



A Guide to Deanery Synod

in the Diocese of Chichester

Chichester Diocesan Church House
211 New Church Road
HOVE
BN3 4ED
01273 421021

www.chichester.anglican.org

Deanery synod – Playing an important role in the governance of the Diocese and the Church of England

There are 50,000 members of the Church of England on the Parish Church Electoral Rolls in the diocese of Chichester

Each year, at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), these church members elect representatives to the 400 Parochial church councils

Every third year, at the APCM, the church members elect representatives to the 21 deanery synods

Every third year the members of deanery synod elect representatives to diocesan synod

And also,

Every fifth year the members of deanery synod elect the diocesan representatives to General Synod

So deanery synod members play a key part in the governance of the Church of England. It is they who elect the lay members of diocesan synod, who formulate diocesan policy. Lay deanery synod members also elect lay members of General Synod, who consider, and approve, legislation affecting the whole of the Church of England.

DEANERY SYNOD

This short booklet is intended to provide an insight into the workings of deanery synod, and seeks to explain what deanery synod is, what it does, and its place in the governance of the Church of England.

Importantly, if you are interested in standing for election to your deanery synod and would like to know what skills you need, and what will be expected of you as a member, we have provided a brief answer to the most commonly asked questions – What does a member of synod do? What skills do I need to be an active member of synod, and how can I make a difference?

As with our sister booklet *Being a PCC Member* this is not intended to be a definitive guide, rather, it should be seen as an introduction to membership of deanery synod.

Your clergy, and current or former members of deanery synod within your own parish, will be able to provide more specific detail on the workings of your deanery synod.

Alternatively, if you are a member of the electoral roll of a parish within your deanery and are keen to see the synodical process in action why not attend a meeting of your synod as an observer. You won't be permitted to speak, or vote, but you can listen and learn!

What is a deanery?

A deanery is a group of parishes within an Archdeaconry. The deanery is a strategic mission unit in the diocese, and deanery synod acts as a vital link between people in the parishes (the PCC), the diocese (diocesan synod) and the Church of England nationally (General Synod).

The Diocese of Chichester has twenty one deaneries, each with a rural dean appointed as an officer of the Bishop, and a deanery lay chair elected triennially by the lay members of deanery synod.

Deanery synod is a council of church members, a forum or meeting place for members of the churches in the deanery.

What does the deanery synod aim to do?

It is often said that The Church of England is 'episcopally led and synodically governed'. The Bishops are responsible for overall leadership on policy and strategy; the clergy, and lay members of the church, working together in synods, make decisions about the everyday running of the church.

The main functions of deanery synod are to discuss and reflect on matters of the Church of England as they affect the deanery, and generally 'to promote in the deanery the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical'. (See further *Recommended Standing*

Orders and Model Rules for Deanery Synods, available from Church House.)

Deanery synod acts as a forum for the airing of parish views on any common problems, the communication of diocesan synod decisions, the consideration of relevant business and the referral to diocesan synod of matters of concern.

Synod will meet at least twice a year to pray and worship together and will encourage:

- The development of shared initiatives on ministry and mission.
- Co-operation over projects between parishes, and a strong desire to support one another, for example:
 - Hold a deanery service, perhaps evensong, with a united choir
 - Develop a deanery website on which to share ideas
 - Bring the Sunday schools together, with parents of course, for a deanery wide Sunday school picnic
 - Start a deanery prayer group, or arrange visits between parish prayer groups

- The sharing of expertise and knowledge between local churches (and indeed with other deaneries) by, for example:
 - Collaborating on fund raising opportunities, one large event covering two or more neighbouring churches.
 - Organising a deanery pilgrimage or, simpler to arrange and at lower cost, a quiet day centred on one church.
 - Introduce cross deanery training days; 'marriage preparation', 'Bible study' etc..
- An understanding of any concerns and problems that a parish or parishes may be experiencing, perhaps through an annual or six monthly meeting of churchwardens across the deanery.
- A generous understanding of the grace of giving, and a mutually supportive approach to giving, so that the deanery can meet, and if possible exceed, its deanery contribution to full ministry costs.
- Discussion and consultation about the best future pastoral provision in the deanery.

