

Our context

Bishop Christopher has already set out the context of our current financial situation and indicated the level of financial challenge we face. To amplify that slightly. In August we received £322k in parish share contributions but to meet stipends in that month we required £331k. That is before any other costs.

In planning for 2021:-

- Every line of the budgeted expenditure for 2021 has been reviewed and adjusted accordingly
- How we work has also been reviewed to reduce the environmental impact of our travel as well as reduce work related expenses
- Bishop's Council have re designated reserves to do all it can in this situation

Bishop's Council have agreed that for 2021, the overall parish share ask from parishes will not be more than received in 2019, which is an overall reduction of £248k. This does not mean that all individual parish contributions will stay the same or reduce as the formula will be applied in the normal way. Some will go up and some down. These indicative figures will be circulated shortly.

Without further change we face an ongoing deficit of in the region of £970k.

How we choose to respond now is vital. We could seek to simply cut costs, but that puts us at risk of a spiral of decline and as a missional church, that cannot be our response. It is imperative that we strive for structures which support ministry and growth and enable us to continue to grow in depth, impact and number. This imperative however is not new.

For a number of years as a diocese we have been focussing on renewal and reform. We have a narrative of hope and our faith requires us to go and make disciples. For us as a diocese we seek to grow in depth, impact and number.

As we seek to deepen in faith and support others in deepening theirs, we live out our faith through social engagement and seeking to impact of communities in meaningful ways. Through that faithful discipleship we seek to grow in number. Seeking greater engagement with faith and the good news of Jesus Christ is a Gospel imperative. This has been the drive and focus of work in the diocese for some time.

2020 was going to be a year of conversation and consultation about how we could journey together seeking to grow in depth, impact and number, asking questions about what thriving communities look like and what we might need to change as a consequence.

It is fair to say therefore, that we were on this journey before Covid and now we need to continue, with even greater missional energy, to consider how we need to structure in terms of parish and the central support function to support growth in our communities.

Victoria James

Diocesan Secretary