

1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parish Treasurer

We are living through extraordinary and difficult times and I hope that you, your families and your loved ones remain well and in good heart through this extended period of lockdown.

I know that on top of the many practical difficulties of trying to maintain the rhythm of church, and indeed daily life, while our church buildings are closed, a growing number of our parishes have very real concerns about their financial sustainability and ongoing payment of Share.

This is wholly understandable, and if you haven't already been in touch, but expect over the coming months to be unable to make your anticipated contributions through Share to our common fund, or otherwise need help and advice of a financial nature then please let us know.

The diocesan finance and parish support teams led by Liz Ashmead and Elizabeth Harvey at Church House can point you in the direction of funds and other services that may be able to help, depending on the circumstances. It will also help us enormously to know in advance if Share payments are not going to be met so we can plan accordingly.

As a diocese we remain financially sound for the time being. We are committed to the ongoing payment of stipends, pensions and other clergy support costs, although we have taken steps to minimize non-essential expenditure.

We have also furloughed a number of staff from Church House who have been left unable to operate in the current locked down environment, thus enabling us to draw on available government funding for the time being at least.

Clearly in a market where equity values are severely depressed it would be unwise to sell investments, so we have also secured borrowing facilities which should enable us to meet our commitments through the remainder of 2020, against various scenarios of reducing income from Share, fees, rent, dividends and our property trading company.

In the circumstances we have deferred any planning around the 2021 budget until the third quarter, and as you are probably aware, the AGM which would normally be the occasion when we sign off the budget for the coming year, has been deferred until September 10<sup>th</sup>.

In the meantime we are taking the opportunity to plan for a different kind of future as lockdown comes to an end. This includes the ongoing restructure of the Church House team, simplification of process around new IT, and making better use of resource by working more collaboratively with colleagues in our Diocesan Board of Education and Sarum College.

Much of this will, we hope, directly benefit parish officers and incumbents in due course by allowing for on-line completion of returns, providing direct access to information and training resources and generally simplifying and streamlining administration.

Who knows what the new "normal" will look like, but what we have seen over recent weeks by way of individual and collective self sacrifice, acts of unbounded kindness and goodwill to neighbours

and strangers alike, the flourishing of on-line and virtual Church, and the national thirst for renewal and a reset of societal values, provides encouragement to us in this diocese for our own now well and deeply rooted Christian vision of Renewing Hope – Pray, Serve, Grow.

I think we can be hugely encouraged at this difficult time in the faith that at the end of lockdown in due course, like shoots emerging at the end of a hard winter, we can indeed see a renewed and reinvigorated Christian spirit spread out far beyond our church buildings, and clearly manifest across the wider community.

Before closing I would like to draw your attention to a number of bulletins that have been published and circulated from Church House during the last few weeks, which provide greater detail in terms of resources available, whom to contact and the steps being taken to secure the future. The links below provide access to some of them. Each link will need to be copied and pasted to your browser.

<https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/whos-who/news-and-events/coronavirus/from-your-finance-team-we-are-here-to-help-apr-2020>

<https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/whos-who/news-and-events/coronavirus/email-from-the-diocesan-secretary-to-pcc-secretaries-treasurers-licensed-lay-ministers-lay-chairs-apr-2020>

Finally I am extremely grateful that contributions through parish Share remain at a high level, and this in turn enables us to maintain our shared commitment to the continued payment of stipends and our other financial obligations through the current period.

In the meantime please be assured of our concern for all parishes struggling through these troubled times, our willingness to engage and do what we can to assist.

With every blessing and good wish,

Yours sincerely



Nigel Salisbury  
Chairman, Diocesan Board of Finance

Cc Incumbents, Churchwardens and Deanery Treasurers