

## The Aldhelm Mission Fund – Diocesan Synod 21 June 2022

The Aldhelm Fund was established in 2005 as a response to the Church Commissioners giving grants to dioceses specifically for Mission initiatives. This money was accounted for centrally and an annual report published to General Synod stating how each diocese had used their funding.

The Aldhelm Fund is overseen by a small group in the diocese, made up of clergy and laity who meet three times a year, membership has changed over the years. I currently Chair this group, and am now supported by former General Synod member Gill de Berry acting as Secretary and Steve Inglis.

As people may be aware six years ago the Church Commissioners funding streams changed and the diocese no longer received a grant for use on mission initiatives. However, the fund has still continued, in fact by a miracle it keeps on giving and over the course of 17 years over £850,000 has been given to the local church for local mission from the fund, none of which has come from parish share, fees, glebe or property income.

This Aldhelm Committee is independent but accountable to the Bishop's Council and currently withdraw funding from the account up to £50,000 a year, which gives us a spending limit.

Tonight, I wish to highlight two things, firstly what the local church can do with seed corn funding, and some of the projects we have helped through the years, and secondly the fund itself.

Grants have been given over the years, for some large projects, these have included in the early days grants towards youth workers, community evangelists and in 2012 an Olympic Co-ordinator in Weymouth. Unfortunately, because we currently do not have a regular income stream we can no longer support people or posts, however we have been able to give large and small grants towards projects including:

Lego Church at Dilton Marsh

And a prayer room at QE school, Wimborne

We also gave a large grant of £30,000 to the Hub Café, at Christ Church, Creekmoor in Poole.

The Congregation writes about this project ' The grant has covered the majority of the café's start-up costs and provides much needed support as we establish the business over its first year of trade.

Opening in September 2021 we have been able to employ 2 members of staff, a Trainee Café Manager and an Assistant Cook.

In addition to the paid staff, we now have a team of 23 volunteers from the Church family and the Community. 'The Hub Café', which offers a small children's play area, is open Monday - Friday 9:30am until 2pm and until 4.30pm on Wednesdays. We serve drinks, cakes, all day breakfast and light lunches with a very popular "Hot Thursday" meal deal.

The vision for the 'The Hub Café' to become the Gateway to the other community activities in the Church and a base for Outreach to our Community is starting to be fulfilled. The Aldhelm Mission Fund was critical to the setting up of 'The Hub Café' and to fulfilling the vision of creating a base for reaching out to our Community. Without its support this amazing Church and Community resource would not exist. Thank you.

We are now going to show a **short video** which highlights some of the other missional projects helped by the fund.

The Aldhelm Committee also offer mentorship to projects and are keen to share good practice. We have money available however currently only get a small number of requests for it, this has probably contributed to the longevity of the fund but does mean that perhaps other projects do not start because of a lack of local funding. Aldhelm funding enables small projects to get off the ground, Grants of £500 have proved enough for some, we have funded gazeboes and banners; podcast equipment, tea urns and coffee cups, as well as the staging of community events, including the Poole Nativity, Marborough Passion Play, and schools events.

The application process is simple, although a bit more complex when it comes to some larger projects. We make sure that there is some local investment in the project, and ask for a team from the local parish or deanery to present to us for requests over £10,000.

So, you can see the possibilities. Now to the fund itself. The Aldhelm fund received a boost last year as a number of people and churches gave to it in thanksgiving for Bishop Nick's ministry, but not significantly enough to enable us to support posts once again. It may be when we consider new money coming into the diocese that we use the Aldhelm Fund to support new ministry, chaplaincy and bolder initiatives such as Not Just Sundaes. It would be my vision to develop this work and to welcome personal or even corporate donations into the fund.

Details of the fund can be found on the web site, there is a card on your seat.

I hope we can rejoice tonight seeing what 17 years of funding and some of what £850,000 has made possible. When discussing mission events and activities in your churches please don't say, we cannot afford it without first applying for funding. We are here to help and enable, and if you or others are wanting to give generously do consider giving, via the diocese to this fund. I hope we have proved tonight that a little can go a long way and have an impact far beyond the walls of our churches. Thank you for listening.

+Karen