



Diocese of Manchester

# archdeacons' visitation news

## Dear Churchwardens

As you start this year of service, the first thing I need to do is say thank you; for all you are, all you bring, and all you do. It can sometimes feel tough; vacancies, tight finances and a struggle to get volunteers. We can't deny those, and it would be wrong to try. The challenges we face may be many, but so are the opportunities to share the transforming love of God with our communities.

We talk a lot about growth in the Diocese of Manchester, and rightly so. At the heart of growth lies discipleship. It's not enough simply to increase the number of people who attend our services; true growth is also a deepening of our commitment to Christ, for long-standing and new followers of Christ alike. Discipleship must be at the core of everything we do. As churchwardens, you play a pivotal role in guiding your congregations on this journey.

Everything flows from an environment where spiritual growth is nurtured. This begins with prayer, scripture, and worship, where we seek to draw closer to God. But it also extends to our relationships with one another, where mutual care is central and we are a family people want to be part of. As churchwardens,

you're not just stewards of the physical property of the church; you are also spiritual stewards, helping to build a community centred on Christ. You've been asked by your fellow parishioners and upheld by God's grace to serve as both guide and a guardian – ensuring that the church remains a place of worship of God and service to His children.

Growth and discipleship are interconnected. When discipleship is at the heart of everything we do, growth is more likely to follow. Christ's call to make disciples means we must focus on how we can reach out to those who are on the margins or those who have yet to experience the life-changing message of Jesus. We are called to share the love of Christ in our communities, in schools, in workplaces, and also online. Every encounter is an opportunity to invite others into the journey of faith.

As Archdeacons we wish to thank you for your willingness to serve. May God bless you with wisdom, patience, and grace and we look forward to the ways in which you will help lead your parish in faith and love.

With every blessing,

**Archdeacon**

Karen Smeeton



**The Venerable  
Dr Rachel Mann**  
Archdeacon of Salford  
and Bolton



**The Venerable  
Karen Best**  
Archdeacon of Manchester



**The Venerable  
Karen Smeeton**  
Archdeacon of Rochdale

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# Our Vision for 2030



In recent years we have made good progress with our Transformation Programme. Many of us have experienced first-hand how things are changing for the better across the diocese in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies. This is helping us achieve our vision of being a worshipping, growing, transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community, and deliver our mission goals which are to grow our churches, nurture new and existing disciples, and serve the vulnerable, deprived and excluded.

Our achievements include moving to our new deanery structures, the creation of our 33 mission communities, investing in our lay leaders, supporting children's ministry in each deanery, and increasing the practical support for parishes.

Most of these changes have focused on new ways of working together which are becoming embedded in the life of our diocese. Building on these successes, we are shifting to the next level in setting our priorities and working out what we want to achieve next. Given the excellent start that has been made, we now have the opportunity to be even more creative and ambitious with our plans for the future. Learning from our recent experience, we are well-placed to develop the plans for our diocese based on the following themes:

## Growing Younger

We have been doing great work in the area of Growing Younger, exploring new approaches with the Children Changing Places Project in Bolton, and Man-Dio Growing Faith in the other deaneries.

We are now combining this experience and learning to develop a comprehensive approach to engaging with children, young people, and their families across our diocese. Our focus is on strengthening the links between our parishes and our church schools.



## Church Planting and Revitalisation

Over the last seven years we have set up four new resource churches and more than ten church plants. We now want to build on this learning, so that churches carrying a DNA of mission are established across our diocese, particularly in communities where attendance is low.

## Developing Missional Leaders

We recognise the importance of investing in our clergy especially those who are newly ordained, and developing our lay people. We are supporting clergy and lay vocations so we develop a new, diverse generation of church leaders with the calling and skills to grow new faith communities.

## Parish Renewal

We are providing direct support to our parishes to ensure they are are missionally focused and financially sustainable. Our Area Deans and Lay Chairs are working closely with our parishes, ensuring they have access to the support they need.

