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**To all Incumbents and Treasurers:**

I am writing today with some news which I hope will be some small help at this time and over the coming months as we reopen our church buildings.

The Chester Diocesan Board of Finance has agreed to gift every parish in the Diocese of Chester a grant of £2,000. From today, we will begin transferring money to every parish. It will be paid without any other considerations and without the need to complete an application process. For those parishes that already pay parish share by direct debit, you do not need to do anything further. We will be in touch with other parishes to arrange payment over the coming weeks.

Parishes are free to do with the money what they wish, but it is the strong expectation of CDBF that parishes will use it prayerfully in helping with some of the new challenges we face in proclaiming and advancing the Gospel of Christ now and over the coming months.

Here are some thoughts as to how it might be spent, but we very happy with uses as you follow the Holy Spirit's prompting:

- Purchasing new IT equipment and resources;
- Paying for additional communications to the parish;
- Holding a suitable event to mark the full re-opening of a church building;
- Bringing back people currently furloughed;
- Extra cleaning of the church building, signs, etc.; and

- Helping a neighbouring parish, church or your community struggling as a result of the crisis.

As we begin a new chapter in the mission of our diocese, the current crisis is not over and some parishes will have continuing financial problems for a while, but this point in time provides a unique opportunity as we open our church buildings once more for individual prayer and small funerals, and look forward to a return to gathered public worship.

We are a diocese that holds dear a belief in the parish system, and I hope you can see that this decision is a clear testament to that. Gifting every parish £2,000 honours the efforts parishes have made in paying their parish share throughout the crisis and shows our thanks to God and continued faith that parishes will continue to pay as much as they can.

This grant does not change the strong need for parishes to continue to pay parish share. We understand it is not easy, but we are not yet out of the woods by any means.

For those parishes that have been very severely impacted financially and have struggled to pay their parish share, we hope that these funds might be able to support you too in your mission and at least alleviate the impact in some small way.

These grants have been made possible by the strong response to parish share requests, and an improved investment market since the beginning of the crisis which has enabled us to release money from a historic fund. Raised in thanksgiving following World War 2, the fund was established to help parishes meet the challenges of paying stipends at that time. Having received permission from the Charity Commission, the capital of this fund as well as the income can now be used to support stipends. We have decided, therefore, that now is an appropriate time to do this, which in turn has meant other unrestricted funds can be used for the purposes of a grant to parishes.

The generosity of past generations has made this gift a reality today. So, as we give thanks for the old, and prepare and look forward to a new chapter in the history of our diocese, it is my prayer that these acts of generosity in the past can advance our collective mission to those in our care today.



**George Colville**  
Diocesan Secretary