

News and information for Parish Treasurers – April 2020

We hope that you are keeping safe and well during these unprecedented times and we thank you for all that you are doing in your roles as Treasurers.

As those responsible for finance, we are all facing significant challenges around how to ensure the continued ministry and mission of the church, now and into the future, when sources of income have been so seriously impacted by the lock-down. We hope that the information in this newsletter will be of some assistance to you as you grapple with this.

With the continued spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and in line with government guidance, the DBF offices in Wells are currently closed, but staff are working remotely and continue to provide diocesan support services to you all.

There is a [Coronavirus FAQ webpage](#) on the diocesan website which is being updated regularly. Please do keep an eye on this page and share with colleagues as necessary.

Government Furlough Scheme

On 20th March 2020 the Government announced that it introduced the “Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme” and this scheme has now been extended until the end of June. We know that some parishes are already making use of the scheme and the DBF has also made the decision to furlough staff from the diocesan team. This will help to reduce a little some of the financial burden on the diocese

The online claim form is now live on the government website; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wages-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#how-to-claim>

If you want to know more about the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, then please see information and downloads on the [Coronavirus FAQ webpage](#). This may be of particular relevance for any PCCs who have staff who cannot currently work, including organists and cleaners, who may not yet have investigated this scheme.

2020 Parish Share

We are aware of course that the payment of Parish Share at the moment is a real challenge and a great source of anxiety to many parishes. Please do get in touch if you need support.

Further to the letter of 15 April that you will have received from the Diocesan Bishop, DBF Chair and Diocesan Secretary, if your PCC is currently paying by monthly direct debit and needs to make temporary changes to the monthly amount from May for PCC cash flow

requirements, please contact [Jessica Cook](#). Changes could include reducing the amount, or we can also suspend contributions by setting the amount to £0.00. We are looking urgently at ways we can help going forward.

For support with parish giving or funding, as usual please contact Gary Watson (gary.watson@bathwells.anglican.org)

As a diocese unfortunately we are not currently anticipating any financial assistance in the form of grants from the National Church.

We appreciate all the efforts you are making with Parish Share.

Funeral Fees

As church buildings are now closed due to the COVID-19 lockdown, funerals are taking place at either the graveside or at Crematoria. Other measures in place regarding social distancing and gatherings also mean that the number of people in attendance at these funerals is very limited. We are aware that this raises questions about whether fees for funerals could be reduced or waived in recognition of the limits currently placed on funerals.

In usual circumstances, clergy are expected to consult Archdeacons over the reducing or waiving of DBF attributable fees. However, as these are not normal circumstances, the incumbent is able to use his/her discretion when deciding whether fees should be reduced or waived for pastoral reasons. This applies to the whole of the cremation fee, whereas the PCC would need to be in agreement to waive the PCC element of the graveside fee of £305*. For parishes in vacancy please consult with the Area Dean regarding pastoral issues and waiving of fees.

When considering if the fee should be waived or reduced, please remember to consider cases if the services are conducted by a Retired Minister or stipendiary minister from another parish and the impact financially on them.

Where funerals are taking place, the incumbent could levy the normal fee, but then offer a Memorial or Thanksgiving service when the lockdown is lifted, which in accordance with the Bishops Guidelines has no statutory fees attached to them.

Should you have further queries regarding funerals and applicable fees, please contact [Janine Lavery](#) who will be happy to help.

**The parochial fee for a graveside funeral is: £413 which includes the burial of the body (£108 DBF and £305 PCC), for a graveside committal £347 which includes the burial of the body (£42 DBF and £305 PCC) and £199 at the crematorium (£169 DBF and £30 PCC).*

Parish Share Survey form for calculation of 2021 Parish Share

We understand that PCCs will struggle to gain the physical signatures on the Parish Share survey form. Please can we request that where possible email declarations are sent electronically with the survey form, in accordance with the previously agreed deadline. Again, do get in touch if you have difficulties with this.

APCM

For 2020, the time for holding a meeting of parishioners to choose churchwardens is extended until 31 October (instead of 31 May). Similarly, the period for holding an annual meeting of parishioners (APCM) is extended to 31 October. Bishop Peter has issued an instrument to that effect which can be downloaded from the [diocesan website](#).

PCC meetings can take place remotely, and the Charity Commission is advising that PCCs should document their decision to do so to demonstrate good governance.

Annual Report, PCC Accounts and Return of Parish Finance form

Please complete your Finance Return, as soon as you can. This does not require to have had an independent examination or have APCM approval and will help us to identify parishes who are most vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. The Parish Finance Return is completed online. Please visit the Church of England website at parishreturns.churchofengland.org/ to input and view your Parish Finance Return – if you require login details then please contact [Janine Lavery](#). The information given in the Finance Return is used directly by the National Statistics and Research Department to create the Parish Finance Dashboards.

The Annual Report and PCC Accounts need to be presented to the APCM and signed off by the PCC Chairman and an Independent Examiner. Please forward your Annual Report and Accounts, the Independent Examiner's certificate and completed checklist to [Janine Lavery](#), within 28 days of your APCM (and by **30 November 2020** at the latest). A copy of the Independent Examiners Certificate can be found on the [diocesan website](#).

