



DIOCESE OF
YORK



One Diocese Shared Mission

Understanding Free Will Offer

“Give, and it will be given
to you. A good measure,
pressed down, shaken
together, running over, will
be put into your lap; for the
measure you give will be the
measure you get back.”

Luke 6:38 (NRSV)

To live Christ's story is to be part of God's mission of love in and for the world today. We need a flourishing and sustainable church of followers of Jesus for this to happen. And it is not something any one parish can do alone.

When people talk about “the diocese”, they may think of boards, councils, and staff teams. Those are important, but they are only part of the picture. The Diocese of York is, above all, our 440+ parishes and their people, working together as one body to share the good news and serve our communities.

What is Free Will Offer?

Free Will Offer is the voluntary annual commitment parishes make to the diocesan common fund. It is how we share the cost of ministry and diocesan services across the whole diocese. It is best understood as shared discipleship and shared mission — because parishes don't pay for the diocese; together, we are the diocese.

Free Will Offer supports our diocesan vision by enabling:



Becoming more like Christ
Formation and discipleship



Reaching new people
Mission and evangelism



Growing churches of missionary disciples
Investment and support where
local funding is hardest



Transforming our finances and structures
Sustainability and good stewardship



What does ministry cost?

Direct costs

A core part of diocesan expenditure is the direct cost of ministry. This includes clergy stipends, National Insurance, pension contributions, training, and housing-related support, including council tax.

Shared costs

Alongside direct costs, there are shared costs: diocesan services that help parishes operate safely, legally, and effectively and enable mission and growth. These costs also include the shared work of nurturing vocations and training new ministers.

Supporting new ministry:

- Stipends, NI, pensions, and housing for curates
- Training for lay ministers and curates
- Vocations team (including support for ordinands in training)

Supporting parishes and the whole diocese:

- Safeguarding advice and training
- Church buildings and faculties (including the Chancellor)
- Mission and pastoral support (including parish reorganisation)
- Generous giving advice and resources
- Governance and compliance support
- Finance, HR and legal services (including registrar)
- Advice and resources for children's and youth ministry
- Schools' support and education resources
- Clergy grants (including relocation)
- PR, marketing, and communications support



Free Will Offer helps us to sustain ministry in every community, and it relies on every parish contributing what it can to make that possible.

Other income

Free Will Offer is not the only diocesan income. As a diocese, we also receive some income from historic investments and funds, rental income, parochial fees, Lowest Income Communities Funding (LInC), and external funding for specific projects. But Free Will Offer remains the main way the diocesan family shares the core costs of ministry and services.

Estimated costs for 2027

Direct cost of ministry (full-time minister)

				Total Cost
Stipend & NI	Housing	Pension	Training	
£39,853	£13,163	£7,161	£749	£60,926

Net total cost of ministry (full-time minister)

Direct cost of ministry (DCoM) (full-time minister)		£60,926
Shared costs per Ministry Unit	New ministry	£10,204
	Other costs	£18,917
Shared costs subtotal		£29,121
Total cost of ministry (TCoM)		£90,047
Reduction due to other diocesan income (excluding LInC funding)		(£8,747)
Net total cost of ministry (TCoM)		£81,300

