

A message from Godfrey Robson, Chair of the Cathedral's Finance Committee  
*delivered at the Cathedral AGM on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November*

Dear Friends

I am deeply sorry not to be with you this morning.

You have, and will have read, the Treasurer's Report. I would like to congratulate David on its conciseness and clarity.

But I want to reflect on some of the issues.

There is of course only one main issue. We have a loss on the General Fund of £127,000. This means that in the last financial year we spent £127,000 more on the general running of the Cathedral, than we could afford. By the "general running of the Cathedral" I mean the normal, regular costs, required year-in year-out, to let the Cathedral do its normal business.

But that loss of £127,000 comes after a loss of £146,000 in the previous year. And then £131,000 in the year before that.

This cannot go on.

The Finance Committee has ideas and plans.

- we will look for better use and return from the leasing etc of Cathedral property
- we are exploring whether we might package up some of our expenditure into one-off projects, which some might find it more attractive to support - eg, to support more choral scholars
- we need to find some better way to attract contributions from casual visitors.
- Adrian Tupper and I will be reviewing the performance of our investments
- and we plan, for the next financial year, the introduction of a proper budgeting process. Designated budget holders will negotiate their individual budgets and then be responsible for managing them. It is extraordinary that, in a business with a £700k turnover, this has not been done before. The change in culture will no doubt be gradual, but we should see a difference in approach to and prioritisation of expenditure.

But beware. Ideas that sound good, don't always yield the results expected. And even taken together, these ideas aren't going to cause overnight transformation.

And here, friends, comes the awkward bit. As the Treasurer points out, if we are to eradicate the deficit quickly, the congregation's contributions need to increase very substantially David suggests by 25% - 50%. I would put it higher, even perhaps 70% - 80%. My question today is whether we can contemplate achieving that within two years. You will be horrified at this suggestion. And yes, I know that many of you already contribute generously, and have responded seriously to earlier stewardship requests.

But think about this next point. The Province has done another calculation of - pay attention to this next bit! - the average weekly contribution per communicant member in each congregation. (This is anonymised data - no one knows who pays what.) there are plenty of questions about the accuracy, so let's not go into detailed figures. But the methodology is the same for each, so the relativities still tell us a lot. And guess what? The Cathedral congregation is the lowest contributing of all 54 congregations in the Edinburgh Diocese.

Doesn't that make you stop and think?

Of course the big evangelical congregations - Ps & Gs and St Mungo's - are far ahead of the pack. But for me, one of the joys of being Diocesan Secretary is the opportunity to move around the Diocese and meet so many congregations of small numbers, whose individual members don't seem obviously well off, but who stay dedicated to maintaining their finances, keeping the show on the road, maintaining good liturgy and choir, and still reaching out into the local community,

I think of St Ebba's in Eyemouth, St Peter's in Gala, St Margaret's in Easter Road, St Salvador's in Balgreen, St Barnabas in Moredun.

Gosh, if they can do it, so can we. And if the Cathedral Council is about to come up with good wheezes for our longer term future, first, these will need money, and second, we cannot think of cashing in investments for these new schemes, if we haven't first sorted out our basic deficit problem.

I fully understand and appreciate the many members who already contribute generously, with their time as well as with their money. I'm not asking anyone to contribute more than they can afford.

But I do ask everyone to reflect on what they could really afford, and whether we are, collectively "up for it" to get rid of the deficit in two years.

A final thought. This is not about maintaining our fine Cathedral just for its own sake. And not even about maintaining our outstanding choral tradition just for its own sake. It is about preaching the Gospel, drawing people into God, and contributing to the spiritual growth of our Diocese and of our city, in ways that only the Cathedral can.