

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE: MISSION, MINISTRY AND MONEY

Background:

Throughout the pandemic we have sought, with God's help, to rise to the challenges before us with generosity and joy, imagination, and courage. Although there are many examples and stories of hope, the demands of the past two years have undoubtedly impacted both our churches and our diocesan resources. Therefore, we must continue to seek God's inspiration and strength to enable us to rise to the challenges of the coming months and years as the church of Christ in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton and Barnet.

We are thankful for the many lay and ordained who have given so generously of their time, gifts and money, to maintain the mission and ministry of our parishes and chaplaincies over the past two years. However, we are aware that the impact of the pandemic has been to bring into focus challenges we were already facing as a church.

These challenges could be summarised as:

- A) Mission: overall continued declining numbers in our church congregations**
- B) Ministry: maintaining ministry in our parishes**
- C) Money: increasing pressure on our parish and diocesan finances**

Therefore, as we move forward together as a diocese, with confidence in our generous God who sustains us, we need to rise to meet these challenges.

Mission - Focus on Growing Membership of God's Church:

As we rise to our challenges we do so hopefully; seeking to grow disciples and deepen discipleship.

1. 'Invite Easter' - as we Rise to our Challenges we rise firstly to New Life in Christ. How do we share this truth this year - making it a 'Bumper Easter' as we emerge from the pandemic? Do visit <https://www.easterisnow.faith/> for the Easter Film and accompanying resources for All Age Worship, Collective Worship etc.
2. Small Grants for Mission - Receive £250 for your church - just tell us why you need it and promise to send us a short story and photos! Not funded from the Common Fund. Just email Tricia Humber fxprojects@stalbans.anglican.org and tell her how the grant will support your mission and she'll arrange payment.

3. Refresh/renew or re-prioritise your MAP. Or even a short-term mini-MAP as you rebuild. Contact Flourishing Churches Team for support, resources and facilitation: kpeacock@stalbans.anglican.org
4. Youth and Children: in addition to the usual support for churches and deaneries, we want to highlight Launchpad. It is a program for clergy to receive specialist support in developing youth engagement in their parish or benefice. This program is for church leaders with a heart for developing youth work and currently have few connections with young people or little youth ministry provision. Led by a youth ministry expert from Youthscape, each participant will receive 1-2-1 advice and ongoing support. Interested in Launchpad? Email ccole@stalbans.anglican.org and let us know.

Ministry - Focus on flexible models of ministry for God's Church:

As we rise to our challenges of sustaining the ministry for God's church in a changing context and environment.

1. Share good practice of variety of different types of ministry within our deaneries
2. Explore where resources, ministry, and other support for ministry and governance of church-life can be shared across parishes, benefices, and deaneries
3. Encourage those who have participated in online worship and provision to explore further their own discipleship
4. Participate in the Mission and Ministry training programme, online webinars, liminal live (on Diocesan Facebook page), and other resources to equip all for ministry
5. Form a parish, benefice and/or deanery group where people can support one another in exploring ministry and vocation, supported by our vocations team.

Money - Increasing pressure on our parish and diocesan finances:

We have projected diocesan finances for the next five years to 2026 and are looking at a significant deficit which cannot be funded from our available free reserves - most of the diocesan assets are held as endowment and restricted funds where we cannot use the capital to fund our current needs.

We have an action plan which seeks to address the financial problem:

- making savings at the diocesan office
- reductions in curate numbers
- growing parish share contributions
- small and minimised reductions in the number of stipendiary clergy posts

We recognise that this action plan will be challenging and that the outcomes will rely on effective reductions in expenditure *and* increases in income and therefore looks quite fragile.

In all our financial discussions we have realised that whilst we appear to have a financial problem, the broader, and more urgent picture, is that we have a problem in terms of declining membership.

Focus on Growing Income:

The National Stewardship Team for the C of E conducted research (2,000 Anglicans were surveyed) and found that:

- 1/3 of Anglicans DO NOT give to their church
- 40% of Anglicans have NEVER been asked to give regularly
- 50% have NEVER been asked to review their giving
- Nearly 50% of church members have made an online donation, but only 12% have given online to their church.
- Half of Anglicans have heard a sermon on giving in last 12 months; and 60% of those said it didn't change their thinking
- Anglicans are three times as likely to leave a legacy to charity than they are to their church.
- 49% of givers said they would feel motivated to give more if they understood the impact of their giving.
- Less than a third of Anglicans say they are regularly thanked for their giving.

Beyond Synod:

We ask you to take the issues raised in this paper and at Synod for further discussion in your parishes and deaneries. We would very much value further feedback and invite you to send this to kpeacock@stalbans.anglican.org by Monday 16 May 2022.