



Canon Phillip Blinkhorn

DBF Chair

Email: blinkhorn@talk21.com

27th November 2020

Dear Friends,

With the beginning of Advent we mark the start of a new Church year and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all your efforts during an extremely challenging 2020; and to update you about our diocese's financial position and the outlook for next year.

The national and local lockdowns have been challenging for all our parishes and it has been inspirational to see the response from clergy and laity over the last 8 months. Creative on-line liturgies have been used in most parishes, congregations have responded to new pastoral situations, and great efforts have been made to open our churches whenever possible.

The pandemic is having an enormous financial impact on all our parishes and our diocese just as many families and individuals have experienced significant challenges. Parish income from hire of rooms, use of church buildings by clubs and other fundraising efforts have all been wiped out. When we wrote to you earlier in the year, we asked you to think about two scenarios: a return to "normal" by September 1 or a return by January 1, 2021. I do not think any of us considered that it might be the second half of 2021 before such a return, even with the development of effective vaccines.

Unsurprisingly, the loss of parish income has had a direct effect on receipts of Parish Share by the Board of Finance. At the end of October our receipts from parish share were £4,399,000, down by £888,000 or 16.8% on the same time last year. This drop in our income has given us cash flow problems, and we are grateful to the Church Commissioners for their emergency support with a grant of £1,200,000 to see us through the next few months. Without that support we are facing a £2,900,000 deficit for this year.

It is very difficult to see a great change in the current level of Parish Share receipts in the coming years, and the Diocesan Synod recognised this in approving a budget that has deficits of £1,722,000 and £1,242,000 for 2021 and 2022. We are looking to make cost savings wherever possible, but the harsh truth is that ministry costs are by far the largest element in our expenditure budget and a reduction in income has a corresponding effect on our ability to fund ministry.

We are budgeting for a significant decrease in stipendiary clergy numbers over the coming years, from 200 to 175 by 2022 with the prospect of additional reductions in 2023-25. In the face of these challenges we are absolutely focused, as a diocese, on ensuring that we deploy our resources effectively to achieve our mission goals and to reverse the decline that too many of us are experiencing.

To counter the loss in income and the strains on our cash position, work is underway to sell as many of our surplus vicarages as we can. Given the nature of clergy houses, and their location, this is not a simple task, but we are making substantial progress. If any parish would like to discuss our diocesan financial position in more detail, do not hesitate to contact me.

I do know that a number of parishes are in serious financial difficulties and whilst we cannot promise any funding, we do want to help in any other way possible. If your parish is in difficulties, I urge you to contact David Weldon davidweldon@manchester.anglican.org or myself.

Giving by our parishioners in response to God's grace and unconditional love is the bedrock of the Church's financial resources. If your parish would like advice and support about digital giving or fundraising, please contact Paul Bailey - Digital Giving Officer paulbailey@manchester.anglican.org

On behalf of all our diocese I want to thank parishes for the efforts made to pay Share and to support our ministry costs this year, and to encourage all our parishes to continue paying as much Share as possible in 2021.

Advent brings a new year and the promise of the coming of our Lord, I wish you all a peaceful and a safe Advent season.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. S. Blinkhorn". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Canon Phillip Blinkhorn
DBF Chair