

Letters: If the Church wants to attract new clergy, it must offer better support

By Letters to the Editor
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Archbishop Justin Welby leading the Christmas morning Eucharist service at Canterbury Cathedral | CREDIT: Stuart Brock/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

SIR – As the long-standing (long-suffering?) spouse of a clergyman, I have agonised over the past decade as to the future of the Church of England ([Letters, January 1](#)). I have worked willingly (and unpaid) alongside my husband for 30 years in five diverse parishes in three dioceses and, despite the challenges for us and our family, it has been an immensely rewarding and privileged experience. However, the expectations placed on our clergy by parish and diocese are increasingly demanding, and I worry for the next generation.

The parish system is extraordinary: how many other professionals live alongside those with whom they work? The demands are many. My husband is expected to run a small business, manage a minimal staff team and volunteers, look after a building – these are usually old and often listed – take responsibility for the finances, safeguarding and other administrative aspects of a parish, and be available to all and sundry at all times of the day and night. I haven’t even mentioned prayer, preaching, officiating at services and pastoral work, which one might think should be the priorities.

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I wholeheartedly endorse all the Archbishop of Canterbury is doing in prioritising prayer, evangelism and reconciliation, and reaching out to and serving those in our communities, especially those in most need. Most clergy are doing the same. We need to support them in every way we can.

Joanna Gillum

Nottingham

SIR – Many churches have silverware, including Communion sets donated by past benefactors, which are unsuitable for use today. These gifts were intended as a blessing, but have become a burden. The Diocesan authorities prohibit the sale of such items, so parishes are left with expensive insurance and safe-storage bills, for items that are of no use to them.

As a lay minister, I find it difficult to preach to people about sacrificial giving ([Letters, December 31](#)), while the Diocesan authorities continue to ignore the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verse 19: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.”

Dr K J Briggs

Milbourne, Wiltshire

SIR – If the Church considers that its parishioners give too little in donations or collections, it might ponder on its closed doors and lack of leadership during lockdown. The extent to which its relevance and message have slipped is exemplified by the young woman in the shop who asked for the cross “with the little man on it”.

Tom Stubbs

Surbiton, Surrey

SIR – My wife and I attended a packed carol service in Bath Abbey, well-equipped with large-denomination banknotes. It transpired that cash was unacceptable, though we could donate by means of credit-card terminals. Having no cards with us, we simply went home.

William Brooks

Bath, Somerset
