for now we have calculated the basic cost of stipendiary ministry which you can use to inform your commitment for 2022:

- Stipend: £27,651
- National Insurance: £2,400
- Pension: £10,729
- Housing: £12,300

Total = £53,080

Many dioceses quote a much higher amount than this as they include other direct costs that come from supporting clergy ministry. We are using this lower figure for now, but when local calculations are produced they will include other costs which will increase the overall total.

PRAYERFUL Please seek God in your conversation. You can use the prayer provided here to help you to do that:

Lord of all, we thank you for your goodness and generosity to us,
And for the trust you place in us to be good stewards of your gifts.
As we consider our Parish Contribution for 2022 help us to make a commitment that reflects the money available to us, honours our relationship to all the churches of this diocese, and is a joyful response to all that we have received.
Amidst the questions, anxiety, and competing demands, help us to hear your voice, and to follow you.

Amen