



26 April 2022

Dear Bishop Philip and Bishop Hugh,

We the undersigned have set up a Cornish branch of Save The Parish (STP).

As you are aware, STP has been set up to push back against the increasing centralization of the Church of England while administrative costs burgeon and there is a general movement away from the C of E's traditional roots in this country i.e. the parish. This is of particular importance to us in Cornwall as, of course, this is a largely rural county.

We are particularly concerned, too, in Cornwall for other reasons.

1. That very large sums of money – 60 per cent coming from the Church Commissioners' Strategic Development Fund - are being spent on Transforming Mission in five areas of the county. The Diocese is supporting this programme by providing the remaining 40 per cent of funds needed for the TM programme - from reserves, as naturally MMF does not cover this.

This continues despite the fact that there are clear indications that TM simply is not working. In Camborne, for example, the Cluster has no apparent success in generating either new worshippers or the avalanche of new funds that were due to come in with them. Yet at the same time tens of thousands of pounds are being spent on cosmetics e.g. floodlights at the church, while homeless people are living in a nearby carpark in shipping containers.

Despite a similar large financial investment, TM Falmouth has shown a lack of enduring success as also seems to be the case with the other Cornish TM initiatives.

We suggest **STRONGLY** that it is time for an open, transparent and honest audit of

Transforming Mission to assess whether these precious funds from the Church Commissioners are being well-spent. The Diocese is haemorrhaging funds to support programmes that appear fundamentally flawed.

The annual results of each TM will have been audited and compared with budget. We call on you to publish this information which surely should be in the public domain and openly available.

The future of our congregations, the use of our churches with formally trained priests practicing in them - indeed our entire way of church life - is at stake.

2. While these large sums of money are being spent on Transforming Mission, you Bishop Philip, are leading the On The Way (OTW) programme across the county. This has already resulted in brutal cuts to clergy with yet more strongly mooted. Rural Dean Caspar Bush recently raised the idea of at least one and a half stipendiary posts being axed for financial reasons under the Carnmarth North OTW review at its recent deanery synod. In East Wivelshire, a plan voted through resulted in 50 per cent of stipendiary posts being axed.

We were all told initially that this was a 'bottom up' exercise. The opposite has proved to be the case. Alternative plans from parishioners – and Deaneries – have been roundly squashed. You, Bishop Hugh, have actually said on more than one occasion that if a Deanery rejected a 'preferred' plan, you would approve it anyway.

To say that On The Way is unpopular is an understatement. We call for a moratorium on this programme while we assess the following issues relating directly to it:

A. Could the Church Commissioners' large funding currently dedicated to Transforming Mission be better spent? One of the stipends mentioned above for the axe is ironically in Camborne, currently the beneficiary of £1m of TM funding. We believe that resources dedicated to increasing the number of clergy, both stipendiary and non-stipendiary would be an effective alternative strategy.

B. We also understand that the Lower Income Community Fund, aimed at relieving pressures in our most deprived parishes, also through the Church Commissioners, will now be used to pay for existing stipends.

If this 'change of purpose' is possible, why could TM not also be reassessed in the light of its evident failure to hit its targets?

These two questions are urgent. On The Way has resulted in the alienation of many older, long-standing members of congregations – some of whom have stopped their regular

contributions because they are disillusioned with the roll out of Transforming Mission and – in On The Way - church leaders' apparent deafness to their concerns.

It is worth noting that the latest Diocesan accounts show parish giving of about £3m is nearly half of Truro Diocese annual income of £7m in 2020.

So continued support from those congregations matters. Those same accounts reveal that what could be called “head office” costs came to £2.7m

The situation is grave.

We would very much appreciate the chance to meet and talk to you to share our concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards

Peter Bellenes

Clive Dixon

Peter Hall

Vivian Hall

Andrew Lane

Susan Roberts

Neil Wallis

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