Submitting your Finance Return online – Some Handy Hints & Frequently Asked Questions

The Online Parish Returns System's web address is: https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/

Deadline for Submissions & Who Should Enter the Data

Wherever possible, please would Parishes enter their own Parish Finance Return directly into the National Church's online Parish Returns System. The deadline is **May 31st** of each year. By entering this data yourself it is easier for possible typos and inaccuracies to be caught. It also ensures that the Parish is aware of the information being entered on its' behalf and when queries arise they frequently relate to Parish level information which the Diocese would not necessarily be aware of. *NB – Whilst the Treasurer should approve the data to be entered, the PCC can opt to delegate the actual data entry of the Finance Return either to another member of the PCC, or to a Parish Administrator.*

The Form

First you will be asked to indicate which accounting format your Parish Annual Accounts follow – either the Receipts and Payments format or the Accruals format. (If the gross income of your PCC is less than £250,000 then it is likely that your accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis. Parishes with a gross income greater than £250,000 will use the Accruals accounting basis.)

Preparation

We recommend that you first complete the excel or pdf version of the form before submitting the data online, this will ensure that you have all the information readily to hand. These forms can be downloaded from the home page of the Online Parish Returns System. Notes that correspond to each field are listed at the foot of the form to help identify the information needed. *When entering the information online, the notes appear alongside each field and can be accessed by clicking on the blue question mark symbol*

Logging In

Once you are happy with the data you will be entering, please continue to the online system and log-in. If you are a first-time user and need to have an account created for you, please contact Maxine in the Finance Department at finance@oxford.anglican.org or via the main switchboard on 01865 208200.

Data Entry

- The online system requires figures to be entered as whole numbers, rounded up to the nearest £
- Do not enter decimal points or punctuation in any of the numerical fields
- Ensure that all fields are completed, entering a 0 (zero) to indicate a NIL field, or by entering 'unknown' if you are not sure of this information. *NB If a field is left blank it will be read as incomplete, rather than as a 'NIL' or 'unknown' entry.*

Linked Fields

Please note that there are several boxes which have a relationship with each other. The data entered in these corresponding boxes must, therefore, 'agree' logically with each other in order for them to be accepted by the system. If they do not, an error message will appear when you press **NEXT** and you will be unable to proceed to the next page until entries are altered so that an agreement is made. The boxes concerned are:-

- **Box 14 must agree with Box 1** – if a positive number is entered in Box 1, then equally a positive number must be entered in Box 14, rather than a 0
- **Box 15 must agree with Box 2** – if you have reported a positive number in Box 2, then equally you much report a positive number in Box 15, rather than a 0
- **Box 16 must reflect the entry made in Box 7** – If you have reported NIL in Box 7 you cannot then enter a positive number in Box 16

Comments Box

Please enter any comments that you feel are relevant to your Return in the free form **'Comments'** box at the end of the form - this box is frequently consulted and can often explain an unusual or unexpected entry.

Saving & Submitting

When entering your data please remember to SAVE your data if you have to pause your Return mid-completion. You can then return at a later time and continue from where you have left off. You can save your data by either clicking on **Next** or **Save and Return to Menu** *(see diagram below).*
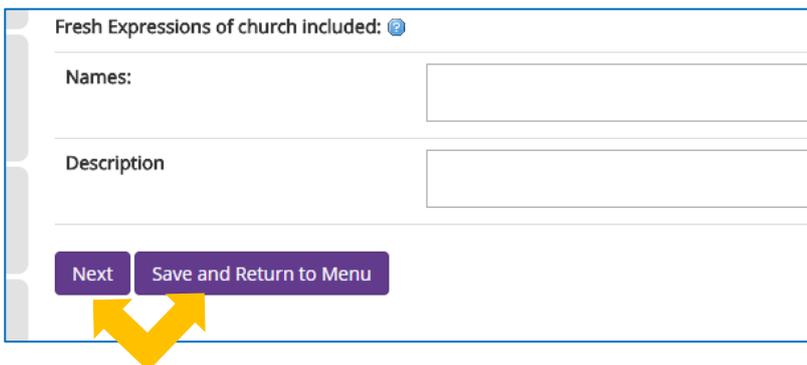
Once you have filled in all the fields please also ensure that you remember to press one of the **SUBMIT** boxes to complete your Return and ensure your data is transmitted to us. There is one **SUBMIT** box located on the final page at the top right corner of the page (see green arrow)
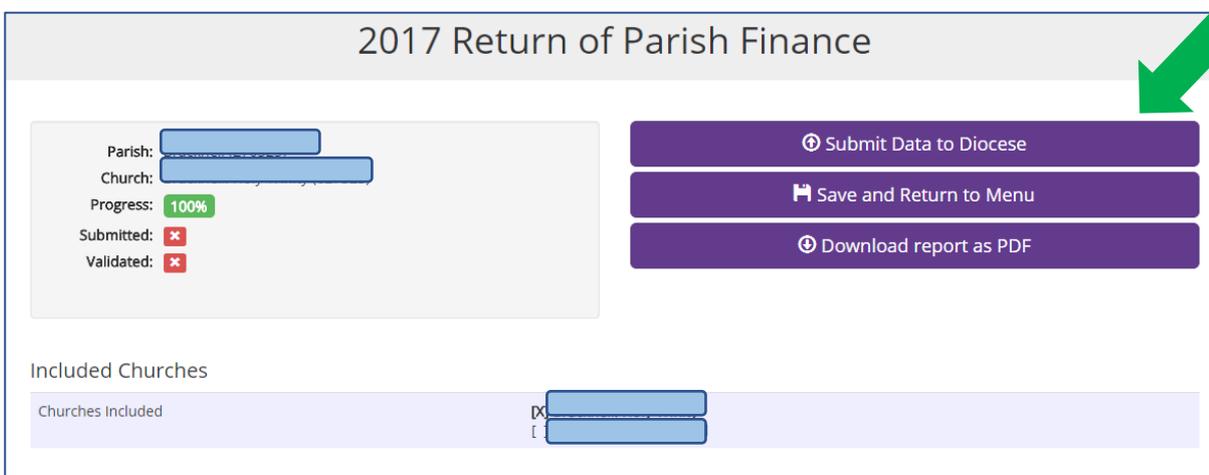
If you scroll down there is also a **SUBMIT** box located at the bottom left corner of the page:

