Suggested article for Parish Magazines

**How do Church of England parishes meet the cost of ministry?**

Some of the answer to this question is obvious in parishes’ annual published accounts – heat, light, upkeep, materials, refreshments, local administration, telephones, expenses, fees to organists and vergers – these are all paid directly through parish accounts. Some parishes also employ a support worker, children & youth workers, run a community shop, support overseas mission partners or local outreach work with Asylum Seekers and Homeless people.

But who pays for supporting key areas such as safeguarding, training, grants for local mission, major church repairs and (last winter) “Warm spaces”? Who funds clergy housing and pastoral support, stipends and pensions, and who pays for wider work on the Diocesan priorities on challenging poverty, energising Growth, caring for God’s creation, and engaging children and young people?

You may be surprised to learn that the answer is – Parishes! Yet we don’t pay for these things directly but rather through the “Parish Share” system, though the Diocese, designed to ensure the Church of England’s Ministry is provided across every parish regardless of size or ability to pay, on a mutual basis where larger more affluent parishes support those in more restricted circumstances. To this end, all parishes are asked each Autumn to consider a “Guided Pledge” which estimates local ability to contribute to these shared costs based on most recent parish annual accounts, clergy allocated to each parish, local levels of relative wealth or deprivation and the numbers of people who attend and support each parish church.

The “Guided Pledge” system has been in place for a few years now, but sadly some parishes have not been able to pledge at the guided pledge level and parish vacancy periods have extended as a consequence of diocesan financial shortfalls. This year, the Diocese is encouraging parishes to spread the word more widely to allow congregations to have a really well-informed debate and encourage deep commitment to understand and meet pledge commitments as guided pledge requests are distributed to parishes in late summer for PCCs to respond by October.

We hope and pray that parishes’ responses to the 2023 guided pledge this Autumn will truly reflect Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 8: 10 – 13. *“And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: ‘The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little”.*

If you want to learn more any of our local Clergy , Churchwardens or Treasurer should be able to tell you all about the Parish Pledge for 2024, or please see the explanatory article on the [Diocesan website](https://www.durhamdiocese.org/parish-support/finance-funding-and-reporting/guided-pledge).