Who can be a member of deanery synod?

Deanery synod consists of a house of clergy led by the **Rural Dean**, and a house of laity led by the **Lay Chair**.

The house of clergy is made up of all clerks in Holy Orders beneficed in, or licensed to, any parish in the deanery, and clerical members of General or diocesan synod resident in the deanery.

Clergy also meet separately with the rural dean as a **Deanery Chapter**. This is a mutually supportive forum for licensed clergy in the deanery. Meetings include worship and theological reflection.

The house of laity is mainly an elected body. Each PCC may elect up to ten members from their electoral roll [*the actual number depending on the size of the electoral roll - see appendix B*]. In addition, licensed lay workers, and lay members of General or diocesan synod, are members of their deanery synod.

Elections to deanery synod take place triennially.

What does a member of deanery synod do?

Members of synod are not delegates, but are representatives of their PCC. In other words a member attends synod in his or her own right. Deanery synod members have a right to vote in elections to the diocesan and General synods.

An elected member is expected to attend all meetings of synod and to

- Come prepared to contribute to the meeting, bringing views, experience and expertise from their own parish, to debate and discuss at synod.
- Report back to their PCC on the content of meetings, and in particular on any decisions taken. It is recommended that 'report from deanery synod' feature as a standing agenda item for PCC meetings so that members can be kept informed about items discussed at synod, and kept up to date with deanery wide initiatives.
- Support events and projects as the deanery leadership seek to develop mission and outreach across the deanery
- Be totally committed to the work of synod

If I am elected to deanery synod what advice can you offer?

- First, do talk to a fellow member of deanery synod in your own parish to get an understanding of the formal processes of the meeting. If possible find a mentor on synod to provide an explanation if you're not sure what is going on.
- Read the agenda for the synod carefully. Understand the purpose of the meeting and consult with your fellow parishioners (especially where you feel that an agenda item has a particular bearing on your PCC, or a fellow church member). You should always try to have a good understanding of the views on key issues of *all* those you represent.
- Do listen to *all* the views put forward during a debate – a simple courtesy which, surprisingly perhaps, may help you to gain a deeper understanding of your own position as well as that of a person expressing another view.
- Do support and pray for each other on a regular basis. We serve, and answer to, one master, and what better way to do so than through prayer.
- As a member of synod *your* views count. If you have an opinion on a subject being debated do not be afraid to

share it - the true value of a debate is the sum of the views earnestly and clearly expressed.

- *BUT*, always remember that you are there to serve God, not yourself!

Finally, *don't* commit yourself to any task or activity which you may not be able to fulfil and *don't* commit your parish to anything without first seeking endorsement from your PCC!

Governance of Deanery Synod

Deanery synod is chaired jointly by a rural dean, generally the incumbent of one of the parishes in the deanery, who is appointed by the Bishop, and a deanery lay chair, who is elected triennially by the house of laity. Sometimes, especially in a larger deanery, the Bishop may also appoint an assistant rural dean. Synod will appoint a secretary and treasurer (sometimes in a larger deanery an assistant secretary and/or treasurer will be appointed) from among its own members, usually, but not necessarily, a lay member.

The deanery synod standing committee will consist of the joint chairmen, secretary, and treasurer (and assistants if applicable) and an equal number of lay and clergy members elected to the committee triennially by each house.

