



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

Parish Share

Holding a Deanery Parish Share Discussion

Guidance for Area Deans, Lay Chairs and others in a
coordinating role

Contents

Introduction p3

Key points to consider:

1. A context of prayer, scripture and reflection p4
2. Communication p4
3. Identifying need and encouraging generosity p4
4. A clear timetable p5
5. Dealing with difficulties p7

Introduction

Perhaps the most significant change in this parish share scheme that was first introduced for 2023 is the involvement of deaneries. In the scheme a share request is sent for each deanery. The parishes in each deanery are then encouraged to meet to agree how to fulfil that request between them. To help, a suggested contribution by parish/ benefice or Mission and Ministry Unit (MMU) is also given, which is intended as a starting point in the deanery discussions. Parishes may agree to increase or decrease their contribution in relation to the starting point, but it is necessary that the total share request for the deanery is met so that together we can cover the costs of parish ministry across our diocese.

This approach was most popular in the diocesan parish share consultation and it is hoped that it will enable mutual support between parishes. For example, a number of parishes may opt to collectively contribute £10,000 more to help a neighbouring parish in need that will contribute £10,000 less.

Parishes may also opt out of discussions and simply contribute their parish calculation which is the amount suggested as a starting point for discussions. However, we hope this will only be considered as a last resort and the scheme will certainly work better if parishes work together and support each other in deaneries.

This guidance note provides advice on how to go about holding these discussions in your deanery. In recognition that our deaneries are very different and that you know your context better than anyone, these are not prescriptive guidelines. Instead, they are some thoughts and ideas that may help you to approach this in a way that works best for your deanery and local parishes.

If it is helpful, please also consider talking with your Archdeacon about the best approach for your Deanery. There is also a possibility that others in the diocese may be able to help to facilitate and advise if that is helpful and your Archdeacon will be able to request this help for you.

Key points to consider:

1) A context of scripture, prayer and reflection

Underpinning the parish share scheme is a move away from transactionalism – paying for what you get. It is important that these discussions are set in a context of scripture, prayer and reflection and don't become financial negotiations. To support this, it may be helpful to:

- Start any meetings with prayer, readings and a reflection
- Encourage reflection from participants in discussions. For example, at the start of a meeting you might ask each participant to reflect on:
 - The challenges they face in their own context
 - Their hopes for the future in their context
 - A reflection on what God is calling you towards as a deanery as you hold these discussions
- To help emphasise the ethos of the new scheme and to support your discussions, you may wish to consider asking for an offer of generosity from one or more parishes before any parishes request support.

2) Communication

It is important to ensure that everyone who will be involved in the discussion process is aware of how it will work, the timelines and what you hope it will achieve (set in a context of scripture, prayer and reflection). This might be done by writing to incumbents and churchwardens at the outset or holding an initial short briefing session.

3) Identifying need and encouraging generosity

This is perhaps the most challenging element and how it is best dealt with will depend very much on context.

Proactively approaching parishes

As a leader in your deanery, you may already be aware of the situation in different parishes and approaching particular church leaders directly to discuss their needs or capacity to help others may be the best way forward. For example you might be aware that a parish is facing particularly challenging financial circumstances in the year ahead because of a major maintenance issue. At the same time another parish may have received a significant legacy or usually has relatively strong finances because of a particular income stream. The new share scheme also removed some of the inconsistencies of the previous scheme, the consequence of which is that some parishes received a significant increase in suggested share contribution from 2023 whilst others received a significant decrease. This continues to be particularly challenging for some of the parishes that received a significant increase and we hope it will be seen as an opportunity for generosity for those who received an unexpected and significant decrease in their suggested share contribution, at least in the short term.

An opportunity for all to be generous or request support

Whether or not you are proactive in directly contacting church leaders, it will be important to provide an opportunity for all parishes to either share their need for support or identify themselves as willing and able to support others.

A single meeting during which people respond to this question is unlikely to be the best approach if your deanery is not used to working together in this way. People may be nervous about sharing too much information or making offers of support without first consulting others in their parish. Such a meeting may also lead to conversations about the relative merits of different parishes' needs or the capability of different parishes to provide support. This could be uncomfortable for participants and counterproductive. Instead, you may wish to consider a multi-step process whereby you set out and reflect upon the context and explain the process at an initial meeting and invite people to speak with others in their church community about their needs or capacity to help, before contacting you to share that information. Once it is clear who is in need of support and who may be well placed to offer support, you can start to match up offers with parishes in need. You may then hold a follow up meeting to present the plan to the wider deanery and to discuss other ways that the deanery may work together in the future. This approach is obviously more time consuming and may be less necessary in deaneries, such as those with MMUs, that are more used to working together and supporting each other in this way.

