

**Giving God,
We are so much richer than we think
or can ever imagine.**

**But blindness to our true riches
prevents us from sharing your goodness
and enriching the world.**

Forgive us.

**Open our hearts to clearly see that
your love is big enough for all, and that
your blessings are multiplied when divided.**

**Living God,
may we have open eyes to the needs of others
and open hands to make a difference.**

Amen.

Luke 12:13-21 Divided and multiplied

BUDGET CHALLENGES
2020



DIOCESE OF TRURO
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

The various departments and committees of the diocese have followed their usual processes to create a budget calculation for 2020 based on the assumption that existing policies and projects continue as they are. The result of these calculations is an Operating Deficit of £300,000 despite the fact that the Diocesan Synod approved a policy in 2018 that “Today’s giving should resource today’s church” and “Deaneries will be where giving and the cost of ministry are matched”. Whilst that level of deficit can be accommodated with the use of existing reserves, there is every expectation that the same process will lead to continuing and growing losses, year on year. Our reserves would only allow that policy to operate for a limited number of years.

As a result, the Bishop’s Diocesan Council (BDC) recognised that this is unsustainable and wished to explore alternatives before recommending a budget to the Diocesan Synod. Consequently, we will debate that budget at our November meeting rather than in September. This allows us time at this next Synod to explore views about alternatives and to see what approach would most likely command the widest support.

The first question, therefore, is to decide whether to accept a budget with an Operating Deficit this next year and if we do, on what conditions on a longer term plan might that acceptance be conditional?

Whether or not we accept a deficit for 2020, it is clear that significant policy changes will have to be made in the very near future (and have the necessary financial impact in, say, two or three years) and that the structure and style of how we operate must evolve to match current circumstances.

It is worth reminding ourselves that around three quarters of the budget is directly related to the provision of parish-based stipendiary ministry (including housing) supplied within the place of ministry.

The remainder of the budget covers a range of much smaller activities but primarily aimed at supporting the ministry of the church in parishes or undertaking it where it is better to do this on a wider basis, especially for viability reasons. Some of these activities, such as safeguarding, human resources, health and safety and data protection requirements, are not optional.

Any budget is about the balance between income and expenditure. Put starkly, either we have to increase our income to meet our spending expectations or, if that proves not possible, we will necessarily need to provide ministry on a reduced cost basis.

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS FOR SYNOD IS THEREFORE WHAT ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF MINISTRY MIGHT WE CONSIDER?

The Church of England is especially committed to a ministry in every place and for every person; we are not a membership organisation. One of the implications of this is that the money raised by local congregations will not wholly go towards meeting the needs and expectations of those making the contributions.

- How do we sustain such outward looking motives in a world where this is predominantly counter-cultural?
- Does this mean that we should continue with the same pattern of parish units (we already combine these into larger groups called benefices with a single incumbent with varying degrees of integration and mutual support)?
- Should we look to create such benefices on a different basis?
- Should we, for example, only agree to appoint a stipendiary priest to parish groups that can demonstrate a minimum level of viability (however that might be defined) even if this means much larger groups? Some dioceses seek to work on this basis but we would still need to face the potential situation of what do we do when such groups fail to meet their commitments? How do we avoid only ministering to the better off?

Another line of thought might be to ask whether stipendiary (ie paid) ministry at the parish level is the best way to meet our aims.

- Should we require all parish groups to be self-sufficient in both lay and ordained ministries all on a voluntary basis, with a smaller group of paid clergy providing a form of oversight?
- Indeed, what are the proper expectations of the tasks and roles which lay and ordained people undertake? Specifically, what is the whole church's view of ordained ministry and what value do we place on lay vocations?

One of the complications is that many parishes are already finding it difficult to fill various roles (such as treasurer and even churchwarden) and are resorting to paid staff to fulfil necessary actions (such as preparing annual accounts and paying the bills).

- Have we reached the point where it has become more realistic to undertake some of these tasks on a collective basis or is having the ability to do them part of the viability criteria? What about places where such skills are rare?

Much of the debate in recent times about budgets has focussed on the liturgical and local presence roles. However, many people especially those who do not consider themselves to be members, when asked, would expect the church to be 'doing' a range of things.

- What would we include in such a list, such as having a care for the disadvantaged?
- We often talk about the church having a mission role but how do we actually do this and at what level is it most effectively resourced? What else would you want the church to be doing?

But on the other hand, in a broadly secular society there are many organisations not affiliated to a church that are specifically aimed at meeting such needs.

- How far should Christian disciples fulfil their commitments inside the church or rather by devoting their efforts and resources externally? What will this do to the image of the church?

One particular budget issue we have is that of the large annual grant we continue to enjoy from the Church Commissioners (£822,489 in 2020). That grant changed in 2017 from simply recognising the relative wealth of dioceses to being conditional on it being used to target the less advantaged within each diocese. Arguably, our budgets since then have not demonstrated that we fulfil that conditionality. It is highly likely that we will be expected to make changes in this regard very soon or risk losing this income, roughly equivalent to 15 clergy.

- What is the best way of achieving this, bearing in mind that from where we are at present this will mean that whilst some places might see a reduction in their MMF Call others will see an above average increase?

Members of synod will be aware that through the generosity of the Church Commissioners we are able to initiate several projects under the heading of Transforming Mission which is about stimulating church growth in new ways.

The projects are spread across the diocese and the overall purpose aims to foster a learning process that will transfer this experience to other places. The funding is however time limited and projects will need to be self-sufficient within six years, with a clear expectation that the need to achieve this is anticipated quite early in the overall timescales. The diocese makes a contribution to the costs of this initiative but in a way that does not directly impinge on MMF allocations.

Perhaps one way of considering these issues is to do what is sometimes called a zero-based budget approach. This means that we start with a blank sheet of paper and only commit to those things that we can afford, with a strong preference for a sustainable approach.

- What would be on your list?

The alternative is to cost the list of commitments and then look for ways in which we can increase our income – at present there is little option, given the scale needed, to look to increased congregational giving.

- What do you think should be the average level of discipleship giving to the church? (Current average unrestricted giving and collections in the diocese is £8.63* per person per week).

We respond to God's generous love - the gift of his Son, the world around us and the people we encounter - through our own discipleship. We give of what we have (time, money, skills) especially to and through the church. The way in which we do that is a sign of our commitment.

At the next Diocesan synod, you will be asked, in groups, to consider the various options and will be invited to bring forward suggestions that command the support of your group as a whole and which will make a significant contribution to bridging the deficit, either through reducing costs or increasing income – or both. In reality this means looking at changes that are at least of the order of £75,000.

RECAP OF QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP SESSIONS TO CONSIDER

- Given that levels of giving are only ever a *symptom* of spiritual health (or otherwise) what are the root *causes* we need to be addressing? What actions can we take, to change this?
- Do we accept a budget with an Operating Deficit this next year and if we do, on what conditions on a longer term plan might that acceptance be conditional?
- Despite our best efforts in 2014 with the achievement of a 21% increase in collection call on the MMF, why are we at the same financial point now as we were almost five years ago?
- Is stipendiary (ie paid) ministry at the parish level the best way to meet our aims?
- Should we require all parish groups to be self-sufficient in both lay and ordained ministries all on a voluntary basis?
- What alternative models of ministry might we consider?
The Church of England is especially committed to a ministry in every place and for every person; we are not a membership organisation.

GET IN CONTACT

T 01872 274351
E info@truro.anglican.org
www.trurodiocese.org.uk

Church House,
Woodlands Court,
Truro Business Park,
Threemilestone, Truro,
TR4 9NH



DIOCESE OF TRURO
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH