



# Common Fund Request

*This email has been sent to all Parish Incumbents, Treasurers, and Secretaries. If you hold a role at multiple parishes, you may receive multiple copies of this email.*

Dear Friends,

The past year in the Diocese of Sheffield has been full of change and new opportunities. We have said goodbye to Bishop Sophie as she has moved to take up her role as the Bishop of Coventry. We have also said goodbye to Archdeacon Malcolm as he took on the role of the Bishop of Wakefield.

Alongside these goodbyes, we look forward to welcoming the Revd Leah Vasey-Saunders as the next Bishop of Doncaster and our new Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham, Revd Canon David Gerrard.

There are many reasons for thanksgiving to God at the present time. By the grace of God, we continue to attract exceptional leaders, lay and ordained, across the Diocese. In April we hosted an encouraging Open Day for clergy wishing to explore the possibility that God was calling them to our Diocese. In February, we heard that our funding application to the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) had been approved: we have been awarded £17.1 million to use between 2026-2028. The new funding offers a further boost to our strategy, enabling an additional investment in stipendiary clergy posts, grafting teams, mission area support posts, and our curate pipeline. Our 'Stats for Mission' for 2024, praise be to God, show growth across the Diocese over 2023 of between 3% and 5% in Usual Adult Sunday Attendance, Usual Child Sunday Attendance, Usual Adult Weekday Attendance and Usual Child Sunday Attendance. This is the second

year in a row in which we have recorded an increase in the number of those who regularly worship in our churches.

We also have an in-principle award of £18.5 million for 2029-2031 subject to national funds being available. However, in order to access this further funding, we will need to demonstrate two things: first, missionary value added from the first tranche of the funding; but also, secondly, a pathway to financial sustainability. Common Fund receipts are a critical part of this. Receipts from Common Fund in 2024 were £3.4 million. It still represents a reduction in cash terms since 2019 where common fund receipts were £4.2 million.

It is fair to say that the national funding influx of millions of pounds has caused a messaging headache for us. While it is excellent news, the fact remains that we are utterly dependant on the generosity of churches paying Common Fund to keep the Diocese functioning.

Across the Diocese there are currently fewer net contributors than net receivers. This means that very few places are meeting the full costs of local stipendiary ordained ministry and an even smaller number that provide an additional contribution into Common Fund. Parishes across the Diocese are subsidised by the Diocesan Board of Finance or through National Church grants such as Lowest Income Communities' Funding. You can see more information about the overall breakdown of costs in the infographic attached to this email.

In November 2024, Diocesan Synod approved a deficit budget of £1.9 million for 2025, calling once again on our limited general reserves. We anticipate needing to set a deficit budget once more in 2026.

We all have to play our part. Our challenge together is to meet the generosity the national church is showing us by being generous back: in kind, in faith, and yes, in finances. May I urge you, please, to meet generosity with generosity. This year we are asking you, if at all possible, to aim to increase your pledge on last year between 3%-5%.

As your PCC completes your budget and planning process for 2026 and you make your Common Fund Pledge we ask you to consider carefully and prayerfully what you are able to invest. This is investment in your local leadership, local Mission Area, and local communities; and whether you are able to support other Parishes through this

arrangement. To continue to benefit from national funding we need to show that we are committed to our local mission plans through local investment.

As a Church Commissioner, and a member of the Triennium Funding Working Group which was responsible for these proposals, it would be remiss of me (Bishop Pete) to write to you without mentioning the Church of England's recent announcement of a record £1.6 billion in funding for the 2026 –2028 triennium — a 36% increase on the previous period. This significant investment reflects a strong commitment to clergy well-being, including a proposed 10.7% increase in stipends from April 2026 (this would equate to 11.1% in our diocese), alongside continued support for ministry in low-income communities, safeguarding, redress, and clergy retirement housing. This funding is part of a wider vision to distribute £4.6 billion nationally over nine years, made possible by increased contributions from the Church Commissioners.

We are fully committed to clergy well-being in our Diocese and we will be obliged to implement the proposed stipend increase. Initially, additional funding will assist us to do so. However, without a corresponding rise in parish contributions to the Common Fund a significantly increased stipend will inevitably widen our budget deficit.

We have prepared a number of resources to support you as you consider your pledge, these are available on our website. Our Mission Area Support Team will be more than happy to support you on this journey. We have once again included an opportunity to make a provisional pledge where you may not feel able at this stage to make a full pledge. To help the Diocesan Board of Finance approve budgets for 2026 when we meet in November, we would ask for your pledge by 17 October 2025. The supporting resources, contact details and pledge form are available on our website: [sheffdio.org/common-fund](https://sheffdio.org/common-fund).

We thank you for all you are doing to spread the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ with such faithfulness and fruitfulness. For the ways in which you serve your local communities on a daily basis both in times of challenge and in times of celebration. Please do get in touch if there are any ways in which we can support you at this time or in the coming months.

With gratitude and every blessing,

+ Pete Sheffield

The Rt Revd Pete Wilcox,  
Bishop of Sheffield

LJ Buxton

LJ Buxton  
Acting Diocesan Secretary

T. Gardiner

Tony Gardiner  
Finance Director