

Dear all,

God is with us, gathering us as Christ-centred communities, calling us to make Christian disciples, sending us in loving service, empowering us by the Holy Spirit. These are words from our unanimously endorsed Diocesan vision and strategy document launched in 2016 and we continue to seek to be shaped by this understanding and inspiration. In the same vision document, I highlighted that part of the challenge for us as a diocese was a “chronic high six-figure operating deficit for the Diocese over several years” and “small historic investment income compared with neighbouring dioceses”.

In terms of the deficit, over the years we have streamlined centrally in order to reduce the deficit and before the pandemic approached a near break-even budget. The pandemic created further financial difficulties but through the generosity of many we are again moving year on year towards a break-even budget. However, reaching this goal by 2025 or 2026 depends largely on every benefice and parish meeting its Parish Share payments. Otherwise mission and ministry in other parts of the diocese is immediately and adversely affected and funds to pay for clergy and mission initiatives severely restricted.

Consequently, if your parish has a history of not contributing in full, or it is considered likely to struggle to meet its Parish Share request, I would strongly encourage the development of a financial action plan. This plan would demonstrate how the parish intends to address the challenges it faces, eventually moving towards full payment. Further, it will enable diocesan officers to effectively allocate resources to you in order to assist in identifying and addressing the challenges you face.

Completing an action plan has been identified as the most effective way to ensure that each request for financial assistance can be considered fairly and transparently. This is not only important in the interests of fairness, but also in terms of allocating the Contingency Fund the DBF oversees to support requests for financial assistance. This highlights the need for even more robust financial support systems in future.

The action plan should be embedded in the context of the wider mission that the PCC/benefice is working towards and be realistic, recognising both the strengths and weaknesses of each parish. Of course, such a plan is not to be considered as an inflexible document but instead as the scaffolding which enables mission, ministry and solid financing to be built upon.

Finally, those within your PCC including the incumbent (if in post), churchwarden and treasurer should help to put the action plan together. Following each member signing-off the plan this should then be sent to the Parish Resources Manager – [Julie Podd](#), who will point you in the right direction and continue to work closely with you to allocate resources and diocesan staff as needed.

With thanks for our ongoing partnership in the gospel.



Bishop Martin