Net total cost of ministry for other ministers

	Direct cost	Net TCoM
Half-stipend	£37,419	£49,625
House for duty	£13,912	£22,080

Why this matters

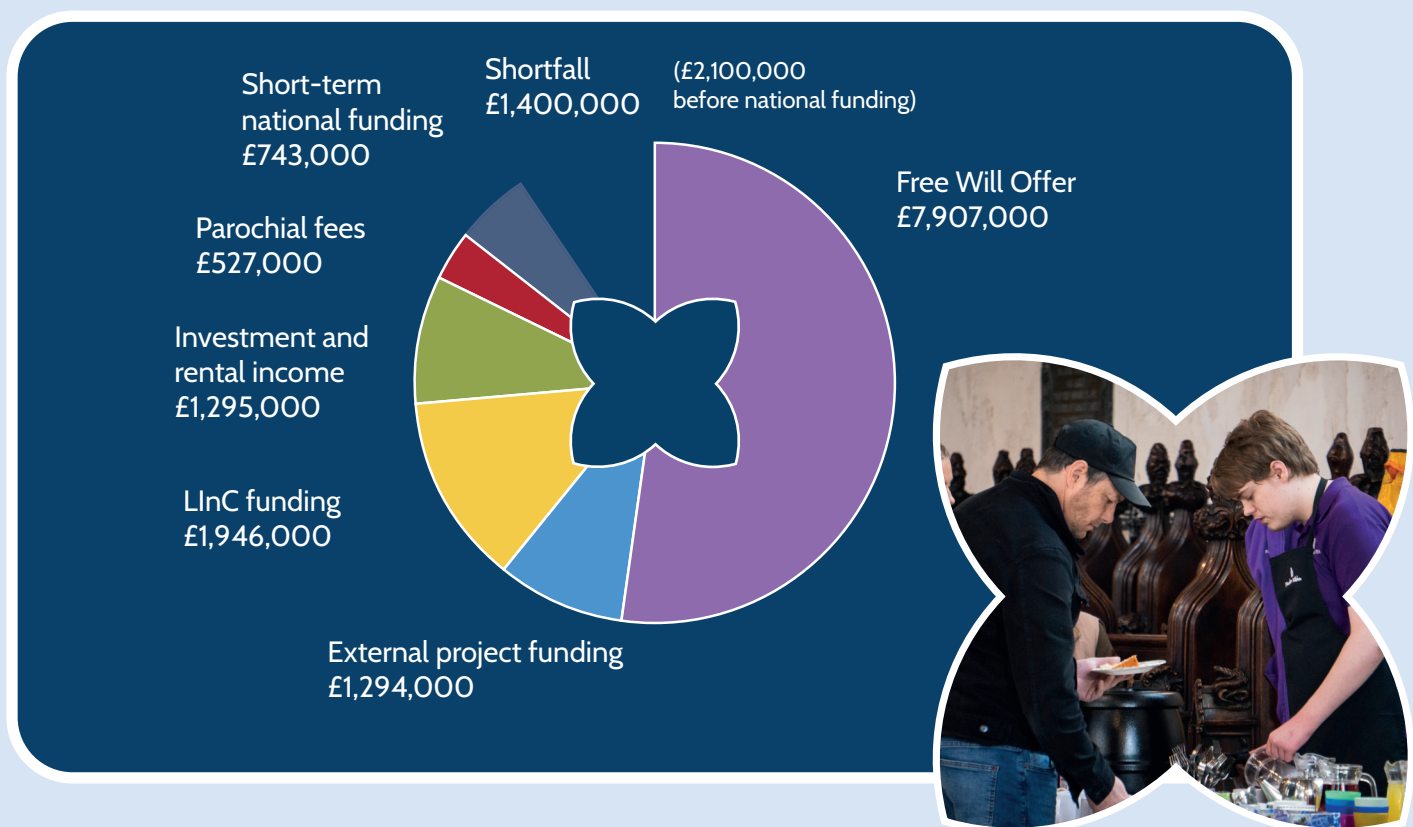
In recent years, the total received for our common fund from parishes through Free Will Offer, alongside other income, has not fully matched the cost of providing ministry and shared services. We have bridged this gap using reserves and selling unused properties. While this has helped in the short term, it is not sustainable.

Deanery plans are shaping new patterns of ministry, but the overall financial picture remains challenging, with an underlying budget gap for 2026 of £2.1 million. We will receive some extra short-term national funding, a contribution that will reduce year-on-year. This reduces the shortfall in 2026 to £1.4 million. To give a sense of scale, this is roughly equivalent to every person in our congregations offering an additional £3 per week to the diocesan common fund.

The aim is that, by 2031, every Ministry Unit will contribute a fair share towards shared support costs, after taking account of Lowest Income Communities (LInC) Funding. Over time, this will make funding more predictable and help safeguard the shared services that many parishes rely on.

Parishes that are able to contribute more than their net total cost of ministry help sustain ministry across the whole diocese, including in communities with fewer resources. Commitments are also intended to rise broadly in line with inflation, so the shared system keeps pace with real costs.

Our income



Next steps for your PCC

Whether you are new to the Free Will Offer process or have many years of experience, we hope you will find the following suggestions helpful.

Start with a conversation

What do you want to nurture and grow in your parish?

Which diocesan services have you relied on recently?

How might your Free Will Offer help other parishes?

Check your local picture

Review income and expenditure trends (last two years and current year forecast).

Look at giving: number of givers, average gift, any recent changes.

Identify one or two realistic actions to strengthen income (e.g., stewardship focus, contactless giving, planned giving review).

Does your current Free Will Offer cover your direct cost of ministry, or are you relying on other parts of the body to cover both ministry and shared support?

Involve the right people early

Speak to your Area Dean, Archdeacon, Deanery Financial Adviser, or the Generous Giving Team. Consider the questions you need answered to make a decision.

Agree on a commitment

Agree what you can commit to for 2027, and sketch a plan for the following two years. Take inflation into account — the Church is not insulated from rising costs. Your commitment should be voluntary, prayerful, and realistic.

If you feel you cannot meet your direct cost of ministry, agree:

- what you can offer
- what would need to change to increase over time
- a review point (e.g., 6 months)

If you need help with your commitment

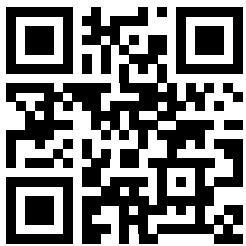
Please talk to your archdeacon as soon as possible. Honest, early conversations help avoid worry and support better planning.

In recent years, some ministry units have been able to meet at least their Direct Cost of Ministry through reorganisation and new patterns of ministry. Many others are making progress, and some are already able to contribute beyond direct costs.

Thank you

Thank you for the time, care, and responsibility you carry as incumbents, treasurers, and PCC members. Your generosity keeps ministry flourishing across the diocese

If you have questions — or anticipate difficulty meeting your direct cost of ministry — please speak with your area dean, archdeacon, or DFA early, or contact us. We are here to support you on this shared journey.



Find out more

Find more resources and submit your pledge at dioceseofyork.org.uk/FWO

Get in touch

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