

Questions from the Revd. Matthew Rowland (Woodleigh) to Mr. Giles Frampton, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance

“What is the policy of the DBF on receipt of restricted funds, when did the trustees last review this and where can this policy be viewed?”

“There is no specific policy on the receipt of restricted funds; the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance (EDBF) follows the Charity Commission guidance. In essence, EDBF will accept restricted donations, as long as it can comply with the restriction applied by the donor and is in line with its charitable aims.”

“What is the DBF's policy towards receiving money from the Ephesian Fund set up by the Church of England Evangelical Council? Would the DBF be willing to receive contributions from mission communities or churches via the Ephesian Fund that is over their clergy costs to support other mission communities or churches that have signed the Church of England Evangelical Councils statement of faith?”

“The first challenge is that we do not have a ‘pay for what you get’ system in our Diocese. All Common Fund contributions received go into a single account and are then used to support ministry costs across the Diocese, based on the deployment plan. For the last 5 years we have included a memo note on every Common Fund request showing the total Common Fund request being made at Mission Community level, compared to the notional cost of the clergy deployed across the Mission Community. It is not possible to allocate clergy costs to individual parishes.

We have an open dialogue with the Ephesian Fund and have been able to accept contributions from two parishes where the total Common Fund contributions are less than the notional cost of clergy. Whilst it adds an extra layer of administration, accepting such contributions is possible in these scenarios.

Conversations are on-going with the Ephesian Fund in respect of those parishes where the total Common Fund request is above the notional cost of clergy. In these circumstances, EDBF is being asked to accept a restricted donation and give a guarantee that the ‘excess’ contribution will only be used to support ministry costs in those places that have signed the Church of England Evangelical Council’s (CEEC) statement of faith. While EDBF is unable to give that guarantee, work is on-going to explore whether the Ephesian Fund will donate on the basis that the aggregate Common Fund contributions across all parishes that have signed the CEEC’s statement of faith is less than their notional cost of clergy.”

Supplementary question from the Revd Matt Rowland (Woodleigh deanery)

Thank you for the answer. I was just wondering if Giles, have you spoken to any other dioceses about how they are managing the contributions from the Ephesians fund?

Response from Mr Giles Frampton, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance

There have been conversations, yes. I can’t give you a summary of the results of that conversation as it’s mixed.

Response from Mr Neil Williams, Director of Finance

I was just going to add very quickly, as a result of what I said in the answer I have this week met online with the Ephesian fund to explore that, and that was one of the questions I was asking with them. I think their trustees are in the Egyptian desert at the moment and are due back soon.

Questions from Mr. Luke Appleton (General Synod) to Mr. Giles Frampton, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance

“What projected increases will be necessary to Common Fund levels in the next five years based on current levels of spending and participation?”

“The increases required in the Common Fund request per participant is one of the key assumptions that will be tested/debated as part of the Budget Strategy conversation at Synod. The budget illustration used an assumption of CPI +1% for 2025, with a question for Synod around the period over which such an increase should continue to be applied.”

“As a General Synod representative, I have had a number of queries about the Commissioners' slavery 'reparations' £100 Million fund. Is there any awareness of any impact this has had on giving within the Diocese?”

“We are not aware of any impact (positive or negative) on giving within the Diocese following the Church Commissioners decision to create an in-perpetuity impact investment endowment fund that promotes human flourishing for historically marginalised and vulnerable groups, in particular communities impacted by historic African chattel enslavement.

It should be noted that this funding commitment will be sourced in its entirety from the Endowment Fund managed by the Church Commissioners. None of the money given to a parish church will be used for this fund. None of the money will come from parish income. And of course, every gift made to a Parish, whether directly or through the Parish Giving Scheme, will go to the intended beneficiary, now and always.

Further details can be found on the attached 'myth busters' briefing document from the Church Commissioners.”

Question from Mr. Martin Smith (Tiverton and Cullompton) to Mr. Giles Frampton, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance

“It has been reported that there is in our Diocese, an approximately 50:50 split between those opposed to blessings of same sex partnerships and those in favour. It is likely that 30 to 40 of the biggest churches in the Diocese, led by conservative evangelical leaders opposed to blessing same-sex relationships, will either withdraw their financial support for the Diocese in part or in total. This would result in a reduction of Parish share collection to nearer 50% than 96%.

What would be the impact of this entirely predictable outcome on the 2025 budget strategy?”

“We are all aware that this debate is on-going and that at national level much energy is going into finding a settlement which everyone can sign up to, so the question appears to be premature. Clearly Diocesan Synod will need to consider how any such settlement, once agreed, may (or may not) affect the way the Common Fund system works here in our Diocese. We will therefore not be considering any changes to our current system until it is clear what has been agreed.

Each 1% reduction in Common Fund receipts represents a loss of c.£90k of income. Were there to be a reduction in Common Fund receipts to the extent the question envisages, the budget and the forecasts would be brought back first to BDC and then to Diocesan Synod for revision.”

Question from the Revd. Ruth Frampton to the Revd. Preb. Ian Bussell, Director of Mission & Ministry

“What provision is the diocese making to recognise and affirm the current ministry of local lay leaders in our parishes?”

“Lay people minister alongside ordained brothers and sisters in a wide variety of ministries and many different kinds of leadership. The review of training and development in the diocese has focussed so far on licensed lay and ordained ministers. However, discussions about the kind of licensed ministers and the kind of licensed ministries we need leads us naturally to consider how we might support and resource all the varied and vibrant local ministry.

Local lay leaders in this question are those under the authority of the incumbent, some with formal training but most bringing life experience to their leadership of different aspects of church mission and ministry.

Resourcing:

- *GROW courses in a wide variety of areas are aimed at local lay leaders, but often attended by licensed ministers as well.*
- *As an extension of centrally run Grow courses we (the Department of Mission and Ministry) want to be able to offer these in a form where they can be delivered locally.*
- *There is training for specific roles, such as Treasurers and Church Wardens, which is valued and welcomed, and we will see if there is more we can do to support specific roles.*
- *‘Learning communities’ is the buzz word for getting together people in similar roles to learn from each other and support each other, and we will ask where these might be helpful, and in what form - from a simple ad hoc whatsapp group to a regular in-person reflection group.*
- *And the introduction of ‘Commissioned’ roles is partly for local lay ministers who would like to do some more learning but not able to commit to a full licensed lay ministry course.*

Affirming:

- *Local lay ministry is often affirmed when the person is authorised or set aside for a certain ministry within the church. If those authorising, usually the incumbent, would like ideas for a form of words or a service to build around this please contact the Department of Mission and Ministry.*
- *Local lay ministry is often affirmed in a particular service for example teachers are sometimes both affirmed and sent out in a ‘back to school’ service.*
- *It is difficult to consider how a diocesan wide or centrally organised initiative might helpfully recognise and affirm local lay ministry as it is by its nature local, and its energy and relevance comes as it emerges from particular contexts. However, if a Deanery or Archdeaconry would like to celebrate and affirm its local lay ministry, colleagues from the Department of Mission and Ministry would be glad to work with the Rural Dean and local licensed ministers to create something that met a particular need.”*