

## The Role of The Rural Dean

The power to appoint a rural dean rests with the diocesan bishop. Before making an appointment the bishop consults with the archdeacon, the deanery clergy and lay chair to find a person who is both capable of undertaking the task and who will receive the support of the deanery in exercising this ministry.

### Appointment and Conditions of Service

- The appointment is for a set term, initially 5 years, which may be extended for a further period.
- The rural dean will be commissioned by the bishop or the archdeacon in the context of a deanery event.
- A new rural dean will meet with the archdeacon at an early stage to discuss the role in more detail and within the local context.
- Expenses for the work required in fulfilling the role of rural dean are met in full, and these include:
  - Contribution to secretarial support and equipment
  - Travel on deanery business within the deanery
  - Travel to diocesan meetings on deanery business
  - Stationery
  - Telephone calls on deanery business
  - Postage
  - Official entertaining

Expenses are reimbursed on submission of a claim form obtainable from the diocesan finance office. For details see Appendix A and contact the diocesan secretary.

### Commissioning and Training

#### Induction

- Where possible there should be a handover with the outgoing rural dean and the lay chair.
- A nearby rural dean who is willing to act as a mentor for the first few months may be appointed by the archdeacon.
- There is an annual induction event for newly appointed rural deans and assistant rural deans

- The new rural dean may wish to contact the Director of Mission & Ministry and arrange a visit to Derby Church House to meet members of staff with whom they will have contact in their new role.

## Training

Rural deans and assistant rural deans are encouraged to think of training needs they have for this role when assessing their training needs, planning their CMD and framing their responses to Ministerial Development Review. The cost of appropriate courses can be claimed from the CMD allowance.

Where possible, training should be thought of as development in strategic thinking and practice, and should be incorporated in regular meetings of rural deans.

The following is also agreed to be part of regular support and development:

- Archdeaconry meetings of rural deans with their archdeacons usually take place every two to three months.
- One to one meetings with archdeacon will be held by arrangement.
- The Bishop and his Staff Team meet with the Rural Deans and Lay Chairs twice a year, and he may gather the Rural Deans on other occasions.

## Responsibilities of the Rural Dean

### 1. As an officer of the diocesan bishop

- The rural dean is an officer of the bishop through whom the bishop exercises such pastoral care and oversight as he is not able to exercise in person.
- The rural dean will seek to know all the clergy (stipendiary and SSM) and support their ministries. The quality of his/her relationship with clergy and laity in the deanery is fundamental to the role.
- The rural dean will work in the deanery with the archdeacon in shared and delegated episcopal oversight. Increasingly important expression of this task is through the creation and implementation of a deanery MAP. This can be a tool to frame the many strands of oversight that operate in our church for the local area.
- The rural dean will exercise a pastoral ministry, in consultation with the archdeacon, including help with cases of serious illness or other forms of distress among the clergy, or where there are signs of deterioration or depression which might lead to neglect of pastoral care, breakdown in pastoral relationships, or failure to exercise adequate supervision or team leadership. It is important that the bishops are kept informed of these situations within a context of confidentiality.
- The rural dean is encouraged to play his/her part in developing good communications between the bishops and their staff, and the wider church community.

- The rural dean meets with all newly-arrived clergy living in their deanery receiving the bishop's Permission to Officiate (PTO) before exercising their new ministry. The reasons for this are:
  - It provides an opportunity for clergy to express their thoughts on when, where, and how often they might want to serve
  - It allows the rural dean to give any relevant background information.
- Contact, in person, with people renewing their PTO is strongly encouraged in order to assess (on both sides) how much people feel able to take on.

## 2. As a colleague of the archdeacon

- In order to strengthen the delegated pastoral responsibility and shared oversight, the archdeacon will arrange regular meetings with the rural deans.
- The archdeacon's inspections of churches will sometimes be delegated to rural deans.
- If at any time the rural dean has any reason to believe that there is any serious defect in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of any church or chapel, or that the buildings are in a state of disrepair, he/she will let the archdeacon know.

## 3. As chair of the clergy chapter

The rural dean is the chair of the clergy chapter. Although the chapter has no formal place as a statutory body in the synodical government of the Church, it has a vital pastoral and educational role to play in the care and guidance of and collaboration between ministers in both practical and spiritual matters. It is helpful to have a chapter clerk. Chapter meetings offer the opportunity for collaboration, development, and mutual support of ministry. There needs to be a balance between worship, prayer, study, discussion and social events so as to promote fellowship and understanding between colleagues. It is important that the rural dean and the other members of chapter fully recognise the limits of the chapter's authority and do not make or pre-empt any decision which more properly belongs to the deanery synod.

