Dear churchwardens

I look forward to this time of year when Archdeacon Nikki and myself get the opportunity to sit down with all our churchwardens and hear about life in your parishes...

The Visitation day is very much a team effort alongside the Rural Dean and Lay Chair and there is a constant flow of people in and out. There is a real buzz and, although serious issues are often raised, as they should be, my overwhelming experience is one of gratitude and amazement. Gratitude for what God is doing in so many different churches in so many different settings in so many different ways; and amazement at how much we simply take this for granted and how little we celebrate it. Despite the very real challenges (finance, buildings, numbers...), the Church of England continues to be a Christian presence in every community, and you are an essential part of that.

We hope you will find this newsletter interesting and useful as a reminder of some practical ways that we are trying to support you as churchwardens. Many of you are already getting used to the Online Faculty system which is simpler than what went before and the Parish Giving Scheme should help to build up our giving and cut down administration. Thanks to the support of the Church Commissioners, we are developing two resourcing churches to be of practical support to all sorts of churches in different ways and Mission Enablers continue to work across parishes, groups and teams, empowering our engagement with children and young people. You will also meet the new Diocesan Secretary and find some ideas for working together with your local school.

All these are different dimensions of one and the same Church. All of us together, whether churchwarden or diocesan secretary, church school head or parish treasurer, mission enabler or school governor, archdeacon or parishioner, are called and blessed by God to be part of what He is doing in the world today. So let us learn to bless each other more and more as we become those ‘Kingdom People’ we would like to be, reflecting God’s love, compassion, justice and freedom.

Robert Jones
Archdeacon of Worcester

Meet John Preston, New Diocesan Secretary

Last November, Dr John Preston became our new Diocesan Secretary. In this role, John acts as the CEO of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd (WDBF) and works closely with the Bishop and the Chair of the WDBF to lead the mission and ministry of the Diocese as well as ensure its financial stability. John was previously National Stewardship Officer for the Church of England.

John said: “Although the two roles are obviously very different, it’s been interesting that my first few months shows a good fit between my old job and the wider stewardship challenges of being Kingdom People in healthy, vibrant parishes.”

“We’ve recently been reflecting on the stewardship of creation as Diocesan Synod encouraged churches to consider becoming Eco-Churches. PCCs are also called to be wise stewards through our trusteeship, they must make good decisions regarding money but also as stewards of mission - God’s amazing choice to reach out through his Church as we serve our communities. And of course good stewardship also includes the money that is given and used for mission and ministry. I’ve been really pleased that we’ve been able to save over £50,000 in the diocesan office through a few simple changes such as looking at our insurance renewals, switching our energy supplier (with 100% of our electricity still coming from UK renewables) and changing our paper supplier. For the last two of these, we’ve used Parish Buying and I would encourage PCCs to have a look to see if the scheme can help them.”

John was brought up in the Church and is a lay Reader in his local church on the edge of Telford, also serving on the PCC. When he can, John enjoys travel, particularly seeing the church in different places in the world, and good food!
Working with your local school

There are 100 Church of England schools in the Diocese of Worcester, educating approximately 22,500 children and young people in Dudley and Worcestershire. Across England, over 1 million children attend Church of England Schools. It’s estimated that Anglican clergy dedicate around a million hours every year to working with children in schools, running assemblies and providing holiday and after-school activities.

St James’ CE Primary in Wollaston really values the relationship with its church. Each term, staff at St James’ lead a Collective Worship Forum in partnership with local churches, to which schools across the Diocese are invited. Sally Sixsmith, Headteacher at St James’s, said: “These events offer children and staff ways to engage in worship such as creative prayer, song, art and physical activities. They have gone from strength to strength with over ten local churches, of various denominations, now leading activities for us at each forum.” Over two thousand children have attended these forums over the last few years, including those from non-church schools. “As a school, we would not have been able to successfully facilitate and develop this without the full support of the church in our community,” Sally continued.

Pupils from St James’ School also actively lead a Sunday service in church once a term, in addition to sharing a termly Eucharist in school with members of the church’s congregation. Confirmation preparation sessions for children in Year 6 are run as a partnership between the church and school. The relationship between St James’s and the church flourishes further by the presence of a school representative as an active and valued member of the PCC.

Great Witley CE Primary also has good links with its local churches. Recently, the children produced a series of storyboards visually representing the different parts of the bible and these were ‘taken on tour’ and displayed in each of the local churches. Not only were the church congregation able to access and reflect on the artwork, but it was also seen by visitors to the church and local villagers.

