

News and information for Parish Treasurers – June 2020

From our Bishops

We welcome the announcement from the Prime Minister that public worship in our churches can resume again from 4 July, where that is possible locally and subject to physical distancing guidelines. It will bring joy to many but even as we look forward to it, we remember those for whom Covid-19 has brought bereavement, grief, suffering and great hardship. Christians have sought to minister and support, both through practical means and through constant prayer, all those in need while our church buildings have been closed. Reopening our churches for services will mean bereaved families will be able to plan the memorial services they so desperately need in order to help them grieve, and those who wish to celebrate their marriages will once again be able to do so, in smaller numbers. As the Church, we grieve with them and we rejoice with them.

This guidance is permissive and not prescriptive, which means churches do not have to return immediately to holding services from 4 July, and there will be some churches who are not able to do so yet. We are expecting guidance from the government and the Church of England on how churches should follow physical distancing, as well as address concerns like singing, in the next few days. This will be published as soon as possible.

As we move towards being able to come together again, we thank God for the decline of the virus in this country, and we pray for all those who have died, those who are grieving, and those who are still caring for the sick. We pray for those parts of the world where people are still falling sick in great numbers.

Thank you to all those who have ensured that despite closed doors, the Church has reached further and deeper, through online worship and through practical action, than we can remember.

Covid Summary

Thank you to everyone that responded to the Covid-19 Parish information request, this is really assisting everyone within the diocese to understand the issues that you are facing as a result of Covid-19. As the Bishop has said, as we move towards coming together again, the level of certainty may be slowly returning for you. However, for those PCCs with ongoing concerns the DBF is working on a Discretionary Parish Support and Relief package and continues to offer short term cash flow assistance with 2020 parish share, further details are found later in the newsletter.

It is really important that PCCs continue to meet and be briefed during the pandemic, and it has been really pleasing to hear the ways that PCCs are meeting and working with technology to allow for PCCs to remain informed.

Should your PCC not have met since the outbreak of Covid-19, we would recommend you have discussions surrounding facilitating meetings to allow the PCC to consider the impact of Covid-19 on the finances of your PCC.

2020 Parish Share

We are aware of the impact of Covid-19 on PCC reserves and income streams in this year and into future years. Therefore, ongoing discussions are being held surrounding the Common Fund.

Parish Share is indeed a challenge for everyone at the moment. With the churches being closed, not only are PCCs losing some collections, but the fund-raising events and church lettings have also had to be held off.

The DBF is committed to supporting PCCs through this pandemic and we want to ensure that the support package that we offer is fair, transparent and in line with the financial impact that Covid-19 has caused. The impact of the pandemic is ongoing and in the short term we continue to offer PCCs support by allowing Parish Share contributions to cease, ahead of the Diocese wide support package being confirmed.

If the PCC is currently contributing Parish Share monthly by direct debit, this payment can be modified by contacting [Jessica Cook](#), Parish Share and Stipends Officer, either by email or by phone on 01749 685126.

Discretionary Parish Support and Relief

The DBF is creating a financial and pastoral support package (2020 Discretionary Parish Support and Relief) to assist PCCs, where despite best efforts to alleviate the impact of Covid-19, financial assistance is required to keep up with necessary payments and maintaining a baseline level of reserves.

To this end, Matthew Pinnock shall be emailing all PCCs and asking them to complete a form by 31 July 2020, expressing whether or not you anticipate the need for financial support in 2020. This will further assist the DBF to assess the overall level of support needed and in developing this package of support and relief.

Please look out for this email and respond promptly where you can; thank you in advance for your time in completing this.

Parish Share Survey form for calculation of 2021 Parish Share

Thank you to everyone who has submitted the Parish Share survey form declaring their number of Regular Worshippers and choice of Category. The 2021 Parish Share will be based on the declarations made.

Unfortunately, there are still some forms to come in. The 2020 Annual Survey form, together with a guidance booklet and a letter from the Bishop, was sent to your Churchwarden at the beginning of February. Copies of the [letter and guidance booklet](#) are available for download

from the [diocesan website](#). If you need a copy of the survey form, please contact [Yvonne Thompson](#).

The information provided on the survey forms will be discussed by Archdeaconry Review Groups in the coming weeks.

Fees and fee returns

If you have not already done so, please can we have your Q1 & Q2 returns as soon as possible. If you pay by bacs, please can you email the returns form to returns@bathwells.anglican.org on the day you make the payment. Or you can post cheques, along with the returns form, to Flourish House.

If you don't have any returns for this year, and haven't already notified us, please can you complete the "Declaration of Nil Returns" form or write "Nil" on the returns form, and send it to returns@bathwells.anglican.org

The returns form (in excel or PDF), plus other useful downloadable documents, including the amended fees tables, can be found at the bottom of the Parochial Fees information page on the [diocesan website](#).

Weddings and Funerals

From 4 July, the Government has allowed for weddings in places of worship, providing certain public health criteria are met including an advised maximum number of 30 people in attendance.

The House of Bishops has also advised that funerals may be carried out in church buildings.

More information on this can be found on our [diocesan website](#).

Annual Report, PCC Accounts and Return of Parish Finance form

Understandably, due to the lockdown, it will have been difficult to get the year end accounts for 2019 presented to the APCM and signed off by the PCC Chairman and an Independent Examiner.

When this has been achieved, please forward your Annual Report and Accounts, the Independent Examiner's certificate and completed checklist for the attention of Janine Lavery, Finance Department, Flourish House, Cathedral Park, Wells, Somerset BA5 1FD. A copy of the Independent Examiners Certificate can be found on the [diocesan website](#).

The Parish Finance Return is completed online. Please visit the Church of England website at parishreturns.churchofengland.org/ to input and view your Parish Finance Return – if you require login details then please contact [Janine Lavery](#).

The information given in the Finance Return is used directly by the National Statistics and Research Department to create the Parish Finance Dashboards.

New treasurers should receive our “Welcome email” within three months of starting signposting you towards where you can find support in your role. If you are a new treasurer and haven’t yet received this, please email [Yvonne Thompson](#).