Mission communities are enabling parishes to work together on mission and ministry. Clergy deployment, parochial reorganisation and supporting our most fragile churches are particularly important.

## Our Approach

Supporting our international congregations is key to achieving racial justice, as is ensuring that those in governance, clergy and lay roles are representative of the diversity of our diocese.



Together we are continuing our work towards achieving Net Zero Carbon. Our parishes and schools are measuring their energy use and taking simple, practical steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

We continue to provide a safe environment for all by promoting effective safeguarding.

Across our diocese, people hold diverse views and express their

faith through different traditions, united in a passion for Jesus Christ and his Church. Our bishops honour these differences by inviting church communities from across our diocese to learn together, support one another and listen to God.

## Funding

We are working to ensure that, as a diocese, we are financially sustainable over the medium to long-term as we recover from the challenges of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. This includes talking with parishes about mutual support and the need to pay Parish Share so that the current levels of stipendiary clergy – 175 – can be maintained. We are also paying close attention to the management of the diocese's assets to ensure optimal investment returns and capital growth.

Our emerging strategy is enabling us to bring together the key areas of opportunity and challenge in our diocese, so that we can support each other in a positive and co-ordinated way. We need to continue to work together to ensure that our Church thrives and grows, supporting ever more people in their faith. Developing positive, inspiring and relevant plans for the future mean that we will be well placed to make a bid for further funding to the Church Commissioners for this vital work.



# Support and resources for Churchwardens from Ecclesiastical

Ecclesiastical understands that volunteering for the role of Churchwarden and supporting your church can be a demanding job. Managing a treasured building and ensuring that it's a safe place for your congregation to worship, visit and enjoy can be daunting, but you don't have to do it alone.

## Ecclesiastical church support managers

At no additional cost, Church Support Managers are there for their Ecclesiastical church customers. Providing tailored help and training to support church insurance needs, they can offer guidance on risk management, health and safety legislation and direct you to online resources. They can also deliver online and in-person group training sessions around topics including the basics of insurance, fire safety, fundraising, climate change and net zero, open churches and theft of metal.



Heather Ford



Joseph Davies

**Heather Ford** – Church Support Manager for the North.

Heather has roots in the Church, having previously worked for the Diocese of Manchester, and understands the demands of church life. Heather is passionate about supporting churches to understand how insurance can help, rather than hinder, to enable people to focus on their ministry and thrive.

**Joseph Davies** – Church Support Manager for the South.

Joseph is very much part of the Church family – his father was a parish priest, his mother a hospital chaplain, his wife was recently ordained as a curate, and he spent nine years as a verger at Salisbury and Ely Cathedrals.

“ Fundraising is crucial for sustaining church activities and initiatives. I am always delighted to offer guidance on effective fundraising strategies. We have an excellent online Fundraising Hub which has lots of information about how to get started and how to keep going on your fundraising journey. ”

✉ [meetus@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:meetus@ecclesiastical.com)  
 🌐 [ecclesiastical.com/church/church-support-managers](https://ecclesiastical.com/church/church-support-managers)

## Fundraising hub

Fundraising plays a key role in boosting finances for your church. Ecclesiastical's fundraising hub offers user-friendly support guides which take you from 'where to start' through to 'key factors for successful fundraising' and everything in between.

If you have an Ecclesiastical policy, you can also contact their fundraising helpline, to arrange a call back from their expert team.

📞 **0345 601 9959**  
 🌐 [ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising](https://ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising)



## Ecclesiastical's plain English guides

If you are looking for help in areas such as legal expenses, building work, or outreach, Ecclesiastical has a range of easy to understand Made Simple Guides to help, and their comprehensive document library is full of useful tools like risk assessment templates and Guidance Notes.

🌐 [ecclesiastical.com/church/#madesimple](https://ecclesiastical.com/church/#madesimple)

## Ecclesiastical church insurance team

Do you have questions about your Ecclesiastical policy?

