

## Letter to Parishioners from the Diocesan Finance Officer

### Dear Fellow Parishioners

I am writing to introduce myself as the new *Chief Operating Officer at the Diocese* having joined at the beginning of September.

I am very much looking forward to visiting the parishes across the Diocese as soon as possible but unfortunately the constraints of COVID-19 have meant that I have been unable to visit as many as I would have wished.

Parishes I have visited and the financial returns from those I have not, tell a very similar story. The reality of the situation is that they have been struggling to cover their costs with reduced income. Over the period to September 20 (the latest accounts produced), income received has dropped by almost £1.7m and whilst efforts have been put in place to reduce costs including claiming support from the Government's furlough scheme and reducing property expenditure to all but essential H&S related matters, a reduction of this magnitude has been difficult to manage.

I would, first of all, like to thank you for the generosity that you have shown in continuing to support the life of our parishes over recent months. I am also acutely aware that many are suffering significant hardship as a result of the pandemic

But, as we come out of lockdown and our churches reopen more fully, our costs will start to increase and it will become increasingly challenging to support our parishes with reduced levels of donations. For that reason, I am asking you consider recommencing or increasing your donations if you are able to do so.

The support of those parishioners who contribute regularly by standing order and the associated Gift Aid we have been able to claim from the Government have been invaluable over the last 9 months and have highlighted how important this method of giving is. If you are able to contribute by standing order, please consider doing so. The Finance Team at Bishops House can help you with this if you are unable to arrange this locally.

If you are unable to attend Church and therefore find it difficult to contribute, please remember that you can do so online or by ringing the Diocesan Finance Team at Bishops' House who will be pleased to help you donate.

**Our priests rely heavily on your contributions, particularly at Christmas and Easter and your generous offerings at these times are hugely appreciated.**

Thank-you for listening and for your ongoing support.

**Tony McNiff**