Vikki Day, Stourport Deanery Mission Developer, regularly visits Great Witley Primary. She said: “I believe the relationship between church and school is one of mutual blessing; of sharing, learning and growing together. It can, at times, be too easy to see the body of Christ in terms of the school, but it was also seen by visitors to the church and local villagers.

St James’s and the church flourishes further by the presence of a school representative as an active and valued member of the PCC.

Parish Giving Scheme

In February, the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) was launched in the Diocese, making us the 27th diocese in the Church of England to adopt the scheme.

PGS enables individuals to give to their parish church regularly by direct debit with an option to increase their donation annually in line with inflation. The scheme aims to encourage generosity, efficiency and regularly in giving; helping the Kingdom of God to grow through the flourishing of properly resourced local churches, giving donors confidence that their money is being used well and helping PCCs to budget effectively.

Stewardship Officer, Alison Maddocks, said: “Static giving is one of the greatest threats to parish income and this scheme aims to change that. Joining the scheme also makes it simple for churches to collect gift aid on donations. I would encourage every PCC to give consideration to introducing it in their parish when they’re next able to run a stewardship campaign.”

Bishop John has endorsed the scheme saying: “Introducing the Parish Giving Scheme in the Diocese of Worcester gives us a great opportunity to consider not only how we give financially but also why and how much we give. The experience of others makes clear that, with the right encouragement, this is a great chance to review what it means to live as financially generous disciples, which has the potential to transform our efforts to become Kingdom People and play our full part in God’s mission by putting the church on a more financially stable footing. I wholeheartedly commend the Parish Giving Scheme to every parish and to every individual.”

Diocesan Secretary John Preston said: “Over 33,000 givers are already using the PGS to give to their church, because it makes life easier for them and for their parish. It improves cash flow and combats the issue of static giving. It’s a sure-fire winner and will be a real benefit to our parishes too.”

If you would like to find out more about the Parish Giving Scheme and investigate whether it is right for your church, please contact Alison Maddocks, Diocesan Stewardship Officer on alison.maddocks@cofe-worcester.org.uk or 07930 853433.
Parish Pixels – show us what makes your church special

This year, our church competition celebrates churches across the UK through photography. However, it is far from just a photography competition!

We'll be asking every church to send us a single photo showing what makes their church special, whether taken by a professional or a member of the congregation on a smartphone.

We know that every church, its congregation, and community is unique. From the volunteer who holds everything together, to the children's groups who brighten up the Sunday services. From the beautiful flower gardens, to the exceptional architecture of your church building. No two churches are the same, and we want to celebrate what makes your church special.

How would you show how unique and special your church is in just one photo?

Find out more about the competition and how your church can enter at: www.ecclesiastical.com/parishpixels

Our Church Insurance Consultants offer a locally-based advisory service to churches up and down the country, either face-to-face or over the phone.

Our five consultants are responsible for a particular region of the country, and are available to visit your church and parish to give on-the-spot advice, as well as scheduling seminars and training. This could include help with explaining your insurance policy, to giving risk management presentations, and providing churchwarden training. Each member of the team isn't just an expert in insurance, they also have a deep involvement with the church themselves. Thanks to their background in the church, they appreciate and understand the concerns that PCCs and congregations have.

Through support and guidance, and by giving our customers the reassurance that they are doing things safely and securely, our consultants can enable churches to focus on what really matters: worship, mission and outreach. With their support, we hope to help make our nation's churches a vibrant, vital and exciting part of the community for the twenty-first century and beyond.

Find out more about your Church Insurance Consultant in your area on our website: www.ecclesiastical.com/cic

Our specialist customer service team

Our dedicated church customer service team have a deep understanding of the specialist needs of those who look after, and protect, churches. Our friendly team are ready to help you with any query, no matter how big or small, and are available by telephone, email or post.

Call: 0345 777 3322
(8am-6pm Monday to Friday except Bank Holidays)
Email: churches@ecclesiastical.com
Post: Church customer services, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester GL1 1JZ
Unique research bolsters our advice for churches on slips and trips

Although churches are generally low-risk environments, slips and trips remain the most common cause of injury. In some cases, these can be severe, so taking sensible and adequate precautions is essential. Sometimes, this is more difficult in church premises, usually because of design constraints or the heritage fabric of the building itself. Here, it is usually necessary to consider a wider range of precautions.

