

# The Deanery of Stroud

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## **Presentation to the Inter-Deanery Meeting on the use of the Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF)**

### **Introduction**

For those who don't know much about Stroud Deanery, we are a grouping of 45 churches serving some 81,000 people towards the South of the Diocese. Our current anticipated roll of Stipendiary Clergy should be 10.5 with a further 4 House for Duty or Associate Priests and a further 5 SSMs. We have the highest ratio of population to each Incumbent of any of the Deaneries – a figure that will increase with big new developments planned West of Stroud. We have the second highest ratio of worshippers to Incumbents of any Deanery. The reality currently is that we only have 6.5 Stipendiary Clergy and some parishes have been without a priest for quite some time. Of the non-stipendiary and House for Duty priests we have 9 in post.

There is a Positive reason for this lack of clergy (despite the sometimes negative effect!).

Just over two years ago we were presented with an opportunity to 're-imagine Ministry in the West of Stroud'. It became apparent that of four Benefices, three had clergy approaching retirement which would create the opportunity to look creatively at how we might re-organise Ministry in this area.

After much deliberation and prayer and many, many meetings(!), the idea for the Stroudwater Team was agreed.

### **The Stroudwater Team**

The Stroudwater team is a grouping of three former joint Benefices and one single Parish comprising 15 parishes in total. Previously there had been four Incumbents and an HfD Associate. The new Team would have a Team Rector and two Team Vicars. In addition, a central plank of the new Team is that there should be Administrative Assistance in the form of a Team Office and Administrator.

However, whilst this process was continuing, people were retiring! By the middle of last year, one group of Parishes had been without an Incumbent for over a year and by the autumn there was just one Incumbent left standing! Thank God for PTOs!

Finally, the Stroudwater Team was agreed and it became official on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 and was officially launched on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 by Bishop Robert at a special service.

The degree of patience and understanding within some of the parishes who have been without clergy leadership has been both remarkable and strained at times.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of this strain has been seen in the Pledges for Parish Share this year. The Deanery budget for the team was £139,417. The amount pledged is £125,796. There is therefore a gap of £13,621.

The set-up costs and some of the operating costs for the office and administrator we hope to source from Grant bodies.

But there will be a likely on-going cost annually to the Team of around £16,500. Using models from existing similar set-ups, a budget has been drawn up as follows:-

<b>Set-up costs</b>	<b>£8,200</b>	Furniture & equipment
<b>Annual Salary</b>	<b>£9,360</b>	18 hrs/week @ £10.00/h
<b>Rental</b>	<b>£7,200</b>	Office space @ £600/m

### **The Future**

The future is bright! We have appointed a new Team Rector and will shortly start recruiting another Team Vicar (the second will be recruited once the current post-holder retires in 2018).

There are plans for a further 1000 houses to be built in this team area – increasing the ratio of population to Incumbents. However, at this point we may look to appoint a Pioneer Minister in addition.

The fatigue of some parishes is being replaced by enthusiasm to do new things and become a different kind of church in many of these deeply rural communities. Gifts once hidden are being uncovered in many places.

This Team ministry could become a model for ministry in rural areas for this Diocese and beyond.

### **The Need**

What is needed for these 15 parishes is some encouragement that is more than words alone.

We need to help them soak up some of the shortfall in Parish share whilst they begin to blossom again under new leadership.

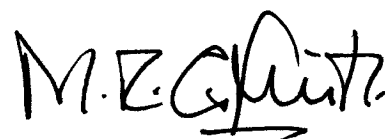
We also need to help them come to terms with an additional cost for an Administrator which will be new to them.

### **Our Request**

We would like to seek support for these parishes to the tune of £20,000 for 2018, falling to £15,000 for 2019 and £5,000 for 2020 to enable them to grow into the new reality of being the Stroudwater Team flourishing in new ways under new leadership.



Margaret Sheather – Lay Chair



Rev. Mike Smith – Area Dean