📞 **0345 777 3322** – lines are open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays  
 ✉ [churchteam@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:churchteam@ecclesiastical.com)

## Risk Advice Helpline

Are you looking for advice on how to minimise risks as you manage your church?

📞 **0345 600 7531** – lines are open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays  
 ✉ [risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com)

## A claims team that really cares

Ecclesiastical's claims team are experts.

📞 **0345 603 8381** – 24-hour reporting service  
 🌐 [ecclesiastical.com/claims/claim-online](https://ecclesiastical.com/claims/claim-online)

## Ecclesiastical would love to hear from you

Do you have a story for Ecclesiastical? Perhaps you overcame a fundraising problem or found a way to get your local community more involved with your church. Sharing 'a day in your life' could really help other Churchwardens and members of the PCC.

✉ [meetus@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:meetus@ecclesiastical.com)

Contains promotional material

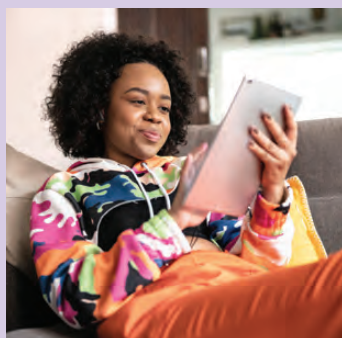
# Month-by-month support

To help you plan maintenance and manage your church and its grounds, Ecclesiastical has created a calendar to keep you organised and on track – you can download your copy using this link:

 [ecclesiastical.com/risk-calendar](https://ecclesiastical.com/risk-calendar)



# Get monthly tips straight to your inbox




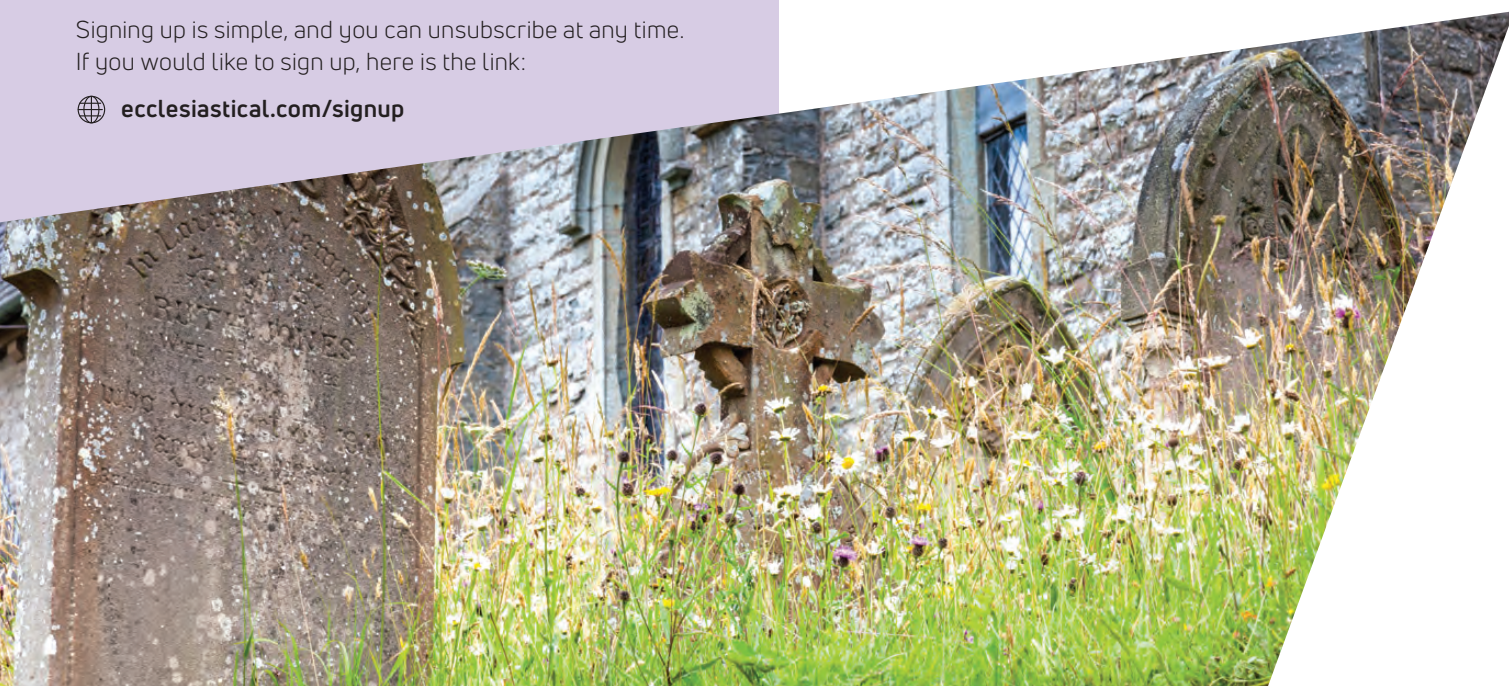
Join the community of church leaders who receive Ecclesiastical's monthly e-newsletter. It's packed with valuable advice about church security, event planning, fundraising and more.