We understand this challenge, and it’s why we have teamed up with leading health and safety researchers at the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) to look at the problem. We have conducted research across a range of historic buildings (including churches) with a view to developing practical advice in the prevention of slips and trips. This is in a way that is both sympathetic with the history of the building and is cost effective.

Our new guidance looks at a range of topics identifying best practice and exploring a range of precautions. You can find out more and read the guidance on our website at: www.ecclesiastical.com/churchslipsandtrips

We’re delighted that this offer is now running until the end of 2019 and many more churches are set to benefit from our donations.

How your church can benefit

For every new home insurance policy taken out where ‘Trust130’ is quoted, we will ask the customer what church they would like a donation of £130 to go to. So, by spreading the word around your church workers, volunteers and congregation, your church could benefit, and as there is no limit to the number of donations one church can receive; the donations could make a big difference to your church.

Has your church already received a donation?

If your church has received a donation, we’d love to hear how your church has used the money. Whether you’ve used it for a large project or event, or just to buy biscuits for coffee mornings, we want to hear about it. You can either tell us by email at: Trust130@ecclesiastical.com or via facebook tagging us @churchmatters and we might share your story too!

Find out more about our home insurance at: www.ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance

Do we have up-to-date contact details for you?

If you need to update us on changes to names, email addresses, phone numbers and changes to PCC members, you can do this by calling our team on: 0345 777 3322

We’ve donated over £285,000 to churches across the UK so far!

For every new home insurance policy taken out with us, we have donated £130 to the church of the policyholder’s choice, and so far these donations add up to over £285,000!
Rewarding the good work of others with our Movement for Good Awards

At Ecclesiastical, we’ve always believed in supporting the causes that can make a positive difference to people’s lives. That’s why we work closely with the communities we serve to tackle the issues that are important to them.

On Tuesday 23rd April, we launched our Movement for Good Awards – a programme designed to give £1 million to charities. Our Movement for Good Awards are a way of recognising and supporting the efforts of these dedicated men and women – people who devote their energies to changing people’s lives for the better.

500 charities will receive a £1,000 donation

Anyone can get involved by simply nominating an eligible charity*. You can nominate between Tuesday 23 April and Friday 17 May.

10 charities will be awarded a £50,000 grant

Eligible charities* can apply for a grant via a simple online application. Applications open on Monday 23 June and close Friday 26 July.

So, if your church is a registered charity, you have a charity associated with your church, or there’s a charity anyone in your congregation is associated with, you can get involved.

You can find out more on our website at: www.ecclesiastical.com/movementforgood

*Please note, anyone can nominate but you must be an eligible charity to win an award. Go to the website address above to view the full Terms and Conditions.

Taking a sabbatical in 2020?

Ecclesiastical’s Ministry Bursary Awards provides financial support for members of the clergy taking extended study leave, and we are now accepting applications for sabbaticals taking place in 2020. You can find out more about the awards, check the eligibility criteria and apply on our website: www.ecclesiastical.com/mba

Risk Management Advice Line

We know that managing the risks of a church or church hall can be a demanding responsibility.

That’s why we’ve introduced the Risk Management Advice Line. Whenever you need information about managing risk and can’t find what you are looking for on our website, our experts are here to help.

Call our Risk Management Advice Line: 0345 600 7531

The line is open from 9:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays. Alternatively you can email us at: risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Our Risk Management Advice Line offers Ecclesiastical customers free risk advice. Please have your policy number to hand when you call.

Our new-look website

Have you seen our newly refreshed website? We’ve changed our site to make it easier to use, but you will still find all our useful guides, information and videos available on the site.

The website has a clean and fresh style, which makes it easier for you to find the information you need. If you have any trouble finding information on our new site you can always call our team who will be happy to direct you to the right place.

Call us on: 0345 777 3322

www.ecclesiastical.com/church

We would like to hear what you think of our new website. You can email comments and feedback to: churches@ecclesiastical.com
Allchurches announces record giving and changes to grant programmes

In 2019, Allchurches Trust, owners of Ecclesiastical, is making changes to its giving that will place even more of an emphasis on helping organisations in less-affluent areas.

The changes have come about following a Strategic Grants Review, which set out to ensure that the Trust continues to meet the needs of its beneficiaries and make the greatest possible impact with the funds available. The aim is to improve effectiveness, transparency and reporting, including for annual grants to dioceses and cathedrals.

