



To All Parish Treasurers

20 March 2020

Mr Colin Bird
Chair, Diocesan Board of Finance
Email: DBFchair@stalbans.anglican.org

I am writing to you as Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance, but also as a parish treasurer.

At the end of last week, we were concerned that suspending catering was going to cause a reduction in parishes' income. Monday's suspension of public worship, however, is a game changer for all of us, as is, for some parishes the likely cancellation of weddings. There is no doubt that the financial impact on parishes and the Board of Finance will be severe.

Much will depend on how long the suspension of worship and events lasts for. In my own parish, for example, I will be able to pay our bills until 30 June; thereafter things will become distinctly more challenging. I know that for a lot of parishes, the cost of the ministry, paid through the parish share, takes up most, if not all of the planned giving, with other expenses (insurance, utilities etc.) being defrayed out of fund raising, which has effectively ground to a halt.

The National Church is alert to the pressures faced by parishes and dioceses and discussions are taking place about how, together, we can ensure the mission and ministry of the Church is sustained at this time.

I appreciate that there is only so much you can do to reduce costs in this period. One obvious move is to reduce heating, cleaning and other operational expense in our churches. My guess is that whatever you can do on reducing operational costs will not cover the two or three major costs most of us face, namely insurance, personnel costs and ministry costs through the parish share.

It is essential that you pay insurance premiums that come due in the next quarter. Also, I'm sure that we will all want to support paid workers for as long as possible. I want you to know that we understand that you will want to prioritise such payments.

The payment of parish share is a substantial cost; however, the ministry continues, and our clergy must be paid. The DBF is a charity, as are all PCCs, and our trustees have the same duties as all of you. We all need therefore, to do what we can to ensure that our cash flow holds up as best we can.

We would hope that givers through the Parish Giving Scheme and those who give by standing orders will be able to continue. It is important that they are covered in your parish communications and thanked. It is also important to cover those who use envelopes under your parish giving schemes. Again, make sure they are included in your communications and given your PCC's bank details so they can transfer their giving direct or an address to which they can post their envelopes.

The DBF's operational reserves cover about 9 weeks of costs, 80% of which is the costs of the ministry. I would urge you to do all you can to continue to pay parish share during the next quarter, even if this uses reserves, including those you had designated for other purposes. The DBF will be doing the same.

Together we can keep the ministry going during this difficult time.

Yours in Christ

Colin

Colin Bird