

Why your parish offer is vital – accompanying notes

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A shared endeavour

In this Diocese, the cost of supporting and providing mission and ministry across the Diocese is a shared endeavour.

It is facilitated through The Common Fund - the common pot of money paid into by congregations across the Diocese through their Parish Offers – an amount determined by the parish or benefice.

Supporting each other in this way is a demonstration of the shared sense of responsibility we have to everyone in our Church family, so all can flourish.

Without these contributions, funding for clergy, their housing, mission and parish support would simply not be possible.

As we are reminded in 2 Corinthians, *'Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'* 2 Corinthians 9.

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The Common Fund

The Common Fund aims to ensure a Christian presence can be maintained in every community as it supports the cost of mission and ministry in parishes across the diocese – now and in the future - no matter what their:

- church tradition
- local setting
- financial situation

Nearly **75 per cent** of the Common Fund is made up of Parish Offers. The rest is made up of contribution from the Diocesan Board of Finance made up of:

- Reserves
- Strategic development fund and parish development grants
- Other externally generated income

It means your parish's contribution is vital to the financial well-being of the whole diocesan family, and helps provides a stable platform from which, together, we can bring about a Church where all can flourish and *'have life in all its fulness'* (John 10:10) as God intends.

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'Though we are many we are one body'

Why is this the model used to finance and support mission and ministry?

The answer is that this collective response enables us to collectively ensure that the word of the Lord is spread throughout the Diocese, whatever the wealth of communities.

The quote on this slide is from one parish who, although in a deprived area, has been able to continue its vital presence and ministry in the community, thanks to the Common Fund.

Giving into the Common Fund embodies biblical principles and the generosity at the heart of the first Christian communities too.

We read in the New Testament how the early Christians showed a common concern for each other, sharing out their possessions.

'All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.' (Acts 2:44-45)

As Christians, we understand that as churches, we are part of one body in Christ, but dependent upon each other.

'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.' (1 Corinthians 12:12)

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How the Common Fund supports: parish ministry

The good news is that the money parishes contribute comes back to them in one form or another as ministry, mission or support services.

Indeed, the majority of the money into the Common Fund is spent on parish ministry. This allows a vicar to be placed in nearly every parish. It pays for things like

- stipends (clergy pay)
- pensions,
- clergy housing
- training for those already in post, as well as training future clergy

£49,494 is how much it costs to pay for a full-time clergy person, including employers NI, pension contributions and housing

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Maintaining Parish Offer during a vacancy

We're in vacancy, so why are we still be asked to pay for ministry?'

It's an understandable question, however, there are several reasons why PCCs are asked to continue paying their Parish Offer in full during a vacancy.

1. The DBF still incurs costs maintaining the parsonage, and often a vacancy is the time when any significant works (new kitchens, bathrooms etc) are undertaken.
2. Potential clergy looking at the parish will often want to assure themselves of the financial robustness and responsibility of the PCC - maintaining Parish Offer is a good indication of this.
3. Maintaining the Parish Offer during a vacancy allows for the provision of ministry in other areas of the diocese where the resources are limited.
4. Finally, as Christians, we support others, knowing that at some point in the future we ourselves may need supporting.

This final point is the most compelling reason and goes to the heart of who and what we are called to be as part of the body of Christ.

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How the Common Fund supports: local mission

The money is also used to support local mission and outreach, for example through:

- helping facilitate initiatives such as community projects
- work with children and young people
- training for lay ministry

This ensures a parish can serve its community and enable encounters with God whether the church is large or small, wealthy or poor, more rural or urban.

It means that paying into the Common Fund should not be seen as a choice between supporting your local mission or church building over something else.

Rather your local mission – your church's presence - is supported through the generous giving of all parishes into the Common Fund.

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How the Common Fund provides: support services

Money from the Common Fund additionally pays for the central services provided by the support teams at the Diocesan Office.

This includes support with:

- Safeguarding, HR, and governance
- Legal advice and Communications
- Advice on the care and development of church buildings
- Guidance on fundraising and giving, or bringing in external funding for projects

Diocesan Office colleagues help parishes maintain and grow their presence in the community, as well as meet their statutory responsibilities.

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Why your Parish Offer is so vital

The Parish Offer is a gift by a parish or benefice into the Common Fund, with each parish or benefice able to determine the amount it will contribute.

In 2025, there was a 2.5 per cent increase in Parish Offers over those made in 2024 – **thank you!**

Despite this, as this bar graph shows, **Parish Offers do not cover** the expenditure needed out of the Common Fund to cover day to day mission and ministry cost.

The shortfall has to be paid for out of funds generated by the Diocesan Board of Finance through:

- Reserves
- Strategic development fund and parish development grants
- Other externally generated income

This subsidy is not sustainable long term which is why **every Parish Offer is vital to help start closing this gap**

In 2026, to meet the budget approved by Bishop's Council – a 5 per cent increase in Parish Offers will need to be seen.

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A reducing deficit

It's important to note that Diocesan Team has been working hard over several years to reduce the operating deficit.

2026 will see a £670K deficit, the lowest for many years.

This is against a backdrop of investment in frontline ministry and a commitment to maintain the overall number of clergy in the diocese.

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A budget investing in parishes

The budget approved for 2026 – despite being impacted by the recommendations of the national church's Diocesan Finance Review – will represent an additional **£1 million in parish ministry** thanks to the following measures:

- 10% increase in clergy stipends
- Additional £200k for maintenance of clergy properties
- 8 new curates starting their ministry in July 2026
- Proactive work to reduce the clergy vacancy rate

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Each parish's ability to contribute is different

Each parish's contribution into the Common Fund is vital but it is recognised that each parish's ability to contribute is different.

To help parishes consider what they might give, each is provided with an Indicative Offer.

This is simply a guide figure and not a demand.

It is made up of three elements:

- **Cost of direct ministry** - based on the number of full-time equivalent clergy in the parish or benefice
- **A share of central support costs**
- **A contribution to wider diocesan mission, calculated as 10% of unrestricted income** – this includes curate costs, training of clergy and ordinands youth and children ministry support, community engagement, contribution to the national church's newly established Ministry Training Fund.

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The BIG impact of your Parish Offer

Thanks to the contribution of parishes like yours, and in partnership with the Diocesan Board of Finance, last year, the following was made possible:

- 157 paid clergy, including curates, supported
- 17 ordinands supported during training
- £583,000 spent on maintaining clergy housing
- 6 Children, Young People and Family Ministers recruited, and 25 young leaders trained and successfully serving in their parishes
- 76 parishes supported with HR DAC, Generous Giving matters

So much would not be able to happen without the bedrock of the Common Fund, which is why a continued rise in contributions is so important.

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Seeking first the Kingdom of God together

This year it was wonderful to announce that the Diocese of Rochester had been awarded nearly £11 million by the national church in support of the shared Called Together vision.

This funding - which is in addition to the expenditure on parish ministry already funded by the Common Fund - will support the nine-year Called Together programme of work, which seeks to grow **missional churches**, with **missional leaders** and **missional disciples**.

This is direct investment in parishes, but without the bedrock of the Common Fund and your Parish Offers supporting day to day running costs none of it will be possible

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Thank you

THANK YOU for considering your Parish Offer so prayerfully, realistically and generously.

Whatever you are able to offer, it will be greatly valued.