



9th April 2020

Dear All

PGS Parish Statement Receiver - PGS Coronavirus Contingency update 3 – Maundy Thursday

It is just 11 working days since I last wrote to you and yet it feels a life time ago...

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. It contains some important updates about the PGS operations during the current period.

1) PGS remains fully operational

- In my letter dated March 24th, I informed you that we were closing the PGS office to comply with government instructions. In the interim, we have received further clarification from the Department of Health regarding working policies for key workers. **I am pleased to say that we have been able to reopen the PGS office** by operating a reduced staffing rota adhering to social distancing practices and safe operating procedures. This has enabled us to receive all paper donation forms and process them as soon as possible.
- I am extremely grateful for the many messages of support we have received from parishes as we try to adapt to an ever-changing situation. I also recognise the disappointment that some felt at not being able to submit donor forms at this crucial time. Now that we have been able to open the office without contravening government instructions, we have quickly got the operation back up to speed, processing over 600 gift forms in the last week. Confirmation letters have been sent to all donors.
- We are still experiencing disruption to the usual pattern of deliveries of donation forms by Royal Mail, but are processing them as soon as they arrive. The Royal Mails collection service remains unaffected.
- **To clarify: the PGS office is open and we are receiving new PGS donor forms in the usual way.**

2) 1st April donation claim update:

- The 1st April claim for all existing donations went smoothly, raising £3.8m for over 3000 parishes.
- I am pleased to announce that these funds will be in your parishes bank accounts today (Thursday 9th April). The Parish Statements will be available to download from Friday 10th April.
- A Gift Aid claim of £883k was submitted and the funds due to your parish will land in your parish account on Tuesday 14th April, 2020.

3) Donate by Phone:

- **We have moved quickly to provide an additional facility for new donors to give by phone during this period.** We have now received the necessary bank permissions to receive donations by phone and we hope to have it available to all Member Dioceses and their registered parishes by the week commencing the 20th April.
- In the meantime, whilst we finalise the operational processes, we have developed a way for you to promote this New service to prospective donors for them to 'register their interest' in setting up a regular gift by phone, by completing a simple secure online form. Once submitted, the prospective donor will receive a call from a member of the PGS team, to help arrange a 'paperless' regular donation through the PGS. **This facility to register interest will go 'live' on Good Friday.** We have prioritised getting this service ready for Easter weekend as we recognise the

opportunity that this may provide you with. If you are considering raising the subject of giving during Holy week and beyond, we have provided some guidance at the end of this letter.

- o To promote this service please adhere to the following guidance:
 - The best way to communicate this facility accurately is to share the following URL address on any email or text communication you intend to issue to prospective donors: <https://register.parishgiving.org.uk/>
 - You may also choose to offer the link on your own parish website
 - Or you can direct people to the PGS website: www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk ¹
 - When communicating this service, please can we encourage you to share your **parish's PGS Code** with any prospective donor. They will be asked for this, and having this to hand at the point of sign-up significantly increases the accuracy and reduces the delay in registering gifts. For example, there are over 2,000 churches with St. Mary's as a dedication. Confirming the gift is going to the correct St. Marys, requires significant administrative resource so we ask that if possible donors can be equipped with the correct PGS code.
- o We have set up a dedicated 'Donate by Phone' telephone number. This number will be communicated to you during the week of the 20th April.
- o Given the reduction in regular giving to Church as a consequence of the lockdown period, we anticipate that the Donate by Phone service will be extremely popular, as it will provide a unique opportunity to continue giving to Church in absentia. The PGS Operations team have worked tirelessly over the last two weeks to ensure that this new service will be operational during the week commencing April 20th.

On behalf of the PGS family we continue to hold you and all in your community in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

As ever we will continue to keep you updated with any developments.

Your faithful servant,



Helen Richardson
Chief Executive

Stewardship Guidance

One of the founding principles of the PGS is that it is *administered centrally and delivered locally*. We have always championed the importance of 'People giving to People', and often people whom they both know and trust. I have had some member parishes raising concerns as to whether it is appropriate to solicit donations at this time of crisis, and others who want to ensure that if donors want to change their method of giving during this period, that they provide sensible options to enable them to do this. Here at the PGS, we will support parishes on an individual basis however you wish to approach this. For those who would like further guidance, the Diocese of Worcester has kindly offered the following guidance on what you might consider in advance of asking:

¹ Please note for the eagle eyed amongst you please note that the URL is to our 'New in-development' website, therefore the link is not incorrect but both domains www.parishgiving.org.uk and www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk belong to the organisation.

- Ensure you obtain the support of your PCC and Clergy for your approach in advance.
- Decide what is the best and most appropriate way to communicate in your context.
- For any communication you issue at this time, ensure the message received is both personal and local. You may wish to consider including some of the following:

Share what's happening locally:

- Share that whilst the church buildings may be closed, the churches are very much still open as loving communities of faith seeking to care for each other and their communities.
- Ask how they are and would they welcome a call?
- Share what you are doing locally to stay in touch and support one another.
- Include an invitation into whatever support systems you have in place; e.g. email contacts, telephone rota, worship options etc.
- Share what others are doing around the Church of England for example; some church buildings have been continuing to offer night shelter and foodbank support, as well as meeting the current need as temporary assembly and distribution points for vital medical supplies.

Before you ask ensure:

- People need to understand that they are being asked to support ministry where they live for the people of their community.
- Share that for some people they may find themselves in the fortunate group of people for whom financial life is at least fairly stable. They might even be experiencing a reduction in their outgoings as many leisure activities and events are being curtailed.
- Offer why you are asking at this moment? Share that more than ever you need to be an active church to minister to your community and that you are seriously worried about your income at this time.
- You may wish to signpost other local initiatives that the congregation may wish to consider supporting at this difficult time: e.g. Food banks, local homeless shelters, volunteering opportunities etc. Adding this kind of information reaffirms the message about being a church here to serve and engaged in generosity more widely and not a church just after money in a crisis.

Making the ask:

- "Many members of our church use the **Parish Giving Scheme** to make their gift each month. This is a Direct Debit scheme which also reclaims Gift Aid for us monthly. This is enormously helpful since, although we are not meeting in church, our expenditure has not substantially changed. We still need to support our mission, pay the insurance on the church building, continue our outward giving and contribute towards our parish share which covers clergy costs across the diocese, including here. If you wish to find out more about the scheme and register your interest please visit www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk
- If you give through the PGS and want to adjust your giving, whether upwards or downwards, you can contact them on info@parishgiving.org.uk or call them 0333 002 1260."

Finally end with:

- "Our financial generosity to the church is a key part of our Christian commitment. Many people are re-examining their priorities in life at this moment. If you believe that the church is an important witness to the love of God in these difficult times, please be as generous, and no more generous, than you feel able."
- "Thank you for all you are and will do to continue to support our church. Together we can continue to love and care for all who live in our parish."

With thanks to the Diocese of Worcester