

Launde Deanery Minster Community  
**Treasurers Gathering**  
25/01/2024  
Billesdon Old School

**Present**

Phil Leech (Generous Giving Enabler, Leicester Diocese)  
Brian Kearvell-White (Glooston)  
Camilla Newton (Stonton Wyville)  
Chris Weston (Tur Langton, also in the Shangton congregation)  
Valarie Chouler (Skeffington)  
Gill Pawley (Tugby)  
David Thurlby (Church Langton)  
Richard Windle (Hungarton & Keyham)  
David Mills (Billesdon)  
Jonathan Dowman  
Jayne Lewis

**Apologies**

Sarah Longhill (Gaulby)  
Patrick Beddows (East Norton)  
Sandra Griffin (Horninghold)  
Roger Jackson (Slawston)  
Anthony Jarvis (Shangton)  
Lynne Bysouth Kemp (Cold Overton)  
Edward Davis (Lovesby)  
Simon Hammond (Owston & Withcote)  
Kathryn Letts (Tilton)  
Gillian Woodford (Hungarian & Keyham)

**Notes:**

Warm welcome by Billesdon Church in the old school house.

Phil Leech introduced himself and explained that his purpose for the evening was to listen and help us in constructive conversation. Several key questions were asked in our discussion (in bold)

**What is the final format of the Minster Community and how much will that cost?**

Treasurers recalled that we hope that the Minster Community will receive 4 stipendiary posts as recommended by Diocesan Synod.

Launde Deanery receives 3.1 stipends:

1.0 Jayne Lewis parish and Co-Area Dean.

1.0 Jonathan Dowman Oversight Minister, Growing Faith Enabler, Associate Minister and Co-Area Dean (half of Jonathan's stipend comes directly from parish contributions, and the other half is presently funded by the DBF directly).

1.0 Stephen Bishop in Six Saints.

0.1 Alison Myers (Launde Abbey and Loddington)

Presently the Minster Community (17 parishes) directly receives two of those stipends.

In 2023, the total contribution from the parishes in the deanery was £80,243.

in 2024, the average stipend cost will be the equivalent of £61,500

There was a perceived need at the meeting for the Minster Community to breakdown of ministry costs that clearly demonstrate:

- How much is costs to maintain our churches
- How much it costs for our churches to serve the local community (our outreach and mission)
- Stipends received
- How much the Deanery, and Minster Community contribute towards these stipends
- The shortfall
- Clarity over what each parish is contributing to ministry costs in the Deanery and Minster Community

Presenting this clearly would help our churches and parishes see that ministry is not the greatest cost and that Investing in ministry is 'good value.'

It was felt that the Minster Community *is* in need of an additional stipendiary post.

To grow this capacity, the Deanery and Minster Community needs to take greater responsibility in funding the posts we receive. Jonathan's present post illustrates some of the present complexities of creating new Minster Community positions. In the short term a return to the giving levels of 2018 would be a good start.

### **How much ministry do we receive now?**

Jayne, Jonathan, David (SSM), our PTOs and Lay Readers, offer the Minster Community more ministry provision than many churches have received in recent years, though the parishes that Alison Booker served, feel her loss acutely (and wonder why they are left in vacancy).

It was felt that to help the Minster Community move forward, we need to do 2 things.

- 1) All churches need to know who to contact when guidance or support is needed. Some parish noticeboards still have Alison's details listed, while others are blank.
- 2) We need a robust and hopeful collective vision for ministry provision in the future. This needs to be shared by the Minster Community and demonstrate to the wider church that investment will be worthwhile.

Linked to the first point, the Minster Community needs to work towards a stipendiary (or equivalent) Operations Manager, who would both be involved in local ministry and coordinating life events services and mission. A similar need exists for the provision of pastoral care. David Palmer has been appointed in his Minster Community capacity to help develop our shared pastoral outreach, a responsibility he will help all in the Minster Community to share.

### **Can you share more about Diocesan finances?**

Phil offered an overview of our Diocesan financial context from 2022. The material he shared is available on our Minster community website ([launde-minster-community.webador.co.uk/pcc-admin-info-forms](http://launde-minster-community.webador.co.uk/pcc-admin-info-forms)). This information provided the context for a helpful discussion around giving and the cultural, ecclesial and financial landscape. There is a £2.2 million funding gap with stipendiary ministry and the training of curates costing £6.5 million every year.

The weekly average gift given to churches across the whole diocese is £10.70 per giver per week. We wondered if this figurer would be the same for our own churches?

Giving has gone down significantly in the Launde Deanery since 2018, while the unrestricted reserves of our churches has increased. There are several reasons for this and several of the treasurers highlighted that we have had several years of significant uncertainty. Phil can give further details, should this be an area our churches and treasures want to discuss further.

While there is no sense of judgement in having significant reserves on hold, we are invited to reflect on how much we are holding in reserve and how much we could commit to ministry and mission.

## **What do we do about our parishes (they don't know how church finances work)?**

Many of our parishes and our church congregations do not understand how ministry in the Church of England is funded or provided, some believing that our priests are paid by the government.

Many of our parishes contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of our church buildings, but we need to demonstrate how ministry is provided and a vision for the future.

## **Would it be helpful if the Minster Community broke down what we give into areas?**

1. Giving to our spiritual ministry (services and mission).
2. Giving to our social ministry (the work that churches do in the community e.g. offering community space, community cafés, special events (such as harvest).
3. Legal and statutory functions.
4. The building, it's maintenance and its improvement.

Across the Church of England generally, people tend to give most to the building (maintenance and improvement), followed by gifts related to Christian faith, belief and practice.

The costs of ministry provided by PTOs and other ministers, and even when services are lay lead, are not clear to our churches or parishes. The Minster Community needs to communicate a clear picture of what ministry costs together with a vision for ministry in the future.

There are areas such as buildings insurance that every parish needs to pay for. Working together for a common insurance policy that may cover the entire Minster Community could be an example of us working effectively and beneficially for all.

## **How hard will the Diocese come down on us if we don't pay sufficient Parish Share?**

The parish contribution promised is a gift and up to each parish to discern.

However, in a Minster Community, Parish Contributions will have a direct correlation to the stipendiary ministry available to the Minister Community.

## **Phil then offered some input into ways we can encourage giving in our churches**

1. People need to know why they are giving and what they are giving to. People give to vision.
2. We need to build transparency and trust with our parishes between our churches and as a minster community. We need to be open about our reserves and about the challenges to funds.
3. We should seek to develop a culture and theology of generosity in our churches. This is not simply a culture of asking for more money, but how we are generous communities of worship and discipleship

## **Actions**

It was felt that this was a positive and honest conversation that should, initially, be shared with Deanery Synod and then more widely.

We need to decide how many stipendiary posts we need to match our hopes and vision? What steps might each church take to start to travel in that direction.

Is there one initial financial area that it would be beneficial for all parishes to share in?

Insuring our buildings might be one such area? To begin with this might be quite complex to arrange, but once in place it was felt that it could be practically and financially beneficial for all parishes in the minster community. There was broad interest in exploring this.

Advise parishes to check notice boards and have either Jayne Lewis or Jonathan Dowman as contacts?