If the Annual Report and PCC Accounts have been approved by the PCC already, please scan and send in to [Janine Lavery](#).

Fee Returns

As we are at the end of the first quarter in 2020, please arrange for the Parochial Fees for January, February and March to be submitted from your parish / benefice. Forms can be downloaded from the diocesan website on the Parochial Fees page.

Once completed, the fee return forms can be emailed to [Janine Lavery](#) and bacs payments can be made to the DBF. Please do ensure that a clear reference is added to the payment so that we know who this is from and what it is for. DBF bank details are: 60-23-06, 52161242.

Training Days

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, all recent training days scheduled to take place at the Diocesan Office have been postponed until further notice. Our next scheduled Treasurer Training Day will take place around the end of September – dates to be confirmed but please do let [Yvonne Thompson](#) know if you would like to reserve a space or be kept informed of this training.

If anyone would be interested in an online training session regarding Parochial Fees, or more information on Cashbook or Gift Aid, then please do get in touch with [Yvonne Thompson](#).

Data Developments – Independent Examiners

In recent times, more and more people are having difficulties finding an Independent Examiner who is experienced in church or charity accounting and all the Idiosyncrasies this brings. Therefore, Data Developments are launching a new Independent Examination service. This will be available for those churches or charities with an income of under £250k and using Data Developments' MyFundAccounting or Finance Co-ordinator software to record their accounts. Costs are expected to be around 0.5% of your annual income.

To register interest and receive information, email sales@datadevelopments.co.uk giving your name, organisation name, email address and that you are interested in the new IE service.

<https://www.datadevelopments.co.uk/>

Covid-19 Support and Grant Funding

Below is a list of organisations which have launched funding programmes to assist local organisations in responding to the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/fund/>

- Fund supporting 3rd sector organisations and voluntary groups managing heritage projects

<https://www.stewardship.org.uk/information/covid-page-2>

- there is a helpful Q&A session together with details of their next two webinars on Employment and Longer Term issues.

<https://www.parishresources.org.uk/coronavirus/>

- contains financial guidance for churches

<https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

- includes a list of organisations and the types of funding they have available

More generally, Gary Watson, Giving & Funding Adviser, can assist with advice on grants available to churches_– we maintain a directory of grant making trusts and bodies covering most aspects of funding for capital projects including repairs and re-ordering as well as funds which support revenue costs for delivering a variety of activities from churches. Please get in touch with Gary to see how he might help, using the contact details below:-

Gary Watson – 01749 685270 or gary.watson@bathwells.anglican.org

SECURITY UPDATE – Promoting Bank Details To Your Congregation

In the memo “New Ways of Giving” which was circulated this week to PCCs, it stated that a giver would only require the sort code and account details to be able to set up a new standing order or internet payment. In line with the recent direction on Confirmation of Payee (CoP) from the Payment Systems Regulator, churches should also provide the account name in order to ensure the payment will be accepted.

As a further fraud prevention measure, it is advised that churches should only provide their bank account details to those who are potential givers within their congregations and local communities, or where details are requested by a trusted individual.

Giving & Funding News

The latest [Giving and Funding News](#) gives information to help with parish finances during the current time – electronic giving solutions, Gift Aid, Easyfundraising, free donations software – plus card readers & contactless giving terminals, National Heritage Lottery Fund, lead thefts and caring for your church whilst closed. Please click the link to access this valuable information.

NatWest – banking during lockdown

It is possible to post PCC paying in (cheques only) to the following address: NatWest, CPU, PO Box 21, 41 The Drapery, Northampton, NN1 2EY.

Cheques will only be accepted with a paying in slip. Cash must not be sent, nor can a cheque be paid into multiple accounts. The cheque will be processed within 5 working days of receipt.

Finally - Changes in the Finance Team

Imogen Taylor, Head of Finance & Operations, is retiring from that role at the end of April, We would like to express our gratitude to Imogen for many years of dedicated service to the Diocese, bringing a fund of knowledge and skills to the Finance Team. We all wish her a very peaceful and happy retirement but know that she will not be resting with her feet up! Due to the additional strategic work needed due to ongoing pandemic, Imogen will be continuing to serve the DBF in a part-time consultancy role over the next few months.

Also, we say farewell to Paul Smith, Interim Finance Manager, who has contributed enormously to the Finance Team in his short time with us. He will be missed, and we all wish him every success in his new endeavours.

We are pleased to welcome Matthew Pinnock and Debbie Smith to the Finance Team who are taking over from Imogen and Paul as the new Head of Finance and Operations and Finance Manager, respectively.

They are both looking forward to getting to know parishes and treasurers across the diocese as they settle into their roles.

New treasurers should receive our “Welcome email” within three months of starting signposting you towards where you can find support in your role. If you are a new treasurer and haven’t yet received this, please email [Yvonne Thompson](#).