These annual grants are now guaranteed until 2022, facilitating longer-term, strategic planning. At the same time, the Trust aims to steadily make a greater amount of funding available to churches, charities, dioceses and cathedrals that apply for grants to fund projects in their communities.

As well as giving a higher percentage of the total project cost, Allchurches has doubled the uplift on grants to projects in areas of greatest need.

Annual grants are also now allocated based on population and the degree of deprivation of the area, and dioceses and cathedrals have been asked to provide more information about what they intend to spend their grant on and report back on the impact that the money is having.

Chairman of Allchurches Trust, Sir Philip Mawer, said: “We’ve already heard about some great initiatives being funded by our annual grant, including a youth outreach partnership project called Growing Faith for Generations (GF4G) in the Isle of Man. We’re keen to work with dioceses to share these stories about the good work our funding is helping to enable in their parishes.”

You can find out more about Allchurches Trust at: www.allchurches.co.uk

We’re here for you...

Ecclesiastical supports our church customers with more than just church insurance – read on to find out more about how we can help you.

Expert Financial Advice
Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Services provide independent financial advice. Our experts advise clergy, church people and PCCs on making investments (including ethical investing), pension and retirement planning, mortgages and life assurance.
Call: 0800 107 0190
Email: getadvice@ecclesiastical.com

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Ecclesiastical Insurance Services offer tailored Motor insurance protection to the clergy, with benefits including business use (for anything relating to the church), no direct debit charges, no fees for policy changes, and up to £500 cover for church goods in the car.
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Our dedicated team are ready to support you and with 99% claims satisfaction*, if the worst should happen, you know you are in safe hands.
Call: 0345 603 8381
www.ecclesiastical.com/claims
*Ecclesiastical claims satisfaction survey 2017 - direct customers

Funeral Plans
A funeral plan from Ecclesiastical is an ideal way to make financial provision for your funeral, as well as reducing the worry for your loved ones at a difficult time. Making your funeral wishes known in advance and providing for the cost makes sound financial sense.
Call: 0800 055 6503
www.funeralplans.co.uk

NOW available to PCC members!
Church Commissioners’ funded projects

As a diocese, we have been fortunate to receive funding from the Church Commissioners for two different projects – Calling Young Disciples and Resourcing Churches.

Calling Young Disciples

Calling Young Disciples has been running for over two years and the feedback is increasingly positive. There are six Mission Enablers in place along with Project Director, Ruth Walker. Over the two years, 10 parishes across the Diocese have received support from a Mission Enabler and they have worked with 42 individual congregations, in both urban and rural settings. The team have also been offering training to a wider number of parishes and individuals.

Ruth said: “Each year, the Church Commissioners ask us to collect statistics to demonstrate how Calling Young Disciples is moving forward. It’s been a real encouragement to see the numbers affirming that the model is working and we are moving towards achieving the goals set at the start.”

Churches that have been working with the Mission Enablers have seen a 67% increase in volunteers. They have also seen 360 people attending worship for the first time and 80 of these are recorded as becoming regular worshippers.

Ruth continued: “It is still early days and the changes are fragile – it’s difficult to measure what a ‘regular worshipper’ might be. However, the numbers are important and give evidence of a change in the culture.”

Evidence suggests that a number of the new activities initiated by Mission Enablers have the potential to be replicated elsewhere and adapted for different contexts – for example ‘Toddler Praise’ type events, cell groups for tweens/teens and a programme of one-off events throughout the years linked to seasons or specific calendar dates. Participants have also emphasised the importance of engaging and blessing whole families rather than just focussing on children or young people, as well as being clearly and invitationally Christian.

“We shouldn’t be embarrassed to include prayers or worship songs in our events,” said Ruth. “It’s essential that we model the faith that we hope others will want to take up!”

Alongside the work of the Mission Enablers in parishes, the team has been working with both the diocesan Children’s and Youth Officers and the Education team to run training for all churches in the Diocese. “We’re keen to ensure that as many parishes as possible can benefit from the Calling Young Disciples project,” said Ruth. “We’re also starting to explore what might happen next for the project – what are the areas that are particularly working and how can we develop and build on these in the future. Hopefully over the next few years, we will see more children, young people and families in our churches becoming disciples of Jesus.”

Resourcing Churches

In July last year, a grant of over £5 million was awarded to the Diocese to establish two ‘resourcing churches’. All Saints’ Church in Worcester and St Thomas & St Luke in Dudley (‘Top Church’) each received funding which, along with investment from the Diocese, will enable them to grow and become a resource for other churches locally.

