



Treasurers' Newsletter

Diocese of Gloucester

November 2008

Fourth Quarter Newsletter - 2008

Dear Colleague,

First of all I'd like to thank you for the work that you have done this year in your role as Treasurer. Here in the finance department we truly appreciate the work that goes into every parish by the people who maintain the accounts and keep cash flows going in the right direction.

I hope that through out the year, you have felt supported by the Diocese. We are striving to continually improve the way we support all treasurers, and any feedback or comments would be most welcome.

As we look forward to next year, we are launching a new improved excel Cashbook, along with plans for more workshops on specific subjects throughout the year. Again, if there are any particular subjects that you would like discussed and feel that others would benefit from, please let us know and something can be arranged.

I hope that you all have a very merry Christmas and a happy and relaxing New Year.

Yours sincerely

Matt Brunt

Diocesan Management Accountant

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Parish Share 2008

The Diocese had a shortfall of 6.43% at the end of October, compared with a shortfall of 5.86% at the same point in 2007. As reported in July, this is a deceiving figure due to Cheltenham Holy Trinity's low contribution percentage. By removing Cheltenham, Holy Trinity from the statistics the Diocesan shortfall changes to 4.93%.

Bank Deposits

John Preston (National Stewardship and Resources Officer, Church of England) recently sent out a letter about Bank deposits and the effect that the compensation scheme has for PCCs and Dioceses. Please find below a copy of his letter:

Following the collapse of Icelandic banks last week, a number of parishes are asking questions about the security of bank deposits, and this email aims to give you an update on the situation.

We understand that the majority of parish and diocesan deposits are held in the Church of England Deposit Account run by CCLA (formerly known as the CBF Deposit Account). This has over £1 billion of deposits, which is spread amongst about 40 carefully chosen institutions. The Fund is currently Aaa rated (triple A) by Fitch, an independent rating agency which reviews the rating weekly. Whilst the funds deposited are not covered by the FSCS compensation scheme, as it is a collective investment fund, both the spread of deposits and the selection process mean that risk is spread. We have been informed that no part of the fund is deposited with any of the Icelandic banks.

We are aware that some parishes, however, have money on deposit at Icelandic banks. The sums are not large in the context of total national Church funds, but obviously the amounts involved are significant to them. The Archbishops' Council is supporting voluntary sector moves led by NCVO and ACEVO to encourage the Government to offer protection to charities who have lost money in this way. In support of this, we would be very keen to hear if you know of any of your parishes who are affected.

The information provided by the FSCS about its compensation scheme does not specifically mention charities. However, the Charity Commission has issued guidance that charities should be covered by the Scheme to the same extent (ie up to £50,000) as other organisations and individuals. Virtually all parishes would be covered by this, as the most relevant exceptions for any organisation seeking to claim under the guarantee scheme are that it exceeds two or more of the following limits: (i) it employs more than 50 people, and/or (ii) it has income or expenditure of more than £6.5million per year, and/or (iii) it has net assets of more than £3.26 million. The Charity Commission guidance can be found on: <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/news/fincomp.asp>

Diocesan Cashbook

We recently took the Cashbook to the South West regional conference, where it was well received by other Dioceses. This interest has prompted questions about how many parishes actually use the cashbook and how many have tried it, but have decided not to use it.

Enclosed with this newsletter you should find a questionnaire relating to the Diocesan Cashbook, which I would be grateful if you could fill in and return to me. Depending on the responses, other Dioceses may “buy in” to the Cashbook, offering some sort of remuneration which would then obviously help to reduce parish share.

There is also a new Cashbook available, version 2, which has all the same functionality of the current Cashbook, but makes reconciling previous year’s transactions and transfers between accounts much simpler. This new version also has the up-to-date Finance Return required by the Archbishops’ Council, and additional codes such as Sundries. The new Cashbook will be available on the Diocesan Website (www.gloucester.anglican.org) at the beginning of December, along with a new user’s manual to guide you through it. Copies will also be available on CD if requested.

Cashbook Workshops

Due to the launch of the new Cashbook, we have decided to hold a short workshop for Treasurers who wish use it. This workshop will be held at Church House, in the Committee Room on the 11th December starting at 10am and lasting approximately 2 hours.

The workshop will consist of a short training session, followed by questions and answers. Please book your place quickly if you would like to attend, as space will be limited. Copies of the Cashbook will be available at the workshop.

A perfect opportunity to get the new Cashbook and do some Christmas shopping.

Future workshops will be held in the new year, and help and advice on the new system is available from Church House.

Parish Share 2009

We have now received the majority of allocations for 2009 from Deaneries and parishes, although there are still some outstanding. Those of you who contribute by direct debit should have by now received a letter with the breakdown of the monthly or quarterly payments. If you would like to change any of the amounts, or if you have not received a letter and were expecting one, please contact the Finance department as soon as possible so that we can amend our records in time for January.