Many of Ecclesiastical's customers already benefit from this e-newsletter, and we hope you'll join them.

Feel free to share the sign-up link with others in your church community who might be interested.

Signing up is simple, and you can unsubscribe at any time. If you would like to sign up, here is the link:

 [ecclesiastical.com/signup](https://ecclesiastical.com/signup)



# Why should net zero be a focus for churches?

## A Q&A with the Church of England



# BENEFACT TRUST



Julian Atkins

In 2024, our Group's charitable owner, Benefact Trust, pledged £1.5m towards the Church of England's ambitious goal of reaching net zero by 2030. Benefact Trust's funding is focused on equipping and inspiring churches across the UK to start their journey to net zero and reduce their impact on the environment.

Benefact Trust sat down with Julian Atkins, Net Zero Programme Director for the Church of England, to talk through some of the most commonly asked questions about the Church's net zero goal.

Whilst many of us want to play an active role in tackling climate change, the prospect can seem overwhelming due to the scale of the issue, the urgency to take

action and the abundance of complicated information. In Benefact Trust's short Q&A with Julian, he emphasises how important it is to keep things simple and start small.

Julian discusses what net zero actually means, why the Church has a responsibility to reduce its impact on the climate and low-cost ways to get started. Watch 'Net Zero and the Church' on Benefact Trust's YouTube channel:

 [youtube.com/@benefacttrust](https://youtube.com/@benefacttrust)

Here you'll find a host of helpful videos, including a full podcast with Julian Atkins.



# Ecclesiastical supports sabbaticals

Ecclesiastical aims to support Anglican clergy by offering financial assistance for life-affirming sabbaticals through their **Ministry Bursary Awards (MBAs)**.

Established in 1987, these awards have distributed over £1.4 million, benefiting more than 1,500 clergy members. An MBA can rejuvenate and enhance the ministerial development of clergy, offering them opportunities to engage in extended study, travel, or other enriching activities that can have a lasting impact on their personal growth and to the ministering of their congregations.



St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Kolkata, West Bengal, India

The **Revd Adam Dickens** is a recent recipient of such an MBA and he told Ecclesiastical:

“ I was very grateful for the MBA grant as it facilitated my sabbatical visit to Kolkata and wider West Bengal where I spent a month engaging with projects run by the Cathedral Relief Service of Kolkata Cathedral, as well as visiting various establishments that came under the ambit of the Diocese of Calcutta; these included churches, schools, colleges, a TB clinic, an AIDs hospice and a residential home.