Questions & Queries

Please see the Frequently Asked Questions below which may help you answer simple queries. For more complex issues or further assistance please contact Maxine in the Finance Department at finance@oxford.anglican.org or via the main switchboard on 01865 208200 and we will be happy to support you in submitting your Return.
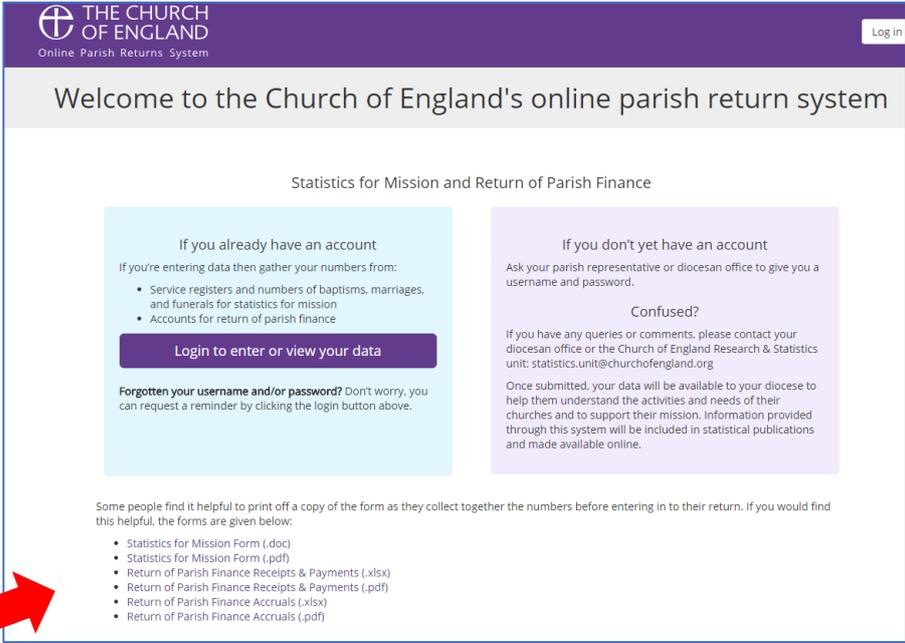
Finally…

Thank you! We appreciate the time taken to submit your finanical data. We believe that submitting your information in this format has benefits at every level of the life of the Church - local, deanery, diocese and national - and we are thankful for your invaluable contribution to this process.

Church of England's Online Parish Returns System
Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Where can I download the PDF/ Excel Parish Returns Forms if I wish to complete a draft Return before submitting the data online?*

   All the Parish Return forms for the current year are located at the bottom left corner on the front page of the Online Parish Returns System at: https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/ . See red arrow on diagram below. *N.B - You do not need to log in to download these forms.*


2. *How do I know what information is being asked for?*

   All of the Parish Return forms have helpful notes at the bottom if you scroll down. These should help you determine what data the form is requesting. These notes are available when you enter your data online and can be accessed by clicking on the blue hexagonal icon

3. *We are a multi church Parish, how do we submit a combined return?*

   In the Online Parish Returns System select the principal church in the Parish and start your Return. In Section 1 (see green arrow) the opening field is titled **Churches Included** and each church in your Parish should be listed with a tick box next to it. You should **tick the box** next to any church that is to be included in a joint return and this will link the information for the churches concerned.

