

Finance in Focus *at Leominster Priory*

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Finance in Focus - 1

What a gift the world got at Christmas!

As the big day comes around again, we can't help but be amazed and thankful for God's gift of his Son over two thousand years ago. And we know that, through the Holy Spirit, it is a gift that keeps giving.

And I hope we all know the joy of giving gifts to friends and family at this and other special times. God's gift was more special than any other, of course, knowing that it would involve the death and resurrection of his Son.

Those of you who give to the Priory regularly by Standing Order or via the *Parish Giving Scheme should by now have received an individual thank you card from the PCC. It's important that we express our appreciation for your generosity and commitment.

But our thanks also go to everyone who gives to support the running costs of the Priory in other ways too, whether by donations via "the plate", the contactless giving facility, or by supporting the various fundraising events throughout the year.

We have been rather shy of late in raising the subject of church finance. However, several years have gone by where Priory income is many thousands of pounds less than expenditure, and we need to take action to address this.

Over the coming months we will be using this page, which we are calling **Finance in Focus**, to talk about the Priory finances. We will explain some of the detail behind the income and expenses, and discuss ways in which we can perhaps be a bigger part of the solution. Thank you. John Bland.

**To join the Parish Giving Scheme scan this QR code on your smartphone, contact the Forbury Office, or use this link <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/leominster-priory-church-hereford/> or visit or the Forbury Office or website leominsterpriory.org.uk*



Finance in Focus - 2

Back to basics – Expenditure

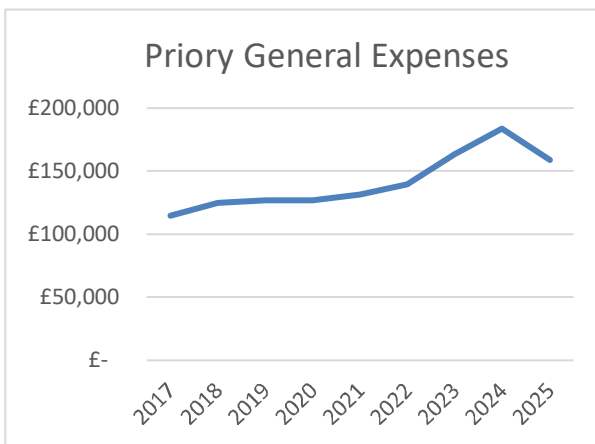
Deficit Watch:

2025 Total shortfall:
£20,163 (draft)

Of course, we all get bills (groan!). The cost of living affects us all – some more painfully than others. And the same is obviously true of the Priory. At home we probably have rent or mortgage, council tax, utilities, food, clothing... even the basic demands on our resources can seem endless, their cost increasing year by year.

This graph shows how the Priory General expenses (excluding special projects) have changed over the years. That's a 38% increase in eight years whereas Priory income, excluding special projects, increased by just 10% over the same period. (2024 exp. were high

mainly due to rented property repairs, organ work, and high energy costs.)



Next time we will look the key income sources that support the Priory's general expenses. But of course, at any time you feel able to increase your financial support (note the Deficit Watch panel at the top of this page) please refer to the information below.

John Bland, January 2026. johnbland@leominsterpriory.org.uk

(Email me if you can't wait for more information, and I will try to help!)



There are several ways you can give to support the Priory. To join the Parish Giving Scheme (more about PGS later in the year) scan this QR code, or contact the Forbury Office or the PCC Treasurer for this and other ways to give.

Finance in Focus – 3a

Back to basics – Income

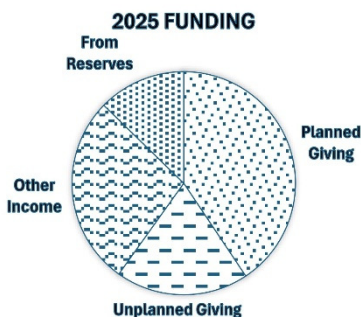
2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:

£2,543 at 28th February

At home, our income has a variety of sources – wages/salary or pension (state and/or private), interest from savings, perhaps an inheritance on occasion, and so on.

As for the Priory, last year an amazing £95,000 (almost 60% of the 2025 expenditure) was provided by giving, by people like you and me! Let that sink in for a moment. Not *paid* but *given*. Not used to buy new cars, or fancy holidays, but *given*. And that from a worshipping community of about 150.



That £95,000 was given in a variety of ways: about £64,500 by **Planned Giving** (Parish Giving Scheme, Standing Orders, and Gift Aid Tax Refund); and £30,500 by **Unplanned Giving** (Collections, Special Events, contactless giving etc). The remaining £64,000 (40%) of expenditure last year was paid for by **Other Income**

from things like fees, rental income, hire of the Priory, interest on reserves, and the shop, and about £20,000 taken **From Reserves**.

