

**A reply from Mr Neil Williams, Director of Finance, to the question submitted by Mr Tim Hamilton, Christianity Deanery and General Synod**

***Q: The Diocesan Finance Team sent out an email (13th July 2022) encouraging parishes to consider establishing a 'Friends Group' for supporting the maintenance of a Church's fabric. Would any funds raised by a Friends Group be ring-fenced from the diocese in the event of parish merger, formation of a new JC or church closure - provided the Friends Group's arrangements are totally separate from the (former) PCC?***

**A:** Any funds raised by a 'Friends Group' whether as a sub-committee of the PCC or by an independent group are 'restricted' for the fabric of the relevant church building. This would not change were a parish to become part of a Joint Council (or move parishes as the result of a pastoral scheme) – the restriction for that building remains. Were a church to close, then it would depend on what happens to the church building. If sold privately, then the funds could be re-directed to other churches within the parish that the building would then be located in (following any relevant pastoral scheme). Were the church to be handed over to the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), then the restricted funds would follow and would be used to maintain the building (thereby honouring the restriction). Were the building to subsequently be sold by the DBF, then any remaining funds would transfer into the Diocesan Pastoral Account to support other closed church buildings. Such funds cannot be used to support the general activities of the DBF.

**A reply from Mr Stephen Hancock, the Diocesan Secretary, to the question submitted by Mr Tim Hamilton, Christianity Deanery and General Synod**

***Q: Has the Diocese recommended the National Burial Grounds Survey to the Devon Records Office as well as to all the parishes as suggested by the Archbishops Council? If so, what does this mean for those parishes who do not wish to engage with the NBGS but have records in the care of the Record Office?***

**A:** The Diocese has not recommended the National Burial Grounds Survey to the Devon Records Office. The contract is solely between the Archbishops Council and Atlantic Geomatics and does not bind anyone else. There is no compulsion at any level, including the Record Office. Parishes can agree or decline to take part in part or all of the project. They are not compelled to do anything and if a parish refuses permission for its records in the Records Office to be copied, they won't be.

**A reply from Right Revd. Jackie Searle, Bishop of Crediton and Chair of the Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Advisory Panel, to the question submitted by Mr Luke Appleton, Torbay Deanery and General Synod**

***Q: Many clergy regularly face traumatic experiences as a part of day-to-day ministry. From being threatened with knives to dealing with members of the public having psychotic breakdowns these are serious incidents. In other professions roles that face these kinds of situations are given regular supervision sessions that sit outside of the hierarchy. While there are support services that clergy could reach out to, many people simply won't hence why supervision in other roles is mandatory. Is there any consideration being given to providing something like this to clergy within the diocese?***

**A:** Thankfully, the situations of physical threat described are relatively rare in this diocese, but when they occur, they can be very traumatising. We know other aspects of ministry can also be extremely traumatic, such as some of the events during the worst of the pandemic.

MDR gives a regular opportunity to review and now contains a question about wellbeing. We are not currently considering mandatory supervision but we do strongly encourage clergy to use the wide ranging support that is on offer. Clergy and their spouses/partners have access to the Diocesan Counselling service, to which they can self-refer at any time and receive 6-12 sessions with an experienced counsellor free of charge. Senior clergy can be contacted for pastoral care and advice in difficult situations, as can the Diocesan Wellbeing champion and any of the wellbeing panel. See the full range of pastoral support here <https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Pastoral-Support-Provided-by-the-Diocese-of-Exeter-for-Website.pdf> In some challenging circumstances we are providing therapeutic supervision, with our lead therapist, for the clergy team.

Many clergy find Reflective Practice Groups organised by the diocese very helpful. These are typically groups of 4 or 5 clergy working with a skilled facilitator on a regular basis. We also offer access to an Emergency Assistance Programme helpline to all clergy for a range of situations and emergency help.

All clergy are encouraged to have a spiritual director.

The CMD programme this term includes a session on 'Confidence for Lone Workers' It is being run by someone who has trained police officers. It will advise clergy about avoiding situations where they put themselves in danger, diffusing tensions and managing a situation where they are faced with aggression. There are still places available.

**Supplementary question from Mr Luke Appleton, Torbay Deanery and General Synod**

Are there any plans for a diocesan wide clergy welfare survey?

### **Response from the Rt Revd Jackie Searle, Bishop of Crediton**

There are no plans for any further survey at the moment. We did a considerable amount of work on this two or three years ago and we are consistently in touch with clergy through the Wellbeing Panel. Some aspects of support do need to be accessed, usually because they need some financial support, particularly through sign posting on the wellbeing pages. There are two particular areas of support, they can be self referred and absolutely no one else knows at all. One is the counselling service where people can self refer and the only feedback that the Wellbeing Panel get is how many people are using the service, which helps us keep track that it's being well used. That is available to clergy and their spouses and partners. We also have a package with Health Assured which gives advice on all sorts of matters so that's again something that we make free to use and to access and all clergy have that. I would also just like to say that we do our best to be a culture in which its ok to say you're not ok. We all recognise the stresses strains and difficulties of life and clergy life in particular. We do our absolute utmost to support and help in such situations.