

Why Do We Pay the Quota?

Edwin Godfrey, Chairman, Finance Committee

When Colin Bird draws up the annual budget for All Saints, the largest item of expenditure is always the Diocesan Contribution, also known as the "parish share", or simply the "quota". In 2008, the sum due to the Diocese of St. Albans is £52,100 out of a total budget of £89,250, a large sum by any standards, especially as we have only around 200 people on the electoral roll.

Many people wonder why we have to carry this burden, in addition to having to maintain the largest church building in the county except for St. Albans Abbey. While people may be prepared to give generously for things which show a tangible benefit to All Saints, they are often less willing to contribute to funds which they see as going out of the parish.

They ask (or imply) questions such as: "What has the diocese ever done for us?", or even "Why can't we be like the Free Churches and not have this administrative burden?" This article is an attempt to explain why we need to make these payments.

Where does the money go?

The short answer is that it goes to ensuring that the ministry of the Church is maintained throughout the diocese. Mainly, this means making sure that we are served by a sufficient number of clergy, and since we are an Episcopal church this is done on a diocese-wide basis, rather than each parish fending for itself.

Out of total budgeted expenditure by St. Albans diocese for 2008 of £12,263,000, more than three quarters goes directly to the cost of clergy and their housing, and if other costs related to ministry are included, such as training and the support of special projects through the Board for Christian Development, this rises to more than 86 per cent.

The basic annual costs of parochial ministry in 2008 have been estimated as follows: to

the modest stipend of £21,740, we have to add £1,331 for National Insurance and £8,080 for the cost of providing for a pension, plus £6,215 for the maintenance and running of a parsonage house; the total of £37,366 would rise further to £42,717 if the average training costs per person of the clergy were added in.

What this means is that the overwhelming bulk of what we pay comes straight back to All Saints in the form of paying for the cost of our vicar. The budgeted cost of administration and legal matters comes to less than 7 per cent of the total, although a contribution is also made to the national Church.



How is our contribution decided?

It consists of two elements: one is called the Stipend Contribution, and is set on the basis of the stipend of our vicar, plus the related National Insurance and pension costs, less any relevant investment, glebe and fee income.

The second is called the Ministry Support Contribution, most of which also provides direct support for parish clergy (e.g. housing and training). It is calculated by a formula, in which the average electoral roll over three years is given a weighting of 2, and the usual Sunday attendance is given a

weighting of 3, to produce a Church Membership Figure.

This is then multiplied by a Share Factor between 0.25 and 3.0, which is fixed according to the parish's perceived relative ability to pay, to give a number of shares; in our case, the Share Factor is 1.50 (slightly less than St. Andrews and the Ware churches).

The total ministry support budget of the diocese is then divided by the total number of shares to give a value per share, and this multiplied by the number of our shares gives the Ministry Support Contribution for our parish.

Looking forward into 2009, there is some good news and some bad news.

The good news is that the Diocesan Contribution for All Saints is estimated to rise to around £53,500, an increase of only 2.69 per cent on the current year.

The bad news is that, unless we can find some way of solving the problem, we are heading for a very substantial deficit of around £20,000 in 2009.

There are various reasons for this, one of which is that, as everyone knows, the cost of gas is set to rise dramatically, and although we benefit greatly from the heating fund set up through the generosity of the late Reginald Cull, we are bound to be hit by substantial increases in the cost of heating such a large church building.

A more fundamental reason is that, while some members of our parish are very generous in their contributions, the current level of giving by church members as a whole is not really sufficient to sustain the parish on a long term basis. We clearly need to attract more people, to increase the pool of contributing church members, but this is likely to take time.

In the immediate future, some of the deficit may be met by using other sources of income, but the bulk of the deficit will

inevitably have to be covered by increased giving by the existing congregation.

We naturally regret having to ask people to put their hands in their pockets again at a time of such economic uncertainty, but we will be launching a new stewardship campaign in the autumn, and will be asking everyone to think carefully about what they can manage by way of regular contributions or specific donations.

SING GOSPEL !

Saturday 18th October 10:30-16:30
At the URC Cowbridge, Hertford

Adults £10; under 18's £8

Following the success of the 2006 event at the United Reformed Church, here is a wonderful chance to join in another all singing day. No need to read a single note – all is learnt by rote!

The morning consists of learning all sorts of rhythms with the brilliant Scott Stroman of the Guildhall School of Music then we move into the Gospel songs. After lunch we join a real black Gospel singer – L D Frazier, who will be over from New York.

The concert in the evening, 7:00-9:00 pm, will be a chance for participants to sing to families and friends. It is sure to be another huge success. For more information please email singgospel@gmail.com or phone Harold or Jane Chaplin on 01992 304606.



...er, 'sorry about this - but I think I completely misunderstood you on the telephone when you called to ask for permission to hold a festival in church...