



## From ice lollies to techno-wizardry, or the lack thereof

*Jeff Thomas, Diocesan Stewardship & Support Officer, has found the last six months a very interesting time*

My role involves engaging with LMAs, Church Councils and their wider congregations to provide advice and assistance with finance and other resources. Having personal contact with individuals is great and it has been a pleasure to help where I can.



If, just before lockdown, you had mentioned Zoom to me I would immediately have thought back to my childhood and the ice lolly I was able to procure for sixpence. That and a Fab were sixties staples for us growing up. Since March, though, Zoom has taken on a whole new meaning and I find that increasingly I am online having meetings and even attending LMA Council Meetings.

I was pleased recently to attend the Daugleddau LMA Council meeting from the comfort of my own study, when fifteen of us got together to talk about church accounting and other exciting topics. It was especially good to see Ruth Black in person online, and to put a face to a name, as I had been working with her on a matter involving St Michael's, Rudbaxton.

I have been able to assist many churches with problems arising out of banks being slow to action instructions relating to standing orders or even not actioning them at all. This has led to a number of payments being made to the diocese in error. I am pleased to be able to say that all those churches who have been content to allow the payment to stand to their credit have been accommodated, as have all the churches who wrote to me to indicate that they preferred to have a refund.

Lockdown and the temporary closure of churches has been, and continues to be, a significant threat to our financial health at church, LMA and Diocesan level. I would urge everyone to consider making their weekly donations (offerings) electronically. There are two possibilities: either by standing order directly to the church account, or Gift Direct where payments are made to your church through The Church in Wales. Just search Gift Direct on the Church in Wales website.

I would like to end by thanking everybody I have had contact with over the last few months; everyone, without exception, has been positive and solution- rather than problem-focused.