Resourcing churches have a proven track record in helping to reach the 93% of people who are not currently part of any Christian community. They are given additional, focused resources with the explicit aim that these resources are multiplied and shared with others. Whilst they are not the whole answer, they form part of our response to God’s call to be Kingdom People. Each resourcing church is asked to do three things:

- plant new churches
- revitalise existing churches
- support other churches in the area where it is based.

Setting up a resourcing church in Dudley is an opportunity to establish a congregation very different from the other Anglican congregations in the town. Top Church has received support from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help it to bring its building up to the standard of a modern congregation while retaining the historical aspects of this iconic church. The Revd James Treasure has been appointed as Vicar of the resourcing church and he has already attracted a group of around 100 people of all ages who meet on a Sunday afternoon to discuss church planting and share in an informal communion service. The church also holds a more traditional Eucharist service each Sunday morning.

James said: “We’re so grateful to have received funding to enable our vision for Top Church to become a reality. We are planning to grow the congregation to around 250 people over the next five years, so that we can become a real blessing to the local community, help support other Dudley churches and bring more people to faith. We can only do that with the right team and with a building that is fit for purpose – it’s exciting to see our plans developing already!”

The resourcing church at All Saints in Worcester was officially commissioned by Bishop John at a packed Sunday morning service towards the end of 2018. It is a part of the journey of the church which, in 2002, was relaunched to provide an Anglican evangelical ministry missing in the City of Worcester. All Saints has since grown to nearly 400 members. The funding from the Church Commissioners will enable All Saints to develop and expand further, so it can continue to grow leaders to serve in all traditions and enable it to better support other churches.

Rich Johnson, Vicar of All Saints said: “It’s a huge privilege to be asked to become a resourcing church. This is an exciting opportunity to be innovative and to help find ways to do church and be church to the city and wider area so that we can see more people discover faith. Over the next few years, we will be working with the Diocese to plant new churches, work in partnership to revitalise existing churches and share our resources so that the whole Church in Worcester might flourish.”
Using the online faculty system

At the end of last year, the Diocese of Worcester adopted the Church of England’s online system for faculty applications. The web-based portal (https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org) is easily accessible and speeds up the process for parishes to get permission to make changes to their buildings. Here, two parish officers reflect on their experiences:

Jan Vale, PCC Secretary at St Mark’s in the Cherry Orchard in Worcester, said: “Faculty applications are so much easier now that the process can be completed online. Gone is the anguish of repeatedly filling in forms – once the formal details relating to the church and officers are added and saved, they remain in the system. The faculty workshop run by Mark Carter was especially useful and informative, and his explanations took the fear out of getting used to a new concept. Moving from paper to online is not only environmentally friendly, but it also enables the DAC staff to give instant feedback and advice, thus speeding up the process. You can complete applications at your own pace, saving information, returning to edit or continue at any time, plus deadlines are now advertised. Personally, I found it a much less stressful experience than it had been in the past.”

Elaine Whitfield, churchwarden at St Stephen’s, Redditch, said, “As a new churchwarden and having heard rumours about ‘the dreaded faculty’, the thought of making an application was a concern, but I need not have worried as I found the new online faculty system clear, quick and easy to use. It was a simple task which took 10 minutes to complete and the response time was impressive too. The hardest part was deciding whether it was something that didn’t need a faculty or whether it was a List A or List B item; however, clarification was a short phone call to the DAC office away!”

DAC Secretary Mark Carter said: “It is pleasing to hear that parishes are finding the new online faculty system user-friendly and efficient. The use of the system brings us into line with over 30 dioceses across the country and to the secular online planning system. I’d encourage anyone who hasn’t yet registered to use the system to do so and to start sending in online applications for permission under both List B and Faculty. If you get stuck, there are step-by-step guides in the help section or give the buildings team a call and someone can help you.”

You can reach the buildings team on dac@cofe-worcester.org.uk or 01905 732809.

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Whilst Ecclesiastical has used reasonable endeavours to ensure that the information in this newsletter is correct at the time of publication, please note: (a) the information is not intended to constitute a definitive or complete statement of the law on any subject, (b) the information may over the course of time become incorrect or out of date; and (c) neither Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc nor its subsidiaries can accept any responsibility or liability for action taken or losses suffered as a result of reliance placed on the information provided in this newsletter.

When it feels irreplaceable, trust

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