4) A clear timetable

Once you have decided on your approach it will be important to map out a clear structure and timetable which can be shared in your communications. Because this depends on your context and approach the following are only examples:

Example timetable for a Deanery for which financial mutual support between parishes is unfamiliar

	Action
Step 1	Area Dean & Lay Chair write to incumbents and churchwardens <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inviting them to join discussions- Explaining what they hope to achieve from discussions (reflecting on the theological context)- Setting out the timetable for discussions in the deanery- Inviting leaders in parishes to send representatives to an initial meeting
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>Short initial meeting</u>- Introduction by Area Dean/ Lay Chair, setting out theological context of new share scheme- Prayers and readings- Reflections from each participant: Challenges & hopes for the future in their context and theological reflection on what God is calling you towards as a deanery in this context- Outline process and timetable- Presentation of Deanery Assessment- Invitation for parishes to be in touch with Area Dean and/ or Lay Chair to indicate need for support or offer to support others- Next steps

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closing prayer
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clergy and churchwardens contact Area Dean and Lay Chair to indicate need for support/ offer of support - Area Dean and Lay Chair proactively contact clergy and churchwardens in parishes they feel may be requiring support or able to provide support - Iterative process of matching support to need. Some parishes may be more inclined to respond to a request for help once they know that another parish is in need of that support. - Clergy and churchwardens in parishes that are offering support are asked to check whether their PCCs will be happy to provide support.
Step 4	<p><u>Follow up meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction and opening prayers from Area Dean/ Lay Chair - Area Dean/ Lay Chair set out plan that has been agreed across Deanery - Next steps – discussion about how the deanery may work together in other ways (details of how deaneries can bid for funding from the Mission Opportunity Fund will be published later this year.) - Closing prayers
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area Dean/ Deanery Treasurer completes parish share spreadsheet to indicate final share contributions for each parish/ benefice MMU - Area Dean/ Deanery Treasurer collect signed forms from parishes that are contributing more than the suggested diocesan contribution to submit with the parish share spreadsheet - Parish share spreadsheet and forms from parishes that are contributing more than suggested are sent to the Diocesan Office – parishshare@chelmsford.anglican.org

Example timetable for a deanery where this approach is more familiar

E.g. where MMUs have operated in financial partnership

	Action
Step 1	<p>Area Dean & Lay Chair write to incumbents and churchwardens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting them to join discussions - Explaining what they hope to achieve from discussions (reflecting on the theological context). - Setting out the timetable for discussions in the deanery - Inviting leaders in parishes to send representatives to an initial meeting
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction by Area Dean/ Lay Chair, setting out theological context of new share scheme - Prayers and readings - Reflections from each participant: Challenges, hopes for the future in their context and theological reflection on what God is calling us towards as a deanery in this context - Outline process and timetable - Presentation of Deanery Assessment - Invitation for parishes to offer support to those who have raised particular challenges during the reflections - Discussion to match support to need and ensure that overall requested contribution for the deanery is met. - Next steps

	- Closing prayer
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area Dean/ Deanery Treasurer completes parish share spreadsheet to indicate final share contributions for each parish/ benefice MMU - Area Dean/ Deanery Treasurer collect signed forms from parishes that are contributing more than the suggested diocesan contribution to submit with the parish share spreadsheet - Parish share spreadsheet and forms from parishes that are contributing more than suggested are sent to the Diocesan Office – parishshare@chelmsford.anglican.org

5) Dealing with difficulties

It is recognised that the discussions over finances within a deanery may have the unintended consequence of undermining relationships between parishes and people. For this reason a safeguard has been built in enabling parishes to withdraw from discussions and simply contribute the amount suggested by the Diocese as a starting point. Indeed, you may decide that any such discussions in your Deanery are unhelpful at this stage. However, we hope this will be a last resort as the parish share scheme will work better if parishes are able to work together and support each other in this way within a deanery.

If you do encounter difficult situations, please speak with your Archdeacon in the first instance who may be able to provide advice, facilitate conversations and meetings or identify somebody from outside your Deanery who can help. Making your Archdeacon aware of any difficulties as early as possible may help to ensure that they don't escalate unnecessarily.