

Money Matters in Bruton and Cary Deanery - Questions and Answers

This document captures the hopes, fears and questions that were raised by parish representatives at the meeting of Bruton and Cary Deanery Synod on Wednesday 18th March 2026. The responses provided are not to be taken as the definitive, or even official, position of the diocese, but are an attempt to capture, in writing, some of what was shared during the meeting and to guide parishes towards relevant resources to help with their next steps. This follows documentation provided in advance of the meeting, which responded to specific questions in relation to national and diocesan level decision-making regarding church finances.

Hopes	Fears	Related Questions	Answer
Growing Churches			
Growing our Churches – more people!	Lack of people, clergy and laity and ageing congregations	What financial support is available for outreach/evangelism ideas?	The diocese provides Mission grants for new activities reaching new people. This includes Mustard Seed grants of up to £500, or Growing Churches Grants of up to £5,000. Further information and details of how to apply can be found here https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/Giving-and-Funding/grants/
For a spirit of generosity in our hearts and pews!	People ‘freeze’ with fear		We recommend that PCCs conduct a Generous Church Check-up – (document attached to email) to consider what is already in place and what steps may need to be taken to develop a more generous giving culture. This can be facilitated locally or with support from the Giving and Funding Team. Holding a Generosity Week during the church year is a great opportunity to celebrate generous giving in all its forms, from thanking the people who make the tea and coffee, to those who have been regular givers and financially contributed to the life of the church together. There are lots of useful resources to help you plan your Generosity Week, from Orders of service, Sermon starters, to small group resources. https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/building-generous-church/generosity-resources/generosity-week/generosity-week-

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			<p>resources-churches The Giving and Funding Team can help you in the development and delivery of your plans.</p> <p>We are developing a new suite of resources to help you embed generosity in your worship, preaching and teaching. https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/giving-and-grants/Resourcing-a-generous-church/worship-teaching-and-discipleship/worship-teaching-and-discipleship.php</p>
We discover the joy and blessing of giving	Not enough support / Diminishing number of volunteers		We recognise that some churches have a dwindling number of volunteers, but it is important to value the skills and experience that you do have in your existing team, rather than lament what is missing. You may not have the energy to do the same things that you used to, but everyone can pray! Meanwhile, God will likely have placed people in your congregation and community with just the right set of skills who would be delighted to be asked to help. Look at what God has already placed in your hands and grow from where you are, not where you wish you were!
Engaging the wider community			
That our churches can continue to serve their communities	Currently unsustainable	If we want people to pay more then why should we expect them to do so, unless we – the church- does much more for them?	<p>This is a very poignant question. It is more difficult to convince the wider community to give and that the Church is having an impact locally, if it has become self-serving, ie. worship services for the few, rather than loving service to the many. Consider where there may already be, or could be opportunities to develop, partnerships with other local organisations. Joining in and working with others, will often be less resource intensive but still bear fruit.</p> <p>In other trusted community spaces you can attentively listen to the needs of your community and prayerfully consider where the new opportunities for the church to serve might emerge.</p>

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Increased engagement/giving from the wider community	Insufficient financial support	How can we best encourage our non-church going community to support the church? They say they would hate to lose it, but don't currently support.	<p>Help the wider community to understand the financial challenge. Make sure that your communications are couched in a language that help people to engage, i.e. that you help people to see why the church/Church is important and relevant to them and that this is Good news, not just a moan about how little you have!</p> <p>Inspired by feedback from Alham Vale Benefice, our Communications team have created a Thank you poster template to help you communicate your impact locally. Other parishes have chosen to produce a leaflet, delivered to every household (example attached) or recorded a short video.</p>
To grow mission (priest-led)			<p>The Great Commission is for everyone, lay and ordained. Mission should not be considered the sole responsibility of your parish priest, albeit you would need their support. Diocesan support to develop and deliver new activities is available and there are training opportunities throughout the year, from the Lay Ministries Pathway, to the CMS Pioneer Certificate and, as above, grant funding to help you initiate new activities that reach new people.</p> <p>https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/events-and-training</p>
Managing Church Buildings			
A toilet	The burden of funding building repairs and maintenance falls to the same people who pay for the cost of ministry	How can parishes balance the financial demands of the diocese with the needs of the parish – for maintaining buildings and building the kingdom in the parish?	<p>Managing church buildings projects can be very daunting, but we have devised the Managing Your Church Buildings Project Checklist to help break down the various tasks into bite-sized chunks, ideally so that these can be shared.</p> <p>We would generally encourage the costs of ministry to be funded, as much as possible, by the congregation. Your church building is more likely to attract funding from the wider community and grant funding bodies.</p>

