



The majority of the Diocese of Bristol's income (approximately three quarters) is given by the parishes through Parish Share. In response to consistent shortfalls of over 5% against the amount that the Diocese requests of its parishes in Share, and as part of the Diocesan Strategy 2010-2015 planning process, a group was asked to review the Share system and make proposals. The proposals would aim to create a system that helped, first, to change both the perception of Share and the dynamics of financial relationships within the Diocese and, second, to generate more sustainable financial returns, in tandem with other financial strategies in the Diocese.

### **Aspects of a new Share system**

The new Share system would be based on the principles of generosity and spiritual growth and of the interdependence of churches in the Diocese, and would highlight the true costs for supporting mission and ministry in the Diocese.

#### *Generosity and spiritual growth*

- To ask PCCs to decide how much they pledge to give in Share rather than it be a decision calculated and requested by the Diocese.
- To train a team of Giving Advisers in each deanery to provide teaching in parishes on the nature of giving as a catalyst for and result of spiritual growth.
- To encourage parishes to feel that their prayerful commitment to give in Share is an integral part of their plan for growth (as well as that of the Diocese as a whole) rather than feeling that if they grow they will get penalised.

#### *Interdependence*

- To structure the decision-making process at a deanery level, in the expectation of greater deanery – and inter-deanery – support for one-off parochial challenges and a greater sense of mutual support and interdependence.
- To reposition the Diocesan Finance Team as pure administrators of the system, with Deanery Leadership Teams taking responsibility for encouraging giving and pledges.
- To remain true to the ideal that deployment of diocesan resources (stipendiary ministers, support services etc) is not linked to the ability to “pay” for them, while moving away from a situation that leads to dependency and complacency.

#### *Real costs*

- To introduce information on ministerial costs and comparative giving rates to parishes as factors in their decision making process.

### **Introducing the new system**

The new system will be introduced over three years.

#### *For 2010:*

- Share figures for each parish will not be rebased according to their “potential” but have flat inflation based changes from the previous year.
- The Diocesan Office will provide parishes and deaneries with information on their calculated “potential”; the cost of ministry across the Diocese; and giving rates across the Diocese and nationally.
- Parishes will be asked to consider this information and the PCC to make a prayerful commitment to give the amount requested or to give graciously a figure above it.
- At the same time, Giving Advisers will be increasingly available in the deaneries to help teach about the spiritual practice of giving as a response to God, both to the Church and beyond it, for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

*For 2011:*

- As above for 2010.
- Parishes will channel their prayerful commitments through their deanery leadership rather than direct to the Diocesan Office.

*For 2012 and beyond:*

- Parishes and deaneries will again be provided with information on their calculated “potential” (this will be done every three years); the current cost of ministry across the Diocese; and giving rates nationally and across the Diocese.
- Parishes will be asked to consider this information and the PCC to make a prayerful decision about how much they would be willing to commit for the next year in support of mission across the Diocese.
- Parish representatives will be asked to bring this pledge to a meeting with the members of the Deanery Leadership Team, and then confirm it in writing.
- Deanery Leadership Teams will be sent budgeted figures detailing how much their deanery would need to give to meet budgeted expenditure.
- If all the commitments from the parishes meet the budgeted figure, then the Deanery Leadership Team simply inform the Finance Team at the Diocesan Office who administer the reporting and set up any standing orders.
- If the total commitments fall short of the budgeted amount, then the Deanery Leadership Team could go back to the parishes across the deanery and ask them to reconsider their commitment.
- Once the parishes’ commitments have been finalised and passed back to the Diocesan Office, this information is reported by the Finance Team on a regular basis through the existing channels.
- If a particular parish appears to be falling short in meeting their commitment (for an exceptional reason), the Deanery Leadership Team can appeal to other parishes across the deanery or to another deanery to make an additional commitment to help out that parish.