“ It was an extremely rich time as I was offered a window into the joy and despair of life for people living in the city (as well as some of the rural areas in the state of West Bengal) and the creative ways in which church communities were responding. It provided interaction with a very different culture to the one I'm used to inhabiting, with all the challenges and growth that comes with it. ”

The application window for the 2026 MBA programme opens in spring 2025 and closes in September 2025. In 2026, we are particularly keen to see more sabbaticals which aim to support the drive for carbon net zero.

If you would like to find out more about the Awards, including eligibility criteria and application details, please visit:

 [ecclesiastical.com/mba](https://ecclesiastical.com/mba)



## Give yourself a financial health check

In today's world, with the high cost of living and rising taxation, it's more important than ever to ensure your finances are in top shape.

### Expert advice for clergy



Ben Dabbs




Ben Dabbs, an independent financial adviser with Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Service (EFAS), emphasises the importance of financial planning for clergy. “With little time available for clergy in their busy lives to focus on themselves, it's important for them to seek expert advice to manage their finances effectively and ensure their personal well-being and that of their

dependants is planned and catered for,” he explains. “Too often, clergy members will delay financial planning until the twilight of their ministry, which can lead to unnecessary hardship.”

### Plan ahead with confidence

To help you review your financial arrangements, such as life assurance, pension savings, investments, mortgage options<sup>1</sup> and retirement planning, it's worthwhile seeking expert advice from an independent financial adviser who understands your circumstances and can put in place a plan to help give you peace of mind for the future.

If you would like to arrange a financial health check or receive a brochure providing information about the advice and services available, please contact EFAS at:

 **0800 107 0190**  
 **[getadvice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:getadvice@ecclesiastical.com)**  
 **[ecclesiastical.com/financial-advice](https://ecclesiastical.com/financial-advice)**

<sup>1</sup>Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage. The value of your investments including pension investments can fluctuate, and you may not get back the amount you invested. Your capital is at risk.



## Join the Movement for Good



Ecclesiastical is part of the Benefact Group and we do financial services differently – we give all available profits to charity and good causes. It's thanks to our customers that we can make this happen.

The Movement for Good Awards is our annual giving programme and anyone can get involved. The Awards give you the opportunity to nominate the charitable causes that matter most to you.

We're proud to have supported churches, Scouts groups, food banks, hospices, heritage charities and more, all nominated by their supporters.

### How to nominate a charity or church to win £1,000

1. Visit [movementforgood.com/ecclesiastical](https://movementforgood.com/ecclesiastical)
2. Nominate before 15 December 2025. Your nomination will be included in all the remaining £1,000 draws in 2025, so the earlier you nominate, the more chances you have. It's one nomination per charity, per person, so you can get as many as you like in the mix.
3. Further down the page, there are resources you can personalise and share with your colleagues and congregation to encourage more nominations.
4. Keep scrolling to sign up for notifications, including special £5,000 draws and larger awards through partnership funding.

You'll also find more information about the Awards, including the terms and conditions at:

 [movementforgood.com/tc](https://movementforgood.com/tc)

**Best of luck!**

## Trust Ecclesiastical to insure your home and give back to your church!

As a church official, your home could serve as both a living space and a place for your ministry. You might host prayer meetings and counselling sessions from your home, or even help parishioners plan weddings and funerals. You will be supporting your parishioners throughout the years, and Ecclesiastical Insurance is there to support you, with their tailored home insurance policies.

A home insurance policy from Ecclesiastical Insurance can be adapted to suit the needs of the clergy in your work on behalf of the Church, or the general needs of your congregation and community.

### Ecclesiastical Home Insurance

Ecclesiastical Home Insurance provides up to £750,000 for buildings and £75,000 for contents as standard. This cover includes protection for your home, personal belongings and even contents away from home up to £3,500. Additionally, 24-hour home emergency assistance and legal expenses are included, helping to ensure you are covered in unexpected situations.

