

Reflections from Hild breakout group

It was recognised that a large number of churches are working very hard to meet their parish share total and recognise the need to do that. One person said that is what really matters, showing commitment to the Diocese and recognising the costs that go with having parish priests. By agreeing a parish share figure we enter into an agreement with the Diocese, just like we do when we take on a mortgage.

It was mentioned that the approach to accept a deficit and therefore make parish share more achievable for everyone had gone down well and, certainly, until Covid hit the parish share giving had been higher as a result.

However we did recognise that we spend a lot of time every year talking about and focusing on money and that it is restricting us, as God's people. We need to face reality, every year we look for funding to plug the gaps but instead we need to accept the gaps and then just get on with being what we can be in that situation. The reality is that we are spending more than we have to spend. If we could release ourselves from these conversations and worries then we can actually get on with delivering the Diocesan priorities. How much of our walking with people in the worst times of their lives is actually done in the church building? Isn't it more likely to be in their front room, or by the bedside of a dying person, or at the graveside? How many more people do we meet in our community rather at church on a Sunday?

We wondered whether deanery boundaries help or hinder? We need to keep it contextual, what works in a rural parish will not work in a city centre. One size does not fit all, but one thing that has been consistent for us all is Covid. Is this actually the Kairos moment? Is this the crisis that will get us out of this continual loop? This is a new thing which none of us could predict. But we are doing things differently as a result, because we had no choice. Is this not the way that we should be addressing the future? Let's go with it, and glance the glimpses of new possibilities. Let's live with the reality of now, rather than just surviving and scraping through each year, so that, instead, we can get on with being the people of God. We need to let go of the same old way of surviving.

One person did want to state that the gift of the Church of England is its public nature - churches are public places and we need to keep that.

Another reality is that in recent years we have had a large increase in the number of curates that we are training up and, indeed, this year because of the way the BAPs were conducted we had unprecedented numbers of people being accepted for ordination. But how do we fund that? Should we have a limit? It's sad to see that a large number of curates that we have trained have left or gone to serve in another Diocese? We are providing ministers for the future but how do we hold onto them?

Question - what matters most in the budget for 2021? Lots of responses:

- All our resources should be used to target the public nature of our religion
- This is an opportunity for change - grasp it
- We must maintain confidence in ourselves, but also in God
- It was recognised that those churches with a strong spiritual heart are often those who pay more parish share
- We focus on money too much, we are God's people wanting to do God's work, not balance books or be finance officers.
- Let's be realistic and not continually chase a deficit.