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			<p>Local Friends groups, either independent or a sub-group of the PCC, along with a separate restricted fund for repairs and maintenance can encourage local giving for such works.</p> <p>All Church of England Churches can access the free grant funding database within Cornerstone, a new platform to support giving and fundraising. Further information and an introductory video can be found here Email givingteam@bathwells.anglican.org to request access to Cornerstone.</p>
	<p>Quinquennial Inspection</p>		<p>Your quinquennial inspection may identify a lot of costly works, but our Church Buildings Adviser, Mark Lidster, can offer free advice regarding the most urgent of those and the most cost-effective way to address them. You can request support from Mark here</p> <p>The National Church website provides details of a range of grant funding streams to help with specialist conservation works and reports– https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/conservation-grants</p> <p>Natalie Wainwright, Lead Giving and Funding Adviser, can help you to identify the right fund for you and support with grant funding applications. You can book a call with Natalie here</p>
	<p>Church closure</p>		<p>This is not a decision that the diocese would make unless prompted by a parish but, if you are considering becoming a Festival Church, or exploring church closure, do discuss options with your Archdeacon or Peter Evans, Assistant Diocesan Secretary.</p>
<p>Financial decision making – National, diocesan and parish level</p>			

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That the National church will distribute funds to a local level		Why was the motion proposed by Bishop Michael to allow a dispersal of funds from the Church Commissioners to the dioceses not supported by the Synod?	The motion proposed by the Bishop of Hereford, was not voted on, so it is not reasonable to say that it was not supported by Synod. Prior to voting on the motion, an amendment to the motion was raised by the Bishop of Sheffield. In a vote by Houses, the Synod supported an amendment, proposed by the Bishop of Sheffield Pete Wilcox, which acknowledged the complex financial pressures faced by many dioceses and affirming the Church Commissioners' prudent management of the Church's endowment. The amendment welcomed increased stakeholder engagement in developing the 2026–28 spending plans and the commitment to clergy wellbeing, particularly through increases in stipends and focused funding for ministry in deprived communities. It also called for a formal role for Synod in shaping the future national Funding Framework, with a full debate on the approach to disbursing funding, including support for local stipendiary ministry, and based on robust financial modelling. This will be scheduled early in the next triennium.
That parish share becomes more than an aspiration	Ability to pay Benefice Share/ request too high which will demotivate the local church and shrink the number of worshippers	Who at the diocese makes such ridiculous changes and doesn't realise that rural churches mostly are peopled by the elderly who have never earned today's salary?	As a predominantly rural diocese, with a Rural Adviser we are well aware of the unique challenges presenting in rural communities. Rural parishes are represented on and have fed into decisions made by the diocesan Finance Group and Common Fund Committee. Unfortunately, many costs are not determined by the social or demographic make-up of our communities. Stipend levels are set to be consistent across our diocese, and now across the country. Costs of repairing and maintaining housing, council tax and other bills are increasing. In some instances, costs are growing at a faster rate in rural communities compared to urban areas, so this is why all our costs are sought to be covered through a Common Fund.

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			Every gift to the church, large and small, is welcome, so it should not matter how much one earns but how much love one puts into their giving. An annual review of what God may be asking you to give is recommended so that your giving keeps up with inflation and remains a sacrificial offering.
		How should a PCC determine its level of reserves to ensure solvency?	There is some useful guidance about managing reserves on the Parish Resources website – https://parishresources.org.uk/the-pcc-as-a-charity/managing-reserves/
Clergy appointments			
We find a vicar/For an incumbent/Energetic new vicar!	The wrong one will be appointed/ we don't get one/loss of priest I loss of community		When in vacancy, the preparation of a benefice profile is an ideal opportunity to reflect upon and identify the characteristics you are looking for in a new incumbent. Your Deanery and Parish Development Adviser will support you in this process. There is a broad programme of training available to clergy and lay people, so fresh ideas and energy needn't come from your vicar alone!
More clergy to reduce unmanageable benefice sizes	The failure of the diocese to invest in clergy		We want to ensure that there is widespread ministry across the diocese, which is not dependent upon the ability of individual parishes to pay. However, if contributions to the Common Fund, which is used to pay for clergy and support services to parishes, reduces, the number of clergy deployed and the level of support from the diocese must also reduce. If we want to see more clergy, in addition to praying that more will be called to ministry, we need to maintain and grow financial contributions into the Common Fund that will pay for them.
To maintain Anglicanism – ministry not tied to ability to pay	Becoming a congregational church		As above.

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That the church recognises the importance and need for parish priests	They ignore the perils if they don't		The value of a parish priest is widely understood by those within the church, but not always by the wider community. We all have a responsibility to communicate the value and impact of parish ministry and mission and to educate people about how this is financed, i.e. with the support of local communities. We have provided the Deanery with further information to help everyone understand how the costs of parish ministry are calculated and why payment of Benefice Share is critical to maintaining the current level of clergy deployment.
Communication			
		Why is communication so poor/inadequate in an organisation which values holy communion?	Sadly, it is unclear from this comment whose communication is deemed poor, so it has not been possible to provide a response.
		The general public view the CofE as wealthy. The reality is that, at benefice level, it is not. How do we communicate the reality to the general public?	<p>Inspired by members of Alham Vale Benefice, we were challenged to rethink the thank you certificate for payment of Benefice Share and have developed a Thank you poster to help you communicate what the generosity of local people has enabled - link</p> <p>We would welcome feedback from parishes about what other resources could help you to challenge the popular misconception that all churches are wealthy.</p> <p>Our website also has some guidance on how to approach launching a Stewardship campaign or Gift Day, among other things. https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/giving-and-grants/ways-to-give/talking-giving-generosity/</p>