If you don't currently have a direct debit, but would like to set one up, again please contact us and a form will be sent out to you.

Open Day Presentations

The Open Day was a great success, and I'd like to thank everyone who was able to make the event. On the strength of this, future Open Days have been planned (it is expected that the next full open day will be in 2010), along with smaller events which will be held around the Diocese on a more regular basis.

Many treasurers at the Open Day have asked for a copy of the presentation that we made about Parish Share. This is now available on the Diocesan Website at <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/finance/downloads/>

Diocese of Gloucester – Energy Agreement

The Diocesan Energy Scheme is finally ready to be “rolled out”. A letter from Adrian Slade with the offerings and how to proceed will be coming out to all parishes and incumbents next week (beginning 23 November). This will contain details of two electricity and one gas option, including draft contracts for the “ARK tariff” scheme if enough information has been obtained.

This scheme has taken far longer than expected to get off the ground but we really hope it will prove beneficial. We already have another four dioceses keen to join the scheme if there is significant take up which means when we come to revisit the scheme in a few years time it could represent most church property in the South West, the largest buying group in the Church and hopefully bring up significant additional savings.

We understand some parishes feel they have been pestered by one of the groups helping put the scheme together; as such we have spoken with them and asked that future communication is either through us or at your request. Please let Benjamin Preece Smith know if this is not the case.

Office Christmas Opening Times Changes in the Finance Department

In the last Newsletter I let you know that Jessica Ahern is expecting a baby in January. So from the 26th November, Jess will be starting her maternity leave and Kerry Gardiner will be starting officially in the Finance department.

Kerry will be doing the same job as Jessica, and can be contacted on the same extension number. If you have any queries regarding parish share, fees or other receipts, please feel free to contact Kerry or myself and we will be happy to help.

Parish Share Statements

A problem with the Parish Share Statements that we send out quarterly has been brought to our attention. Where a parish has made an additional contribution in 2007, the 'Amount Due' balance at the bottom of the statement has miscalculated this contribution. The due balance running down the right hand side of the statement is correct and matches what we have as the PCCs recorded balance due.

We are looking into why the system is making this miscalculation and apologies for any inconvenience caused. If you are unsure about how much your PCC has left to contribute this year, please contact the finance department and we will be happy to assist.

Registration of PCCs/Trusteeship leaflet

PCCs with income in excess of £100k will be required to register from next year. The Charity Commission has requested that dioceses co-ordinate all relevant PCCs to register in one of three "slots". Our diocese will be seeking to help register all relevant PCCs in the period May/June 2009, we will be running seminars on registration in March next year. If your PCC's income is likely to be in excess of £100k please let Benjamin Preece Smith know and he will arrange an invitation to one of the seminars to be sent to you, or the relevant person from your parish. For those parishes with income below £100k there is currently no stated intent or timetable for registration.

As a result of this process we have copies of a guide to trusteeship specifically tailored to a Church context which we wish to pass on to all PCC members in the diocese. We will be writing to your incumbents shortly asking for numbers on PCCs and hopefully these leaflets will be with you shortly, if you do not hear by the time of the next newsletter please contact Benjamin at Church House.

Giving Officer Update

You may be interested to hear that we are advancing well with implementing the proposed Diocesan Parish Giving Scheme. For those who haven't heard about the proposed scheme. It is a regular giving option for donors the basic principles behind it are as follows:

- The scheme will be delivered locally, but administered centrally
- It will be available to all
- It will provide parishes with a mechanism to promote and improve regular planned tax-efficient giving
- It will improve cash flow within the Parish account due to increased donations and the centrally administered Gift Aid reclaim that will take place monthly
- Givers will have the option for their gift to remain confidential
- Effective Gift Aid administration and re-claim
- The option for individuals to pledge an inflationary increase in advance to offset the rising costs of ministry
- Direct debit offers greater flexibility with regards managing giving. Increases and decreases can be made easily

We are currently at the Pilot stage of the process and are working actively with 6 parishes across the Diocese. We want to ensure that we trial it with parishes of all different shapes and sizes to ensure that any glitches are ironed out before we launch it Diocesan wide. Our proposed launch date will be round Easter 2009 but I promise to update you before then with developments.

May I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and I look forward to working with you in 2009, to begin tackling Giving!

Best wishes

Helen

Office Christmas Opening Times

The Finance department will be open until 12pm on Christmas Eve, and will be back in the office officially on Friday 2nd January. Between Christmas and New Year there will be people coming in and out of Church House, so if you have any final cheques for the year (for example fees or parish share) please continue to send these into us.

As normal, any cheques that we receive up until the 1st January will be treated in our accounts as being received in 2008.

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