

The Bishop of Peterborough writes

Money and growth

Last spring I wrote to thank our parishes for a rise in the payment of parish share in 2011. This month I return to that theme and say a big *Thank You* for a further increase in 2012.

It is not just the cash amount paid by parishes to the diocese that is going up, but also the collection rate - now over 93% of what we requested. In 2010 it was less than 90%. These are small percentage rises, but represent large cash amounts; and a second year of increase is very welcome after a number of years of steady decline. When we bear in mind the economic climate, and a number of church members who have seen their incomes frozen or declining, it is a huge encouragement that we are seeing increased financial support for the diocese. Thank you.

Please don't get me wrong: Christian life is not all about money. But the diocese bears the full cost of parish clergy (training, stipends, employers' national insurance, pensions and housing), and receives no external funding for that. We pay our vicars around £24,000 but the real cost to us is about double that figure. And what we receive in parish share, even with the increase in collection rate, still does not quite meet the costs of our parish clergy. So the collection rate needs to rise further, and I encourage all our Christian people to think realistically and give generously

if they value having parish clergy.

Parish share is not just about paying diocesan bills. I am committed to

reversing our long-term decline in numbers of regular

worshippers, to seeing real numerical growth across the diocese. This is not about numbers for their own sake (although introducing more people to a living relationship with Jesus Christ is a very worthy goal). It is also so that we can be strong as churches to make a difference in our communities: to be salt and light and bring kingdom values to society. And if we want to grow the churches we need to grow the numbers of clergy, in particular full-time clergy.

We have more stipendiary clergy in post than this time last year, and we are planning to continue that increase (again following years of reducing clergy numbers.) But clergy cost money. I hope more people and more parishes can catch the vision of Peterborough as a growing diocese, and can support that with their prayers, their enthusiasm, and their money – for the sake of Christ, his gospel, and our towns and villages.

With best wishes

+ Donald



Diocese of Peterborough - Magazine Resource - March 2013

Produced by the Diocesan Office, The Palace, Peterborough PE1 1YB

Tel: 01733 887000 www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk