

Save The Parish: What Do We Seek?

WHY this document

Save the Parish is for anyone and everyone who cares about the Church of England, and wants to see a rebalancing of resources towards parishes:

- Our supporters have different views on many other great issues of our time, but we all prioritise the parish
- This document provides more detail for those who find themselves speaking about STP, for example at PCCs or deanery synods
- Our manifesto, upon which many were elected to the General Synod, still stands and this is not to supersede or to contradict it

WHAT we seek

As the Church of England moves forward in the 21st century, and recognising the evidence that the presence of stipendiary clergy is directly related to church attendance and giving, the Save The Parish network seeks a rebalancing of resources of all kinds - clergy, finance, support for church buildings - towards parishes.

This means:

- A renewal of the **close local ties** between parishioners, regardless of their faith, with their parish priest, so as to reinvigorate appealing forms of worship in church, and pastoral care for all
- Benefices covered by one priest should be of a **manageable number of parishes** (as the word 'parish' is commonly understood, generally with one church building and one PCC per parish)
- The core of the parish share should be solely related to the stipend, national insurance, housing and a fair pension contribution. Other costs should not amount to more 15% of this figure. Wealthier parishes are encouraged to continue to donate more than this to help parishes in deprived areas, who are less able to meet this core figure. **Parishes with difficulty in meeting the parish share should be helped**, not threatened
- The parish, as the fundamental local unit of the Church of England, seeking only the lightest touch support from **greatly slimmed down diocesan offices**. An end to top down diocesan management, repeated un-fulfilled initiatives and paperwork that bears down on PCCs. The bishop only needing modest support for the purpose of sharing the cure of souls with priests
- Clergy dispossessions not being undertaken for financial reasons

HOW this can be achieved

To achieve this, the Save The Parish network wants to see:

- A **stop to parish mergers** into ever larger mega-structures
- Further numerical **increases in ordinand training and deployment of curates to struggling parishes**
- **Prioritising parish postings for ordained ministers** over administrative roles
- A greater financial contribution from the Church Commissioners that directly relieves parishes of some of their funding obligations or in direct support to parishes
- Proper **integration of the Strategic Development Fund into the parochial system**, taking into account local churchmanship
- **PCCs able to retain their own endowment funds** from legacies, sale of their own property & all forms of giving
- **Dioceses matching best practice in the charity sector** by not spending more than 15% of revenue on support, administration and advisory costs. Greater use of available technology solutions to administrative tasks.
- The simplification (GS2222) and organisational streamlining initiatives of the Church of England giving much **greater weight to the parish as the fundamental local element of the Church**. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, not in a diocesan office, or a National Church Institution.
- The presentation of a **clear business case for every initiative to ensure the benefits justify the costs**. Post programme validation of benefits realisation, to ensure Church expenditure always yields value for money.

FOCUS our priorities

Between now and the July General Synod our priorities are therefore:

- **Support for parishes under threat of merger or closure**
- Maintain a vigorous all-media campaign
- To have **occasional office fees retained by the parish**
- **Challenge the scale and cost of diocesan staff** at every opportunity
- Re-imagining GS2222 to **support our vision for the parish**
- Help prepare STP General Synod members for the July Synod residential meeting