   (NB – If the box is greyed out and you cannot tick it as desired please contact the Diocesan Parish Returns Team for assistance.)
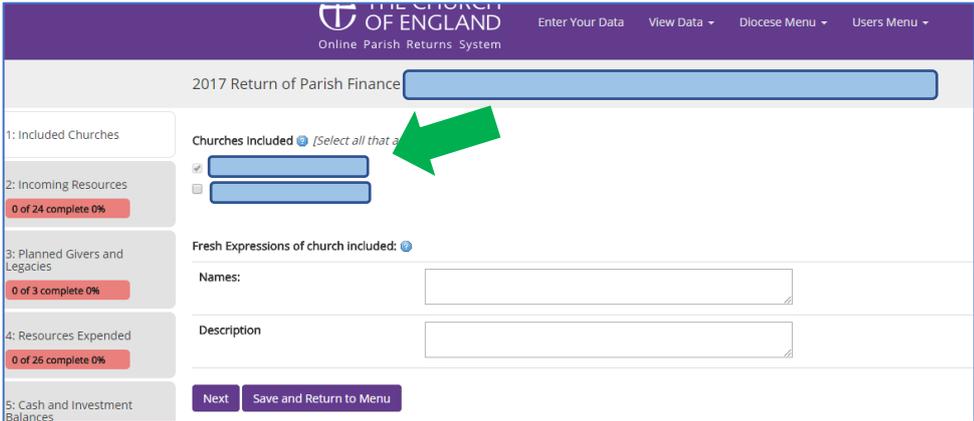
4. *I have forgotten my username &/ or password – how can I get these reset?*
    If you have forgotten your username or password, you can have these reset by following the steps indicated by the system using the Forgotten Username/ Password link(see green arrow)


If you experience problems with this link you can alternatively contact Maxine in the Finance Department at finance@oxford.anglican.org or via the main switchboard on 01865 208200 and we can reset this for you.

5. *Is there a User Guide for the Online Parish Returns System?*
    Yes! Once you have logged in, select the **Users Menu** on the top purple, ribbon and select the **Download Users Guide** option from the drop down list. This is a technical booklet which may contain more information than you might need for your purposes, but it also covers all of the basis functionality of how the System works.
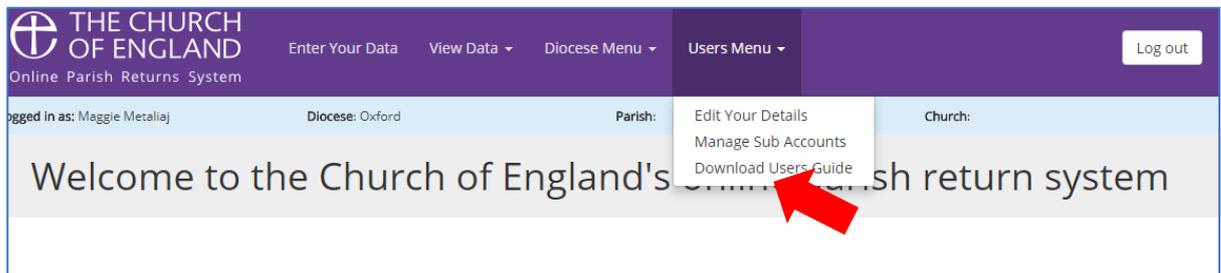
6. *I would like to change my password and/or email address, and/or my Name, and/or Username? If so can I do this myself?*
    Yes & Yes! Once you have logged in, select the **Users Menu** on the top purple, ribbon and select the **Edit Your Details** option from the drop down list. You can then edit whichever of the Name/ Username/ Password/ Email Address fields associated with your account that you would like.
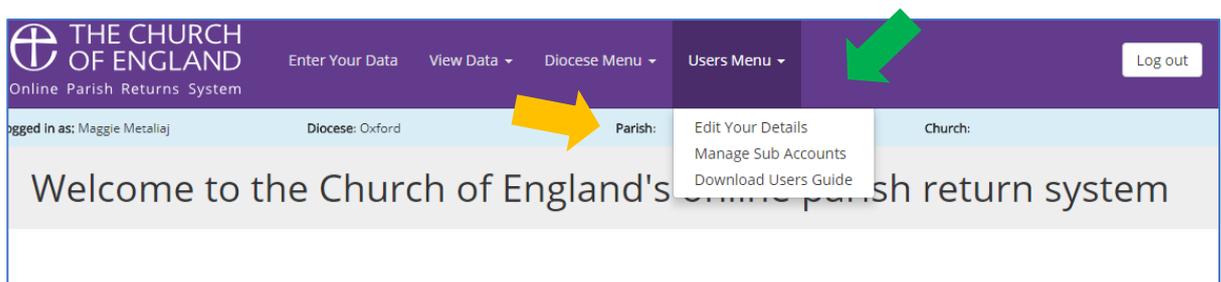
7. *I am no longer responsible for submitting any Parish Returns data for my Parish – What should I do with my account?*

If you are no longer responsible for inputting data for your Parish please remember to update your account with the details of your successor. This will avoid you being contacted by the Diocese in the future in connection with the PCC's Parish Returns. If no one else has been selected yet to take over the responsibity for submitting this data, it is important that contact details for another member of the PCC (usually a Church Warden/ the PCC Secretary or a Parish Administrator) be listed in the account as the temporary contact for the Parish. Please check with your PCC Members to see who this contact person should be in your own Parish and gain their consent before updating the accout with their details. For guidance on how to update the account details please refer to A6 (above).