

Letters: The Church needs to reassure worshippers that their donations will be spent wisely

By Letters to the Editor
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SIR – Andrew Berkinshaw-Smith ([Letters, December 29](#)) criticises churchgoers for not donating more generously.

However, he makes the assumption that more money would result in more paid clergy – whereas I suspect it would lead to a higher parish share and more bishops.

Nicholas Moate
Falmouth, Cornwall

SIR – Andrew Berkinshaw-Smith makes a good point.

We were privileged to attend Westminster Abbey on Christmas morning, but were surprised at how little was given by the 2,000-strong congregation.

The collection might not even have covered the electricity.

Richard Walton
London W14

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SIR – The Church of England’s director of communications [says](#) the Church is “doing everything it can to support its parishes”.

How I wish that were true. In the dioceses of Truro, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, Sheffield and others, bishops are planning to merge up to 20 parishes into a single new parish with one parochial church council. Clergy will be pooled, and the rights and responsibilities of individual parishes taken away.

He also appeals for a move “from anecdote to evidence”. Well, in the Church’s own report of that name, the evidence is that reducing clergy reduces church attendance and giving. So there appears to be a deliberate strategy of driving decline in small and rural parishes.

James Burnell-Nugent
Ivybridge, Devon

SIR – In October I was asked by my local Anglican church to complete a form indicating my total household income for the last 12 months.

My immediate reaction was that this was not only intrusive but also presumptuous. The reason, I was subsequently informed, was to work out the parish share – the amount the church would be charged by the diocese, clearly an ecclesiastical form of means testing. With only a small congregation, the current annual amount is apparently £3,000.

It seemed pretty obvious to me that the poorer the congregation, the smaller the share required. Rightly or wrongly, I declined to make a return.

David S Ainsworth
Manchester

SIR – Recent letters have talked about the Church as if it were a struggling business with strategic, financial and management problems.

As a boy I attended a low Protestant church. We were taught that a church was what was left when all the buildings had fallen down.

What happened to that?

Nicholas Franks

Dorchester