The 2026 budget estimate, approved by the PCC, anticipates expenditure of about £154,000, leading to an increased income shortfall, or deficit, of about £25,000 even after a hoped-for 5% increase in giving. Next time we shall start to look at how we can address this problem. But in the meantime...

There are several ways you can give to support the Priory. To join the Parish Giving Scheme (more about PGS another time) scan this QR code, or contact the Forbury Office or the PCC Treasurer for this and other ways to give.

John Bland, March 2026.

johnbland@leominsterpriory.org.uk



Finance in Focus – 4a

Getting Serious about Giving

2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:

£7,069 at 31st March

I was struck by a wonderful mini-sermon by Dr Sam Wells, which was included in a Diocesan Stewardship presentation some of us attended last year. It is so worth sharing, and very much applies to The Priory Church. Apologies if you've seen it before.

"If you don't give because no one's ever asked you, I'm asking you now. If you don't give regularly because you've never got round to it, I'm saying today's the day. If you don't give much because you think St Martin's* doesn't need it, I'm telling you that it does. If you don't give a lot because you don't have a lot, I'm saying your giving something is an example to everyone else. If you don't give more because no one's ever said thank you, I'm thanking you right now. If you already give until the pips squeak, I'm saying that's wonderful, and nudge the person next to you to do the same."

Rev Dr Sam Wells, one time vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields

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John Bland, April 2026.

johnbland@leominsterpriory.org.uk



Finance in Focus - 5

An Easier Time to Give More?

2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:
£7,069 at 31st March

- Are you a State Pensioner, just receiving your annual increase?
- Do you have a Company Pension, that has an annual increase?
- Are you in employment, where a wage/salary increase comes along from time to time?

Each of these cases offers a good opportunity to consider whether we could review our giving to the to the Priory Church. As the growing Deficit Watch figure in the box above shows, the need is great. *And just a baker's dozen of us giving an extra £10 per week would almost wipe out the current deficit! (13x£10x52=£6,760, or £8,450 if Gift Aided.)*

If we pay tax, we can Gift Aid our giving as well. It's worth an extra 25%, and is easy to set up using the Parish Giving Scheme (which is such a good scheme, and reduces the Treasurer's and Gift Aid Officer's workload considerably).

If you are already signed up with the Scheme, it's easy to increase your giving just by giving them a call – even if you've already opted to have your giving automatically increased with inflation.

Here's their number: 0333 002 1260 or email: info@parishgiving.org.uk

(P.S. These articles are now on the Parish Website "Donate" page)

There are several ways you can give to support the Priory. To join the Parish Giving Scheme scan this QR code, or contact the Forbury Office or the PCC Treasurer for this and other ways to give.

John Bland, April 2026.

johnbland@leominsterpriory.org.uk

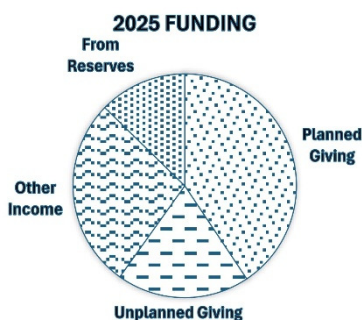


The Priory in Focus – 2025

Understanding the Priory Finances and more...

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (or AGM if you like) on 10th May will see the treasurer Sarah Gluyas stand up to present the 2025 accounts, and answer questions on them. But, if like me you have “Accounts Blindness” it can all be rather overwhelming. So in this Special Edition I will try to clarify some things, especially the Expenditure. That’s because it is important that you understand how **your giving** is being spent. Otherwise, why would you give so generously?

The **Income** side of the equation is fairly straightforward, but nevertheless it was about £20,000 less than was spent. That is, in round figures...



£95,000 was given in a variety of ways: about £64,500 by **Planned Giving** (Parish Giving Scheme, Standing Orders, and Gift Aid Tax Refund); and £30,500 by **Unplanned Giving** (Collections, Special Events, contactless giving etc). The remaining £64,000 (40%) of general expenditure last year was paid for by

Other Income from things like fees, rental income, hire of the Priory, interest on reserves, the shop, and about £20,000 taken **From Reserves**.

The **Expenditure** side is more complicated though. It doesn’t lend itself to a pie-chart, so taking the expenditure items line by line, we can say...

- STOCK FOR SHOP £321 – purchased items to sell in the shop (e.g. greetings cards).
- PARISH OFFER TO DIOCESE £70,000 – payment to Hereford Diocese Board of Finance, for clergy stipends & pension, housing, training, diocesan offices and staff supporting the parishes.
- CHARITY PCC DONATIONS £1,109 – donations agreed by the PCC to other charities.