The role of the Rural Dean

The Rural Dean should be well acquainted with the circumstances of each parish in the deanery and his or her role can, by and large, be summarised as follows:

- Help the Bishop in his episcopate and caring for the deanery
- Provide a supportive and collaborative leadership for mission and ministry in the deanery
- Convene Chapter and co-chairing deanery synod and its work;
- Be a friend to clergy and lay leaders of the parishes;
- Sometimes depute for the archdeacon in his parish visitations

During a vacancy the Rural dean will work closely with the officers of a parish providing them with spiritual and practical guidance

The role of the Lay chair

The Lay Chair will also be well acquainted with each parish in the deanery. He or she will

- Jointly chair meetings of synod with the Rural dean
- Convene and take the chair at any meeting of the house of laity of the deanery synod
- Be consulted by the Bishop for his or her personal view on matters pertaining to the deanery
- Be consulted under the Pastoral Measure for a personal view when matters of pastoral reorganisation and the future of parish church buildings etc...are being formally considered.

A more detailed appraisal of the role of the rural dean and lay chair can be found on the diocesan website (links can be found on p.15)

The standing committee

The standing committee will typically comprise the Rural dean (and assistant Rural dean if one has been appointed) and Lay chair, and an equal number of lay and clergy members of synod (typically 2 of each). The secretary and treasurer will be ex officio members.

The primary function of the standing committee is to act as the management committee of synod.

- The committee will initiate and advise on proposals received from, and to be sent to, a higher synod. They will promote core diocesan strategies, for example safeguarding.
- Members of the committee will consult with individual members of synod and will have a sound understanding of views held, and their expectations of synod.
- the Standing committee will set the agenda for synod meetings, determine what subjects need to be covered, decide on guest speakers, and who will act as liaison with speakers, etc...

Other committees

There are no hard and fast rules but some deaneries, particularly a larger one, may choose to lighten the burden of the standing committee by setting up one or more sub-committees to work on a specific project for example a web site sub-committee or a deanery prayer group sub-committee.

Useful links

Guidelines for Rural Deans

<http://www.chichester.anglican.org/rural-deans>

Guidelines for Deanery Lay Chairs

<http://www.chichester.anglican.org/lay-chairs>

Appendices

A.

Extract from the Synodical Government Measure 1969

The functions of a Deanery Synod

5.- (3) The functions of a deanery synod shall be:

- (a) to consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in relation to their deanery, and to consider and express their opinion on any other matters of religious or public interest;
- (b) to bring together the views of the parishes of the deanery on common problems, to discuss and formulate common policies on those problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote in the deanery the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
- (c) to make known, and so far as appropriate put into effect any provision made by the diocesan synod;
- (d) to consider the business of the diocesan synod, and particularly any matters referred to that synod by the General Synod, and to sound parochial opinion whenever they are required or consider it appropriate to do so;
- (e) to raise such matters as the deanery synod consider appropriate with the diocesan synod: Provided that the functions referred to in paragraph (a) hereof shall not include the issue of any statement purporting to declare the doctrine of the Church on any question.

5.- (4) If the diocesan synod delegate to deanery synods functions in relation to the parishes of their deaneries, and in particular the determination of parochial shares in quotas allocated to the deaneries, the deanery synod shall exercise those functions.

In this subsection 'quota' means an amount to be subscribed to the expenditure authorised by diocesan synods.

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5.- (5) The General Synod may by Canon or Regulation extend, amend or further define the functions of deanery synods.

7.- (1) The rules contained in Schedule 3 to this Measure, which may be cited as the Church Representation Rules, shall have effect for the purpose of providing for the constitution and proceedings of diocesan and deanery synods and making further provision for the synodical government of the Church, including the matters hitherto provided for by the Rules for the Representation of the Laity: Provided that the said rules may at any time be amended by a resolution of the General Synod passed by a majority in each House of not less than two-thirds of those present and voting.

For the formal constitution of the deanery synod see Schedule 3 Part III of the Synodical Government Measure

1969, also known and published as the Church Representation Rules (see Ecclesiastical Law 2nd Ed Mark Hill p376 and pp605-608)

B.

Number on the electoral roll:	Number of lay representatives:
1-25	1
26-100	2
101-200	3
201-300	4
301-400	5
401-500	6
501-700	7
701-900	8
901-1100	9
1101 plus	10

