



July 2018

To Incumbents and Priests-in-Charge  
in the Diocese of York

*Dear My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

## Free Will Offer 2019

**The Lord is the one who goes ahead of us; he is with us, he will not fail us or forsake us in our journey as we become Generous Churches, Making and Nurturing Disciples.**

He has led us and shared our journey from time before time; we have seen his hand at work in the process we began in our consultations with each other two years ago, now beginning to bear fruit in our new ventures to reach those we currently don't, to grow in discipleship, numbers and influence, and to establish a sustainable financial base for the work God calls us to do in our local missional and praying communities.

He goes before us and follows us; we keep our eyes on him now as we take our next steps towards that sustainable financial grounding by prayerfully considering our Free Will Offer to the Common Fund in our Diocese for 2019.

As we begin to see people and actions giving shape to our prayers and our plans, it is my hope that just as 2019 will be a year of the Lord's favour, so we will be able to respond to that favour with generosity to match the overflowing bounty of God himself!

**For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. [2 Cor 9:12]**

### **'What do we get for our Free Will Offering?'**

In 2018 the cost of providing ministry in all the parishes of the Diocese came to more than the amount given to our Common Fund in Free Will Offerings; at present everything else is provided from other diminishing resources ([www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/understandbudget18](http://www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/understandbudget18)). What will your parish contribute for ministry across our Diocese?

**Friday 12th October 2018** is the deadline that has been set for Free Will Offers to be sent to the Diocesan Office in order to shape the budget to support our work in 2019. That's several weeks later than in recent years in order for a number of things to happen before your PCCs prayerfully debate and agree their Offer:

- **I asked Archdeacon Sam Rushton to visit every Deanery Chapter** during the spring to help all clergy engage with this goal; Deanery Leadership Teams and PCC Treasurers have had or will have the opportunity to engage with her too.

- **Prompted and equipped by these sessions**, everyone on your PCC has had or should have had the opportunity to pray, learn and think with you about the Diocesan strategy goal of sustainable finance for mission in your parish and the diocese as a whole.
- **We have published an easy-to-follow guide** to the current year's diocesan budget to help understand where the money comes from and how it is put to work; if you haven't seen it in print you can download it from [www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/understandbudget18](http://www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/understandbudget18).

### 'How do we cut the cake?'

There are some financially-deprived parishes in the Diocese which are paying more in Free Will Offering than the cost of the ministry provided for them; there are some relatively wealthy parishes in the Diocese which pay less in their Free Will Offering than the cost of the ministry provided for them. How will your parish express the generosity asked of us all?

### 'Does our every penny count?'

By pooling our money in our Common Fund we can support mission and ministry in some of England's most deprived parishes in Middlesbrough, and pioneering work such as St Margaret's Welcome Centre in Longhill, Hull, where the church is providing a social hub for an urban community.

- **I've commissioned worship material** to help you as a church community focus on generosity and gratitude at harvest time this year – I encourage you to download this from [www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/freewilloffer](http://www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/freewilloffer) and join with your brothers and sisters in Christ across the diocese in this common prayer and teaching this year.
- **I am inviting you as Incumbents to take the lead** as your congregation prays through its God-given calling and how to meet its costs - human and financial. FWO is not a financial discussion around 'how much can we afford?' but a theological question 'how much is God calling us to commit, in faith, to his wider mission in the diocese?'

- **Having led your PCC in prayer** and consideration of its Free Will Offer for 2019 during September, please return the enclosed form to our Finance Team by Friday 12th October 2018 so that they can begin to shape the 2019 Diocesan Budget (you will need to send one form for each parish in your benefice).

### 'How can my parish afford to give more?'

Your ability to be generous as a parish is shaped by your members' generosity to their own church. Parishes in other dioceses have been helped to address their own local challenges and the Diocese of York will be offering that sort of support soon.

### 'So what do we do now?'

As Incumbent I ask you to take the lead as your congregation and PCC prays through the question of what generosity looks like in your situation. Then as an Incumbent you will need to send a completed response form to me at the Diocesan Office for each parish you serve.

Please take time to read and pray through all the materials and information we've provided; you are in my prayers as you lead your congregations in this journey of generous giving for the work to which God calls us in 2019.

With every blessing

*Henry Ebor*