The rural dean should encourage collaboration to enable those with parochial oversight to have adequate cover to ensure proper time for days off and holidays.

Deanery chapter membership comprises clergy in parochial posts in the deanery and licensed ordained chaplains in the deanery. Chaplaincies may exist in a number of places in each deanery and have a significant presence and perspective through their ministry and mission that could potentially add substantially to the lives of deaneries, yet they often feel isolated. Close relationships with the chaplains in deaneries should enrich the ministry of chaplains and the life of the deanery.

In order to affirm the collaborative nature of ministry, chapters should consider inviting Readers to attend certain meetings. Retired clergy are not members of deanery chapters, but every encouragement is given to support them in a deanery in an appropriate way, which enables

them to exercise their ministry in the light of the culture, ethos and priorities of the diocese and the deanery. Retired clergy may also therefore be invited to some meetings but their presence should not be allowed to dominate the life of the Chapter.

The lay chair may be invited to attend meetings of the chapter where there are particular matters to discuss.

Chapter meeting should be held regularly and at dates and times, that enable as many clergy as possible to attend. Opportunity should from time to time be given for those whose work or other duties preclude meetings during the day to attend at a time more convenient to them, for example in the evening or at lunchtimes. It is important to consider the needs of SSM's, Readers, retired clergy, and others holding PTO in arranging the chapter programme.

The rural dean must report to chapter members issues raised at staff meetings called by the bishops and archdeacons, and also identify questions and issues that can be raised at future meetings on behalf of the deanery and its clergy. The rural dean should also find out if the lay chair wishes any specific concerns of the laity to be raised at meetings.

From time to time opportunity should be given to bishops, archdeacons, sector ministers and others to attend chapter meetings.

The rural dean will liaise with the Bishop's office to arrange deanery confirmations.

- Usually there will be one confirmation service in each deanery every year. The bishops' office will contact each rural dean to identify a suitable date. Additional dates may be possible by arrangement with the Bishop's office. The detailed arrangements for the confirmation service are made by the parish hosting the confirmation with the office of the Bishop who is to conduct the service
- The rural dean should remind chapter members that those presenting candidates should bring with them their confirmation register and completed confirmation returns.
- The collection taken at the service is retained by the hosting parish, either for the work of that parish or for a charity of their choice.

#### 4. As co-chair of the deanery synod

Deanery Synods are governed by the Synodical Government Measure 1969

(<http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/church-representation-rules/church-representation-rules-online.aspx>). This provides amongst other matters that the rural dean and a member of the House of Laity elected by that House should jointly chair deanery synod.

The key joint task of the chairs is to enable all within the deanery to make a contribution to the life and mission of the Church according to their own particular gifts. Therefore, together they

should encourage all synod members to see the deanery as a body able to create and support creative mission hand in hand with the parishes.

The rural dean and lay chair are ultimately responsible for the correct and efficient operation of the synod and its committees

Specifically:

- The rural dean is co-chair, with a member of the House of Laity (lay chair) of the deanery synod.
- The rural dean and lay chair, together with the standing committee, plan the meetings of the synod. The development and growth of synod members will in large measure derive from the shared listening, discussion and study of synod members.
- There should be a deanery pastoral committee to work in relationship with the archdeaconry pastoral committee. It is important that those elected to this body have the mission of the whole deanery at heart. Increasingly the deanery standing committee may fulfil the role of the DPC.
- The deanery should play a significant role in enabling collaborative mission, evangelism and shared ministry across the deanery in the manner of 'Parish Plus'. This will require careful planning of programmes, appropriate liaison with the diocese and adequate time for sharing experience and identifying common aspirations.
- Under synodical government the rural dean is responsible for seeing that each parish maintains an up-to-date church electoral roll, that it has a properly elected church council and holds an annual parochial church meeting.
- The rural dean, with other deanery officers, shares responsibility for encouraging the payment of parish shares.
- The Rural Dean acts as returning officer for the election of deanery representatives to diocesan synod.

