



THE LORD BISHOP OF ST ALBANS
The Right Reverend Dr Alan Smith

February 2021

Dear Colleagues

Thank you for your unrelenting hard work, dedication, and resilience, over these last ten months as you've served and supported our communities and churches with creativity, compassion, and generosity, and continue to do so. With you we pray for our communities and all those on whom the pandemic has had so much impact.

We are also grateful for the incredible generosity of many congregations who, through their giving, have met the cost of ministry and enabled churches to continue to serve their community.

Thanks to the generosity of congregations, parish officers, treasurers, churchwardens, readers and clergy, the final parish share return for 2020 was ahead of our initial estimates, although understandably below 2019 figures. This generosity ensured that the parish share, that sustains parish ministry, was in excess of £12.5million for 2020, approximately 90% of the requested amount. The collection rate in a more normal year is around 95% of requested amount. Some tight budgeting, furloughing and other savings, has helped to reduce the deficit which will be met by diocesan reserves. All this underlines the remarkable efforts of everyone involved in such difficult times.

As we approach 2021 we appreciate many parishes, like the diocese, have found their financial situation weakened, having used reserves, with continued uncertainty when hall bookings may return, and lower levels of plate giving due to limited worship in church buildings. Please do continue to speak to the finance team, the archdeacons, the Flourishing Churches Team, and other diocesan officers, who are there to offer help and support where they can, including with stewardship and giving.

Let us continue to support one another as we adjust to the ever-changing situation. We pray we can continue to face the challenges ahead creatively and generously, as we provide mixed-mode worship, support our congregations and communities, and more. We will also need to prayerfully consider, as we come through the pandemic, how we prepare ourselves to meet the needs of our communities, which will have changed in a post-pandemic world.

Going Deeper into God • Transforming Communities • Making New Disciples

ABBAY GATE HOUSE • ABBEY MILL LANE • ST ALBANS • HERTFORDSHIRE • AL3 4HD
TEL: 01727 853305 • EMAIL: bishop@stalbans.anglican.org

Please know our gratitude and prayers for all that you are continuing to do as together we support one another through these times of unprecedented uncertainty:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Phil 4:6-7

Please do share this letter with your PCC and congregation(s), and please emphasise the gratitude of the Bishop's staff to the many generous givers.
Thank you again for all that you continue to do to enable ministry and build the Kingdom of God in our churches and communities.

+ Alan St Albans

From the Bishop of St Albans and on behalf of Richard, Bishop of Bedford, Michael, Bishop of Hertford, Janet, Archdeacon of Hertford, Dave, Archdeacon of Bedford, Jane, Archdeacon of St Albans, Jeffrey, Dean of St Albans and Canon Susan Pope, Diocesan Secretary.