### But there is more!

When you take out a new home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical, they will donate £130 to an Anglican church or cathedral of your choice<sup>1</sup> – this programme has already contributed over £500,000, to churches across the country.



You can trust Ecclesiastical. They regularly win coveted awards for their home insurance products. In November last year, they retained their top spot in the Fairer Finance Home Insurance league table for a record twentieth time and remain the UK's most trusted home insurance provider!<sup>2</sup> Importantly, in today's online world, they also have an 'Excellent' score on Trustpilot too.<sup>3</sup>



When you talk to the friendly experts at Ecclesiastical's UK-based Head Office, they will work with you to make sure that your home and its contents are well-protected against a variety of risks. By choosing Ecclesiastical, you're not just insuring your home; you could also be helping your church. Call us today!

 **0345 777 3322** and quote **CHOPS25**  
 **[ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance](https://ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance)**

<sup>1</sup>Terms and conditions apply. Visit [ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms](https://ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms). <sup>2</sup>Fairer Finance Home Insurance customer experience rating, spring and autumn 2015 – 2024. <sup>3</sup>Trustpilot reviews – 419 between 1 February 2023 – 14 April 2025. Correct at time of going to print.



# Church Building Grants: Supporting Repairs and Restoration

Our diocesan Church Building Grant is designed to help parishes with the cost of essential repairs to their church buildings. These grants are a vital source of funding, ensuring that the heritage and functionality of church buildings are maintained for future generations.

## Maximum Grant: £20,000

It's important to note that the Church Building Grant can cover no more than 50% of the total project cost. The remaining funds must be sourced from the parish's own resources or through external funding opportunities.



## Eligible Buildings

This grant is available to consecrated church buildings and licensed places of worship. The definition of a 'building' includes the church's below-ground drainage system, foundations, and immediate curtilage. If a parish has multiple churches, an application can be submitted for each one, provided it meets the grant's eligibility criteria.

## Criteria for Application

To qualify for a Church Building Grant, several criteria must be met:

- The parish must have paid the previous year's agreed Parish Share in full, and commit to paying the agreed figure for the current year.
- Up-to-date accounts for the parish must be available.
- A faculty (church approval) must be applied for where necessary.
- At least two quotes for the work must be provided, or one quote if approved by a surveyor or architect.
- The church building must not have received a grant in the last two years.
- The Archdeacon must support the proposed work.
- Architect supervision is required where applicable.

## Ineligible Works

Certain types of work are not eligible for this grant, including:

- VAT on listed buildings (refer to alternative funders)
- routine maintenance, cleaning, servicing, and inspections
- re-ordering, decoration, or churchyard work (unless mitigating a risk to the church building)
- work covered by insurance, and specific restoration projects like organ or stained glass restoration (refer to alternative funders).

## Application Process

To apply, complete the online Church Building Grants application form. Applications are reviewed by the diocesan Finance and General Purposes Committee. Meeting dates for 2025 are scheduled for March, May, July, September, and November. Be sure to submit applications by the relevant deadlines to ensure timely consideration.

More information available at:

 [manchester.anglican.org/church-building-grants](https://manchester.anglican.org/church-building-grants)

# Support for Church Officers



Our parishes are blessed with dedicated and diligent church officers who generously give their time and talents to support our shared mission. From treasurers who oversee parish finances to safeguarding officers who ensure our churches remain safe and welcoming for all, church officers are integral to the life of the parish.

We receive God's gifts with gratitude, use them with care, and share them with love. As Peter reminds us, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10).

To assist you in your important work, we offer guidance and support tailored to your role. Additionally, there is a collection of short films available to help encourage others to take on roles within your parish.

For further support, visit:

 [manchester.anglican.org/church-officers](https://manchester.anglican.org/church-officers)

## Join Our Transforming Prayer Community



Prayer, at its heart, is simple: it is all about God and being where we can meet him and be transformed by him. It is about being where God can show us the endlessness of that grace and love which invites us to respond with hope and joy. Human beings are made in and for God. Prayer, as our response to him, is as natural as

breathing. As God breathes life into his creation, he invites us to use our breath freely in praise and thanksgiving and ask for his Kingdom of justice and mercy to come.

