**NOTE from the Chancellor**

**To: Clergy, wardens and PCCs of Churches in the Diocese of Blackburn**

I understand that Archdeacon of Lancaster is heading up a **Resilience** **Group** to assist parishes with advice and encouragement as they struggle with the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

One aspect of the problems that are arising is **financial**. Churches are shut and there are no public services. Funerals or marriages cannot take place in our buildings. Other church events - Spring or Summer fairs and the like - cannot happen, as we are not allowed to meet together. Inevitably much of the regular giving on the plate, or other occasional income that Churches rely on, will not happen.

Those with responsibility for maintaining the building and paying the bills will be anxious to reduce expenditure, but also be thinking how else they might raise funds and keep the books balanced.

It is inevitable that thoughts may turn to the possibility of selling church ‘treasures’ - some unused and ‘redundant’ communion plate, that old picture that the vicar acquired 30 years ago and nobody likes, some bits of old stained glass kept in the vestry, a piece of furniture stored in the gallery after it was removed in the re-ordering way back, and so on. The law relating to such items can be complicated.

I need to say to you, ***gently*** ***but******firmly***, that the **sale of such items can only be done - *if at all*- by a formal petition for a faculty through the Consistory Court, that results in a Faculty being granted.**

**Without that process being done properly, any attempted sale will not pass ownership to the ‘buyer’. Unwinding the resulting mess can be costly, and some of that cost may well have to be paid by those church officers in default.**

**The Church Courts are required to be very cautious about giving permission. Refusals of permission are far more common than approvals.**

The **Church Buildings Council** may well have to be involved, and they have produced a lengthy **Guidance** **Note**, headed **Treasures** to assist parishes. **It is attached**. **Please read it carefully.**

If you are thinking of going down this route, you must proceed slowly and cautiously, even if you consider you are meeting a really urgent crisis in your parish. The process is bound to be slow. Talk to your Archdeacon early on, and the DAC Secretary.

John W. Bullimore

Chancellor

25th April 2020