

Dear Treasurers,

We continue to pray that you are keeping well at this time. We know how difficult and uncertain the last few months have been for parishes across the Diocese and how hard you have all been working throughout this time. We also know that the coming year is likely to be as uncertain and we want to support you as much as possible. Across the Diocese, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on church and central finances, with significant losses to income.

As church buildings can now re-open, for private prayer and public worship, we have prepared the following guidance to encourage safe giving. We hope this guidance is useful for churches that are re-opening, but also for those continuing to worship virtually. This advice is produced in line with the Government's and Church of England's guidance.

Writing about finances.

Even as lockdown continues to ease, it is important to communicate to every church member the impact COVID-19 has had on church finances. Whilst buildings have been closed, church has been open and active, supporting our communities, and there have still been regular costs to cover. Meanwhile, income from regular giving in church, and from special events, trading income and fundraising, have all significantly dropped whilst people were unable to meet in person.

At the start of the crisis, we provided a template letter for parishes, to allow them to talk sensitively to their congregations about their commitment to giving in the current context. This letter is still available on the Diocesan website (<https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/template-finance-letter-vicars-send-church-members-during-coronavirus/>) and can be edited to fit your parishes' context. We would encourage all parishes, in conjunction with their clergy, to send letters to their congregations, if you have not already done so.

Catch up giving and GASDS.

The Government recommends, in their guidance for places of worship (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>), that cash giving should not be encouraged and other methods should be used wherever possible. However, some givers may want to give "catch up" donations, such as regular envelope gifts they have kept throughout lockdown.

If so, you will need to ensure that cash or envelopes are handled in a COVID-19 safe manner. When collecting gifts, only one receptacle should be used. This should be placed in one space for people to put gifts in and should not be passed around. The receptacle and gifts should then be stored securely for 72 hours before counting. For two people to count safely, the following guidance should be followed. Hand sanitiser/hand washing facilities should be provided, gloves and face coverings should be worn during the count and 2 metres social distancing should be adhered to.

The government has given new guidance on donations and GASDS. Where catch up donations are given - such as £200 in a single envelope for 10 weeks' worth of £20 gifts - GASDS can be claimed on the smaller donations, even though the sum is above the normal £30 cap. For more information, see the Diocesan website (<https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/claiming-gasds-saved-donations/>).

Online giving.

In June, the Diocese launched an online giving platform. So far, 74 churches have signed up across the Diocese and over £1,800 has been donated! It's very easy for churches to benefit from online giving - just email stewardship@carlisle-diocese.org.uk to sign up. We will then create the pages for your church, and enable your church to collect donations and Gift Aid in a simple, completely secure way.

Each church will have two pages; one for one-off giving and one for regular giving. Givers can cover the transaction fees, can provide Gift Aid declarations and, for regular giving, can increase their gifts in line with inflation. More information can be found in the FAQs document on the Diocesan website (<https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/claiming-gasds-saved-donations/>). We have also produced guidance on how to share and promote your online giving pages here (<https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/encouraging-online-giving-doc/>).

Contactless giving.

Contactless giving options are accessible and safe with donations going directly to the church bank account. There are a variety of different units available; when deciding which is most appropriate, make sure you think about who is most likely to use it, security needs and Wi-Fi/mobile phone signal availability. Parish Buying has a list of recommended contactless giving suppliers (<https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/giving-and-payments/solutions>). It is also important to remember hand sanitisers and cleaning wipes will be required for units that include a touch screen; Parish Buying has worked with three suppliers to provide the relevant cleaning/hygiene supplies for churches (<https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/index.php/categories/covid-19-supplies>), which is useful whether you provide contactless giving options or not.

Thanking givers.

Whilst the past few months have been very difficult, we have heard some really encouraging stories of congregations giving generously to support churches through this period. Whilst church buildings have been closed, churches have not - worshipping online and supporting their local communities. A really important part of a church's relationship with givers is thanking them. If you have written to your congregation to ask for gifts or have received catch up donations, we would recommend you write to your givers to thank them.

Templates can be found on the Diocesan website (<https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/documents/thankyou-letters/>).

If you would like any more information on the giving options discussed or any Stewardship support, please contact Anna Newlove, Stewardship Enabler (Maternity Cover), on stewardship@carlisle-diocese.org.uk. Finance enquiries can be made to finance@carlisle-diocese.org.uk.

We are always thankful for the faithful service and hard work of our treasurers, particularly over the last few months. Please be assured of our continued prayers for you at this time.

With best wishes,

Ric Jaques
Head of Finance

Anna Newlove
Stewardship Enabler (Maternity Cover)