- ORGANISTS & CHOIR EXPENSES £11,301 –Director of Music, other organists, sheet music purchases, ‘pocket money’ to junior choir for attending choir practice.
- MISSION £16,119 – Mission Pioneers, Messy Church, Lions and Goats youth groups, choir mission.
- LEOMINSTER TEAM PAYMENTS £18,932 – payment to Leominster Team, for the Priory’s share of the costs of the Forbury office & reception, Assigned Fees administrator, Team clergy expenses.
- ORGAN TUNING & REPAIRS £1,265 – both the Nicholson and Bevington organ expenses, tuning twice a year plus any repair costs.
- CLEANING, REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE £6,013 – costs for cleaning (e.g. toilet roll, paper towels) plus any other property related costs (e.g. roof repairs, locks, keys, light bulbs, boiler service).
- CHURCH INSURANCES £5,947 – building and public liability insurance.
- SERVICE EXPENSES £1,254 – wine, wafers, candles, baptism items.
- CHURCH FLOWERS £788 – fresh and silk flower purchases.
- TREASURER & SECRETARY EXPENSES £2,333 – secretary costs, postage, treasurer expenses, accounting software, auditors’ fee.
- PRINTING MATERIALS £2,173 – printing undertaken at Leominster Team Office for service sheets and other materials.
- MEMBERSHIP FEES & SUNDRY EXPENSES £2,166 – annual subscriptions and memberships (such as Herefordshire Histories Trust, National Churches Council), website, bank charges, Priory wifi (for contactless giving), sundry expenditure not listed elsewhere.
- UTILITIES £13,847 – water, gas, electricity.
- USE OF FORBURY £726 – hire of Forbury Chapel for PCC and committee meetings.
- OTHER PROJECT COSTS £318 – expenditure related to grants, bigger fabric works that are not simply maintenance.
- CHARITY COLLECTIONS PAID £1,609 - funds paid out for a specific charitable cause, being held by the Priory for that cause. Only paying out the Charity Collections income.

- RENTED PROPERTY EXPENSES 3,729 – expenses for property rented to tenants (letting agents management fee, maintenance and property improvements, landlord insurance).
- FUND RAISING COSTS £1,398 – expenses in relation to the Fund Raising Events income, e.g. refreshments, entertainment fee, external venue hire, 100 Club monthly prizes.
- SURPLUS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENT ASSETS £510 – the increase/decrease in the value of the Bateman Memorial Fund investments.
- HOLIDAY CLUB EXPENSES £5,250 – expenditure by the Holiday Club event.
- PRIORY ARTS £0 – expenditure from the specific exhibitions organised by the Priory Arts group (e.g. Vikings).
- PRIORY FUTURES £143,458 – expenditure for the Futures project.

That lot adds up to about £167,000 of General expenses, i.e. excluding the Priory Futures costs which were mainly being covered by grants.

That detail should help you to get to grips with the scope of “running” the Priory Church, and the substantial sums involved.

Finally, we come to the **Statement of Assets & Liabilities**. The Fixed and Current Assets at year end 2025. In summary...

- UNRESTRICTED FUNDS £70,250 – in bank and deposit accounts.
- SALE OF VERGER’S HOUSE £284,996 – (unrestricted) savings account.
- PRIORY ARTS £18,527 – in a deposit account for Priory Arts.
- RESTRICTED FUNDS £210,057 – in bank or deposit accounts legally restricted to use for fabric, young people, Holiday Club etc. (detailed breakdown in the full accounts).
- ENDOWMENTS £129,909 – producing some restricted income.

The full details are in the **Annual Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements for 2025**, available on-line on the Priory website. Turn over for the QR codes for this, and **the Church Groups Report 2025** (listed overleaf).

Scan the QR code on the right, or visit the Priory Website “News” section for the Annual Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements for 2025.



For the Church Groups Report 2025, scan the QR code on the left, or visit the Priory Website “News” section. There is a report from each these groups, well worth a careful read:

- Bellringing – Mark Pugh
- Church Cleaning
- Chalice Assistants – Jean Disckson
- Church linens group - Ceri Hibbert
- Deanery Library - Diana & Jenny
- Fabric Report - Geoff Bricknell
- Flower Team – Mandy Simpson
- Friends of the Priory – Bill Quelch
- Fundraising/Social Committee – Geoff Bricknell
- Lions – Ed Ceney
- Holiday Club – Anna Quelch
- House Group (Monday) – Phillippa & Greg Wright
- House Group (Thursday) – Helen & Geoff Bricknell
- Intergenerational Pioneers – Kathy & David Bland
- Joint Council Report
- Mothers’ Union – Phillippa Wright
- Music Report – Hilary Norris
- Open the Book – Christine Hurdidge
- Priory 900 Exhibition and Events Summary – Rupert Fairchlogh
- Shoebox Report – Anna Quelch

Do come to the APCM on Sunday 10th May, after the 10am Eucharist, now you are well prepared!

