



# Our front line needs funding

Parishes are the front line of the Church of England. They faithfully serve our communities up and down the country.

The Church of England's own studies clearly show that healthy, well-funded parishes are the best way to grow as a Church, yet the Church hierarchy is significantly under-investing in them.

At the same time, dioceses exact heavy tolls on parishes via the parish share- a tax on parishes in all but name. Parishes were promised in return that dioceses would pay for clergy and house them. If dioceses are not honouring their end of the deal, why should parishes honour theirs?

If the CofE's own research shows that more parish clergy is good for the growth of the Church then dioceses should be supporting the parishes to achieve this growth. The dioceses are funded by the parishes not the other way around.



Our research and thorough examination of dioceses' latest annual returns shows that clergy stipends make up only slightly more than one third of expenditure – with this figure sometimes even including national insurance and pension costs.

There is no distinction within these returns on how much is spent on parish clergy as opposed to central diocesan clergy. **As a result, the percentage of diocesan spending on frontline priests is likely to be even lower than one third.**

This letter by a Parish Treasurer, published in the Times on 7th September, shows the shocking impact of the current situation:

Sir, Our rector has recently been required to take on a second benefice; he is now responsible for 14 parishes. Rather than reduce our parish share, the diocese has billed both benefices in full for the incumbent's stipend, national insurance, pension, housing and training costs. The rector now costs us more than £1,000 for every service he takes in our church.

**Andrew Purdy**

Treasurer, Upper Wensum Benefice; Great Ryburgh, Norfolk

# Case Study: Leicester Minster Scheme

Following their deficit of £2.465 million in 2020 (the Covid Year), the Diocese of Leicester's plan for Minster Communities is:

- About 20 Minsters; 234 Parishes:  
about 12 Parishes per Minster
- Number of vicars reduced from 100 to 80
- 20 new Operations Directors
- 4-5 staff per Minster, all located in a central office
  - One of these will be an operations director and not all the others will be ordained
  - So, in all, there will only be 2-4 priests per Minster who will be responsible for pastoral, spiritual & community care (for 12 existing parishes)
- Parishes, with a local vicar vital to the local community, will be destroyed
- Parishes will have to 'dial a vicar' to take services



20 New  
Operations  
Directors



Vicars reduced  
from 100 to 80



'Dial a vicar'  
to take services



Parishes  
destroyed!

## The vanishing £84 million

Dioceses income from  
parishes plus glebe  
endowments -  
£447 million

Dioceses paying out on  
pensions and stipends -  
£363 million

So £84 million is  
'disappearing' into  
dioceses.

They CAN afford  
more clergy



[savetheparish.com](http://savetheparish.com)

At Save the Parish, we have done something simple and revealing – added together the accounts of the 42 dioceses, the Archbishops' Council, and the Church Commissioners, for 2020.

In 2020, Parishes sent £318m to Dioceses in the form of Parish Share. The Dioceses also received £129m “Glebe” income, money from the endowments and land confiscated from parishes in 1976, reserved for spending on stipends.

Out of this £447m, only £309m is returned for Parish Ministry (which rises to £363m when pension payments are added). This means £84m is ‘disappearing’ into diocesan bureaucracy and invisible projects.

Alongside this funding, the Church of England has vast assets managed by the Church Commissioners - £10.1 billion in 2021. They give millions to the Church of England each year.

Some, like the Lower Income Communities Funding is well spent, provided it actually is used to support mission in deprived parishes. Some, like the £176m earmarked for Strategic Development Funding, has been shown in a report by the former head of the OBR to have been a total failure, bringing in only 13,000 of the 89,000 people promised.

Dioceses are making huge, irreversible, changes for deficits of less than £1 million. All diocesan deficits put together only come to £23m. Slimming down the bureaucracy and redirecting a fraction of the Church Commissioners' money would easily save the parish system and give life back to Church of England communities across the country.