

To: All Serving Clergy, Churchwardens, Treasurers, Parish Finance Officers

17th April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Diocesan Budget in the context of the Coronavirus

I write further to my letter of 3rd April 2020 and hope that you are still in good health.

Messages of support and encouragement continue to be received as do assurances of prayer; I, and others in the Diocesan team, are very grateful for these. You all continue to be in my prayers also.

Thank you to all those who have responded with details of what they expect to be able to contribute by way of parish share. This has been really helpful in our planning and will continue to be so as we move forward. I understand that you may still be working on your parish finances to understand the implications of our current circumstances but if you are able to let us know soon what your expectation for April -June might be, that would be very helpful as we move into the next phase of decision making. We are encouraged by many supportive comments about the ongoing ministry of parishes, clergy and the diocese and all of us are grateful for the generosity people are able to show in these challenging times. This enables ministry to be sustained.

We had long planned for 2021 to mark the start of a triennial budget and we would now be in the height of the consultation process which was to have included the detailed plans under our *Live/Pray/Serve* strategy and how we would seek to grow in depth, impact and number. The onset of social distancing and the restrictions on public gatherings meant that the planned archdeaconry events were cancelled and the same will also be true of the local deanery events scheduled for the coming weeks.

It is, however, the case that all the basic assumptions which would have underpinned our triennial budget are now not applicable as the financial position both locally and nationally is so very different and uncertain due to the coronavirus. In the light of this, Bishop's Council came to the difficult decision not to proceed with a triennial budget at this time. For our financial planning to be accurate and reliable, we need to be focussing on a shorter time frame than a three-year budget. It is also true, that our strategic priorities will need to be fulfilled differently in some areas due to the impact of the pandemic.

As a staff team we are working on a reshaped budget for the rest of 2020 which is likely to evolve on a three-monthly basis as our circumstances change. This will then progress into the budget for 2021. Throughout this process we will also be working closely with the Diocesan Finance Committee which will then make recommendations to Bishop's Council.

I know there will be disappointment in many parishes that we are not able to proceed with the triennial budget, but this difficult decision was taken in the face of the continually changing social and economic landscape within which we are now living. It is still our intention for triennial budgets to be our routine

practice and it is something which myself, the finance team and Bishop's Council are committed to achieving, hopefully, with consultations during 2021 for the Budget 2022-24.

With thanks and admiration for all you are doing at parish level.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. James'.

Victoria James

Diocesan Secretary