John Bland john@leominsterpriory.org.uk

Finance in Focus – 6a

A Sobering Look back at 2025

2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:

£12,130 at 31st May

At the 10th May APCM (or AGM), our treasurer

Sarah Gluyas shared these rather gloomy statistics (in round figures):

- *The underlying financial position in 2025 was a shortfall of £22,000.*
- *In **2026** we expect another shortfall of £24,000 even with a hoped-for 5% income increase!*
- *2025 income was down 14% (Planned giving down 11%, un-planned down 13%, other income down 33%).*
- *2025 expenditure was down 10% - GREAT! – helped by pledging £10,000 less to Hereford Diocese, Utilities down 29%, Insurance down 4%.*
- *But Leominster Team costs were up 8% and Mission up 2%.*
- ***WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO FUND OUR DEFICITS FROM SAVINGS.***
- *We have 54 generous regular givers (Parish Giving Scheme and Standing Orders) **BUT 45% DO NOT INCREASE WITH INFLATION**, and the amount given has not changed for several years.*

To see how inflation affects our giving we need to understand the benefit of “compound interest” (don’t groan):

- £100 given 5 years ago is now only worth £79 (4.6% ave inflation)
- £100 x 5 years = £500, **but that £100 if increased by inflation each year totals about £550, that’s 10% more to the Priory while keeping in line with your pension/wages. (100+104.60+109.41+114.44+119.71=548.16)**
- The 2026 Budget Estimate assumes a 5% increase in giving.

Together, can we make that a reality?

There are several ways you can give to the Priory. To join the Parish Giving Scheme scan this QR code, or contact the Forbury Office or the PCC Treasurer for this and other ways to give. John Bland, May 2026.

john@leominsterpriory.org.uk



Finance in Focus – 7a

Legacies – Giving when we've gone!

2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:
£13,429 at 30th June

You've been very patient with me in these pages as I have encouraged generosity in our giving to the Priory. But what about when our life on earth comes to an end? Does that have to be the end of our support of the Priory, which has perhaps been our spiritual home for very many years?

Of course, the answer is a clear "No!" Because that's when a bequest or legacy in our will can make such a difference. As the Church of England puts it

"For many people, leaving a gift in their will is a final opportunity to make a lasting gift to God."

If you don't already have a Will, now's the time to get one written (the Church of England has a scheme where you can make a straightforward Will either free, or very cheaply), and include these words to support The Priory:

I give ____% of my residuary estate OR a gift of £____
(_____) [in figures and in words], free of all
taxes to **The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical
Parish of St Peter and St Paul, Leominster** in the diocese of
Hereford for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt
of an officer of the said Parochial Church Council shall be a
sufficient discharge to my executors and trustees.

If you already have a Will, but wish to add a legacy clause to it at minimal cost, then a simple Codicil might be all you need, kept with your Will.



←This QR code takes you to the CofE Free Wills page:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/lasting-gift-your-church/writing-your-will/free-wills>

John Bland, July 2026. john@leominsterpriory.org.uk

Finance in Focus – 8

Legacies and Wills

2026 Deficit Watch:

Current shortfall:

£13,429 at 30th June

Since my last article (FinF 7a) the PCC has appointed me as its first **Parish Legacy Officer** (PLO), with a new email: legacies@leominsterpriory.org.uk

Part of the PLO rôle is “to provide a friendly, supportive and confidential ear to church members and others who approach regarding will writing and leaving a gift in their will. The PLO does not need to have specialist legal or financial knowledge because the rôle is not to give advice, but to sign-post individuals to further information and appropriate professionals.”

I have never done this before, but I’m willing to learn, and help anyone in full confidence to talk through and think about this. To help with this, there is a variety of publicity material on the subject, and you should find some at the back of church. And there are on-line versions too, of course, here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/church-legacy>

For my part, I am in the process of trying out the CofE-sponsored Freewill service to rewrite my own simple will at no cost. The on-line service is easy to use. I have repeated the link and QR code below.

If you have an existing straightforward will, and it needs updating, writing a fresh one using the Freewill service might be an economic way to go. That’s what I’m doing. The Priory’s Legacy Policy is on our website’s “Donate” page.

I look forward to engaging with any of you on this subject.



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<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/lasting-gift-your-church/writing-your-will/free-wills>

John Bland, July 2026. john@leominsterpriory.org.uk