

A Message from Bishop Rachel and Colin Rank (Chair of the Board of Finance)

Parish Share

There is information elsewhere regarding the details of Parish Share, but it is important to underline that this is about providing clergy who are leaders in mission. It is also about giving into a 'common purse' and it is not about 'paying for what we get.'

Bishop's Council approves the budget for 2018 at the meeting on 19 July 2017 and then Parish Share figures for the next year will be circulated to deaneries by the end of August.

Whilst this process might feel elongated, there are key decisions which have to be taken at different points in the budget-setting process in order that Diocesan Synod can approve the budget at the November meeting.

Allocating the Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF) is just one of the pieces of the jigsaw and we are aware that at present the Parish Share figures are not yet known. However, this does help emphasise that whilst there are some formulaic calculations which need to enable us to reach a request figure for Parish Share for each deanery, all of this is ultimately about generous 'giving'.

Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF)

A revised Parish Share allocation calculation was approved by Diocesan Synod in June 2015. This excludes income from the Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF). These funds are generated from historic income and the figure available differs from year to year.

In 2016 Diocesan Synod agreed that of the available DSF to support deaneries with Parish Share contribution

- one half of the available funds will be allocated to deaneries based on population, adjusted for Experian income indexing to provide a clear bias for the poor. For 2018 this figure is £160k
- one half of the available funds will be allocated at an inter-deanery meeting to be held each summer as the final part of preparing the DBF budget for Synod. For 2018 this figure is £160K

Inter-deanery meeting 22 June 2017 to discuss the allocation of the £160K:

The Area Deans and Lay Chairs (or a representative) gathered together for our first annual inter-deanery meeting. In addition to ourselves and the deanery representatives, the meeting was attended by Ben Preece Smith (Diocesan Secretary) and Julie Ridgway (Head of Finance). The aim of the meeting was to have a collegial conversation to strengthen our sense of 'diocese' and mutual support within the Body of Christ.

The Experian contextual data for each deanery had been circulated prior to the meeting and each deanery pairing had submitted a short paper outlining where the additional funds might be applied within their deanery and an initial suggestion of a sum they would like to receive from the £160K available.

Colin Rank began the meeting with prayer, sharing some verses from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians (Philippians 4; 14-19) focusing on the generosity of the Christians in

Philippi and God's provision for their needs 'according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' There was a recognition that what we give is only ever a response to God's overwhelming generosity towards us.

Each deanery spoke to the points made in their paper and 'request' figures were entered on a spread sheet. The total figures submitted came to approximately £200K.

The aim was not to try and share out the 'financial pot' in a formulaic way or even necessarily give bias to the poor (as that is the basis on which the other 50% of DSF is allocated). Rather it was to listen to particular needs and situations and discern where encouragement and mutual support might best be focused in the coming year regarding Parish Share allocation. It was recognised that agreed figures would be arbitrary sums and not specific percentages etc. It was agreed that both of us would further reflect on all that we had heard before producing final figures. These figures have now been circulated to Area deans and Lay chairs.

Encouragement and Inspiration:

It was very encouraging to be part of a conversation in which people not only spoke of their own contexts, but also spoke out in support of other deaneries as they listened to their contexts. It was inspiring to hear people offering to reduce their proposed sums in order for another deanery to receive more support with Parish Share giving.

Deanery allocation:

Whilst most people spoke of challenges in their deaneries relating to specific benefices, the allocated figures are for each *deanery*, in the same way that Parish Share allocations are for each deanery. It is our hope and prayer that there will be the same spirit within deaneries regarding benefice/parish allocations as was evident at the inter-deanery meeting.

Stewardship:

Our conversation together revealed that a large number of benefices have not focused on stewardship for a long time. If we are to receive and share the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ so that people may know life in all its fullness, then we need to enable people to better understand financial giving and be both challenged and excited. The Diocese of Gloucester is the place where the Parish Giving Scheme originated. It is now established in a number of dioceses and there has recently been work on materials and resources to assist and excite people about financial giving. Going forward, if we are to use God's resources responsibly as a diocese it is not unreasonable to be asking worshipping communities to look at giving in the light of LIFE. Appropriate support could be provided by PGS, staff at College Green and the Board of Finance.

This comes with our thanks to all who participated in an uplifting and heartening meeting

*Yours Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty;
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.*

All things come from you and of your own do we give you (based on 1 Chronicles 29:14)



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