



Martin Bishop

Financial Secretary

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October 2011

Dear Treasurer,

Encl (Paper version): 1 - Parish Share Statement of account to 30th September; 2 – Guidance note from the National Stewardship Officer on recent changes to the Gift Aid Scheme

Items for potential or immediate action, are indicated by side lines

Charity registration for PCCs

For excepted charities with an annual income of less than £100,000 the exception from registration has been extended until 2012. This will allow time for a review of the 2006 Act to take place in 2011 and for the recommendations arising from it to be considered. The Charity Commission expect that the review will look at registration thresholds generally.

Essentially the current state of affairs will not change until 2012, when the present exception (by Statutory Instrument) time expires. *In theory* all other PCCs (with income under £100K) would then have to register, but in practice it is possible that the exception will be extended but the threshold be lowered closer to the £5,000 level.

I will let you know when we hear further announcements from the Charity Commission about this.

Parish Share 2011

I enclose the statement of account for Parish Share which includes cheques and BACS payments received from you up to **30th September 2011** and also an entry showing your PCC's contribution towards the parish share for the fourth quarter of the year.

As in previous years, there will be a period of time after the 31st December for parishes to make cheque payments in respect of the 2011 Parish Share before any shortfall is determined. The cut-off date for this will be Tuesday **31st January 2012**. However it would be greatly appreciated if you could do what you can to ensure that any outstanding payment for 2011, or earlier, is sent to the Diocesan Office in time for the end of December.

Parish Share 2012 and Pastoral Aid Support

At the end of July you will have received provisional figures for the 2011 Parish Share for your parish and deanery. The Diocesan Parish Shares Committee will be meeting on the 24th November to consider recommendations from the various Deanery Committees, on behalf of their parishes, for Pastoral Aid Support Grants for next year.

If your own PCC is considering a request for support, and has not yet indicated this to your Deanery, it is important that they now do so as a matter of urgency, as Deaneries have been asked to submit their recommendations to the Diocesan Parish Shares Committee **by the end of October**.

Harvest Appeal 2011

Any cheques for the donations made for this appeal through the parish should be made out to “**St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance**” and sent for the attention of Mary Handford at Abbey Gate House, Abbey Mill Lane, St Albans AL3 4HD

Gift Aid Guidelines from John Preston

Those of you who were able to attend the recent Budget presentations to Archdeaconries will have received some information about some recent developments with Gift Aid.

I enclose a copy of a guidance note from the National Stewardship Officer (<http://www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid/GA1GiftAidUpdate2011.pdf>)

Further Contact and advice from Geoff Fletcher, Tel 01727 818141 or email gletcher@stalbans.anglican.org

Pensions – Automatic enrolment of employees

Last October, I mentioned that legislation was to be introduced concerning workplace pensions. (<http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/Resources/Help-for-Parish-Officers/PCC-Treasurers/Letters-to-Treasurers>) Some of you may have read in the press recently that the Pensions Act 2008 will *start* to come into effect from 2012. At this stage I wanted to let you know that, in the case of “small” employers such as PCCs would be regarded in this context, the new requirements are unlikely to become applicable until after March 2014, as the legislation will be phased in over a period of two years, applying to the “larger” employers first.

I have recently been in touch with the Pensions Manager at the C of E Pensions Board. They are already giving some thought to how all of this will, eventually, affect parishes whose PCCs directly employ people. They are expecting to issue some early guidance on this towards the end of this year, and I will forward that to you as soon as it is available.

As an aside, clergy who are paid centrally through the Church Commissioners’ payroll, will not count as parish employees within this context.

Withdrawal of the cheque-clearing system

The UK Payments Council (an industry body, but backed by HM Treasury) proposed the phasing-out of the present system of cheque-clearing in 2018. After withering criticism from all sides the proposal has been dropped. I have been informed, by the Secretary of the Churches Legislation and Advisory Service, who is a member of the Payments Council’s voluntary sector working group, that in spite of the fact that the proposal has been scrapped, it has been decided to continue with a revised remit (the terms of which are yet to be decided). Whilst the immediate concerns have passed, it does appear that we have not heard the last of this. I will keep you informed of any further developments as they become known.

Utility Warehouse price increase

[December 2011: The original text of this section has been withdrawn.]

You may like to know that the Parish Buying service will launch officially on 30th January 2012, but the energy service is now fully operational. Any parishes needing advice or quotes can get them immediately by registering at www.parishbuying.org.uk or ringing 0800 368 0887.

For further information please contact **Russell Stables** (russell.stables@churchofengland.org) or **Rob Kissick** (robert.kissick@churchofengland.org) at the **National Procurement Office**