

June 2020

On 15 June, the Diocese of Chester announced that parishes are to receive a grant of £2,000.

The announcement was made in a letter from the Diocesan Secretary to parishes.

He told parishes that they are free to spend the money as they wish but that they are encouraged to use it prayerfully to further local missional opportunities.

FAQ

How can the Diocese of Chester afford this?

As explained in my previous letters the Diocesan Board of Finance has limited reserves. These parish grants have been made available as a result of the response of parishes in paying their parish share and by releasing an historic fund to support stipends. These funds will support stipend payments now so that other unrestricted funds could be used for the purposes of a grant to parishes.

A diocesan investment fund managed by CCLA, in which the above historic fund is invested, has recovered since the low immediately following the coronavirus restrictions being put in place. The fund has gained in value by over £500k.

The CDBF has decided, therefore, to sell £0.5m of these investments to fund the parish grants.

What can't we do with the money?

Parishes are free to do with the money what they wish. However, it is the strong expectation of CDBF that parishes will use it prayerfully in helping with some of the new challenges we face. These challenges will differ depending on local context, but we are a diocese that places a high emphasis on the parish system, and it is for parishes to decide how the money will best further mission in the local community.

Will this impact on 2021 parish share requests?

Finances are still uncertain, and we are in no way out of the woods yet, and we are very conscious that many parishes will have a need of some additional funding now, hence the parish grant. We have been encouraged by the effort parishes have made in paying their parish share throughout the crisis and future parish share requests for 2021 will be considered and calculated in the usual way later in the year at a time when we will, hopefully, have a better measure of the financial challenges we face.

Can I use it to pay my parish share?

If that is what you feel you are being called to do, however we also suggest that you prayerfully consider it being used for other costs of mission arising at the present time that you otherwise might not have been able to meet.

Why a flat rate grant of £2,000 for all, surely some parishes need it more than others?

We carefully considered the pros and cons of having an application process and decided that at this stage, and in this situation, all parishes should receive the same flat rate grant as they will all be facing similar costs. Any application system would likely have been imperfect and would have had scope to create complication, bureaucracy, and delay. Doing this is quick and simple and we are very conscious that many parishes will have a need of some additional funding now.

Of course, when compared to parish share, £2,000 is proportionately greater for lower-banded, more deprived parishes and smaller parishes sharing or with part-time clergy. Similarly, we acknowledge that any approach will highlight certain anomalies, the number of church buildings in a parish for example. We think overall the clear simple message of linking this to a single PCC makes best sense and is quickest and easiest to implement.

Do we need to tell you what we've done with the money?

No. We have purposely not set up any reporting requirements associated with the grant. However, we would love you to share any good news stories that emerge from this. Similarly, it would be good to learn from each other. Please do not feel under pressure to do this. Provided the money is spent prayerfully on your mission at this time, we will be content it has been spent appropriately.

If you spend it in a way that is of general interest, you may wish to share news of how you have spent the money to further mission in your community. [Jim Butterworth in the Communications Team at Church House](#) would be happy to help you with this, and any press enquiries.