Our Transforming Prayer Community is all about connecting and reconnecting with this simple vocation to pray. In the face of a messy, complex world which pulls us in all sorts of directions, our diocesan prayer community is helping each of us and our churches be better aligned with God's call on our lives. This call invites us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and be thankful. Prayer takes us to the solid ground of our hope on which the Kingdom is built: Jesus Christ.

## Archdeacon Rachel Mann

Those who wish to be part of our active Transforming Prayer Community are asked to join us here:

 [manchester.anglican.org/prayer](https://manchester.anglican.org/prayer)

# Parish Giving Scheme



Our diocese has recently signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) – an effective tool for encouraging greater giving in your church. It offers a simple way for people to manage regular donations while also reducing parish administration for the church treasurer. PGS is a simple and safe way for people to support their local church.

## How does it work?

Those looking to donate to a church can give a one-off payment or set up a direct debit through PGS. This can be set up in one of three ways:

- **online through the PGS website**
- **over the phone by calling 0333 002 1271**
- **by filling in a gift form at your church.**

Those who want to give regularly can choose to donate monthly, quarterly or annually. Any eligible Gift Aid is sent directly to your chosen church once it has been received from HMRC.

Parishes must be registered to use the scheme. The PGS service is free for parishes to use and includes various benefits for both the church and those making donations. There is an online portal available to Treasurers and PCCs so they can easily track their donations month by month, and for those donating, there is an easy-to-use platform which allows givers to amend their donation amount, pause donations, increase their giving year-on-year so their gift retains its value in line with inflation, and more.

Please note that PGS is not a replacement for the Gift Aid Lite scheme. If you want to learn more about how the Parish Giving Scheme works with the Gift Aid Lite Scheme, please contact Paul Bailey.

## Benefits

The **giver** donating to their church benefits from:

- being able to donate one-off amounts by credit/debit cards and Apple/Google Pay wallets
- a flexible giving system, where they can give monthly, quarterly or annually

- the option to have their annual giving increased in line with inflation
- any donations being enhanced by Gift Aid, meaning 25% is added to their giving
- a secure, easy to use system which lets users donate anonymously if they prefer.

The **treasurer** benefits from:

- reduced administration and paperwork
- easy access to monthly and annual (both tax and calendar year) statements
- saving time for themselves and those who count the money from plate collections.

The **church** benefits from:

- stable and often increased planned giving, by launching PGS alongside a Giving Review
- efficient and regular reclaim of Gift Aid, improving cashflow
- protection against static giving, by offering givers the option to index-link their gift.

## Register

First, your parish will need to register for the scheme. If you're interested in signing up, please email one of our team who can talk you through the process:

Carolyn McGloughlin:

✉ [carolynmcgloughlin@manchester.anglican.org](mailto:carolynmcgloughlin@manchester.anglican.org)

Paul Bailey:

✉ [paulbailey@manchester.anglican.org](mailto:paulbailey@manchester.anglican.org)

Rob Chilton:

✉ [robchilton@manchester.anglican.org](mailto:robchilton@manchester.anglican.org)



## For more information

**Call:** 0345 777 3322 **Email:** [churchteam@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:churchteam@ecclesiastical.com)

**Facebook:** Ecclesiastical



Whilst Ecclesiastical has used reasonable endeavours to ensure that the information in this newsletter is correct at the time of publication, please note: (a) the information is not intended to constitute a definitive or complete statement of the law on any subject, (b) the information may over the course of time become incorrect or out of date; and (c) neither Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc. nor its subsidiaries or parent company can accept any responsibility or liability for action taken or losses suffered as a result of reliance placed on the information provided in this newsletter.

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