

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION: FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

Parish Administration

- **What is the role of the Finance Committee?**

The Role of the Finance Committee is to support and advise the Parish Priest in the financial matters of the Parish. Under Canon Law, the Parish Priest should consult the Finance Committee, but ultimately the Parish Priest makes the final decision.

- **What do we need to do if we have a change of Priest?**

If you change Parish Priest, the Finance Office will arrange to amend the Parish banking arrangements and inform you of any other changes required. We recommend that the Parish Accounts are up to date and bank statements reconciled, for the new Parish Priest to review the accounts.

- **Are there any finance/administration guidelines for Parishes?**

There are general guidelines that have been sent to each Parish upon request, i.e. Payroll, Second Collections, Foundation Masses. Handbooks produced by the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT) should be available at the Parish. ACAT are – Association of Church Accountants, for all Christian denominations. The Handbook covers the management of “financial and legislative affairs of the Church”

- **When can we have online banking?**

Currently parishes are able to access online banking to view the Parish Bank Accounts – if you wish to read your statements online, please contact the Finance Office.

However, enabling parishes to make payments online is a different discussion. From a risk perspective, it is the sender of an electronic payment who bears the liability for any loss. With a cheque, by contrast, the primary liability is with the bank.

If a Parish were to use online banking to make payments, then – in the case of a suspected fraudulent transfer – it would be down to the Parish to prove that (i) they did not make the payment; and/or (ii) they did not share the PIN. This could be a time-consuming exercise.

Furthermore, the Diocesan auditors will want to consider the potential risks associated with online payments, and the robustness of the risk processes that would need to be in place. We will continue to give more thought to this matter.

- **What is the process to arrange Foundation Masses?**

Foundation Masses

- *A Foundation Mass is one which is said once a year, for 25 years. The term “foundation” relates to the concept of investing a capital sum, the returns from which would pay for the stipend each year.*

- *The suggested donation is £250.00 for an annual Foundation Mass for 25 years, and the procedure is as follows:*

- 1. The Parishioner should speak to the Parish Priest to arrange when they would like the Foundation Mass to be celebrated (i.e. in a particular month, or 'on or around' an anniversary date);*
- 2. The Parishioner should write a cheque for £250.00 payable to 'BRCDT' and give it to the Parish Priest;*
- 3. The Parish Priest will then write to the Finance Office, enclosing the donation, the date and the wording for the dedication.*
- 4. The Finance Office will then send confirmation to the Parish Priest that the Foundation Mass has been formally established for the period of 25 years.*

- **Are there any main suppliers that everyone uses, if so where do we get information from?**

There is no list of principal suppliers across the Diocese; nor is there any obligation to use the same supplier in each Parish, as each Parish is responsible for their own finances. The Finance Office and Property Offices are happy to inform you of the suppliers they use.

- **What about security of the financial data we keep at Parish Level and also send to the Finance Office?**

The data stored on Finance Co-ordinator is only financial data. There is no confidential or personal data regarding any individuals. The file upload of Finance Co-ordinator is encrypted when it is sent to and from the Finance Office.

- **Can you remind me of the new process for Second Collections? (Please see attached)**

- *Where the instruction is to e-mail finance@dioceseofbrentwood.org, there is no longer any need to follow the old procedure: i.e. write out a cheque to BRCDT, then complete the relevant paper slip, and send both to the Finance Office. Instead, once you know exactly how much you have collected, simply send an e-mail to this e-mail address, confirming the amount. We will debit your Parish account (using our internet banking service), and in turn credit the relevant body.*
- *You can send an e-mail for each second collection, or wait until you have several – in which case you must ensure that you specify exactly how much was collected for each cause.*
- *For the remaining second collections, the process is more or less the same as before. In the column headed "Instructions" on the Second Collections sheet, we have indicated the name of the organisation and its address. As before, you will need to make the cheque out, payable to the relevant organisation, and send it to the address given in the attached sheet. However, there is no need to fill out one of the old second collection forms – a compliments slip from your Parish, quoting the amount raised, will suffice.*

- *Please note that the Finance Office is only able to process those second collections where*
 - *We receive an invoice from the collecting organisation (e.g. Catholic Education Service Collection); or*
 - *The collecting organisation is not equipped to handle payments from all 91 Parishes; or*
 - *The collection is for an internal Diocesan fund*
- *Finally, if in the past you have sent a second cheque to the Finance Office for the Gift Aid raised on the original collection, and asked us to pay the Gift Aid to the relevant fund, for the future please use the above process – i.e. simply e-mail us with the amount of Gift Aid to be credited, and we will debit your account accordingly.*
- **Any fundraising ideas, i.e. how to set up a 100 club, information about legacies.**

Please contact the Finance Office if you need any help with these activities.