The deanery synod will be supported by one or more deanery committees;

- Standing Committee
  - composed of joint chairs of deanery synod, officers of synod (where they are members of synod) and other people elected by members of each house in equal numbers from amongst their members as the synod shall determine. It has no power to co-opt additional members.
  - Its role is to initiate and advise on proposals; to ensure members are adequately informed on questions raised and other matters of importance to the deanery; to prepare the agenda; to transact the business of synod between meetings; to make such appointments and do such other things as may be delegated by synod.
- Pastoral Committee
  - This committee is for pastoral matters and has a watching brief over how resources are best used for the mission and ministry of the deanery. It might be

that a decision is made to combine the standing committee and the pastoral committee.

- Other committees
  - The synod may constitute additional committees with such chairs, membership, terms of office, function, mode of appointment and other procedure as it thinks fit.

## 5. During the Vacancy of a Parish or Benefice of the Deanery (or extended absence of the Incumbent)

On a parish or benefice becoming vacant, the rural dean will have a key role to play and various legal tasks to carry out. When a vacancy arises the archdeacon will seek to meet with the rural dean, lay chair and churchwardens as soon as possible. Churchwardens need to be made aware of their responsibilities –

The following matters should be covered:

- Ensure that churchwardens have obtained all keys to the vacated parsonage house.
- In normal circumstances the rural dean will meet with the churchwardens to agree the arrangements for continuing the worship, work and mission of the congregation during the vacancy and other similar circumstances.
- Ensure that the churchwardens, along with the outgoing incumbent, check and sign the terrier and inventory of the parish church(es), parsonage house and other church property.
- Ensure the appropriate handling of finance during the vacancy. There is no longer the requirement for a separate sequestration account but all monies paid and received during the vacancy along with the purpose of each transaction must be clearly detailed.
- Ensure Parish Returns continue to be completed on time, including the Annual Diocesan Return and the Wedding Returns. The returns may be prepared by the Church Wardens or Parish Administrator and should be signed by the Rural Dean.
- Work closely with the archdeacon at the time of appointments, including associated matters such as disposal and acquisition of parsonages and the chosen place of residence.
- When an appointment has been made and the date of the licensing or institution agreed, the rural dean will receive an outline of the service from the Bishop of Derby's office and will work with the churchwardens in arranging the service, including taking the rehearsal and involvement in the service.
- Rural deans should meet the incumbent designate, to welcome him/her on behalf of the chapter and deanery, to advise him/her on the dates of future meetings of both these bodies and to have a preliminary discussion about the service itself.

### Clergy on long term sick leave

For any absence of seven days or less stipendiary office holders are required to inform the Bishop's HR Adviser (the officer of the Diocese designated for this purpose) if they are unable to

perform the duties of their office because of illness This is to ensure practical and pastoral care can be provided and that there is proper administration and accounting of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). They should complete a self-certification form and return it to the Diocesan Offices at Church House to the Finance Team.

Should the illness exceed seven days, clergy should make contact with the rural dean and archdeacon and inform them of the nature of the absence and its likely duration. The rural dean should then provide ongoing pastoral support and keep the archdeacon updated on the situation. After the fifth week of continued absence a member of the Bishops senior staff will keep in touch and do his/her best to take worry and concern away from the individual who is sick. During any ongoing absence the rural dean or nominee will arrange provision of services or liaise with churchwardens who are prepared to do this, to ensure that clergy can focus on their recovery and return to work.

For parochial clergy any sickness greater than seven days must also be supported with a Statement of Fitness to Work (or "Fit Note, as it is often called informally). The Statement of Fitness to Work must be sent to the Diocesan Offices at Church House to the Finance Team. They will ensure that the Fit Note is notified to the Church Commissioners and also to the HR Adviser.

The designated member of the Bishops staff will work to ensure that the illness is understood and that any adjustments to promote a phased return to work at the appropriate time are made. Any report is confidential to the Bishop, and those managing the absence.

Further details relating to sickness absence administration and pastoral care are contained in the clergy handbook (common tenure). <http://www.derby.anglican.org/en/church-admin/clergy/clergy-handbook.html>

## 6. Leadership in Mission

The Rural Dean has a key opportunity to encourage and develop commitment to the mission of the church. Building supportive relationships with ministerial colleagues, ensuring high standards of organisation and administration, and developing a creative space for the shaping of good practice and mutual encouragement in the Gospel – will all contribute enormously to the flourishing of Christian witness in the communities we are called to serve.

The Rural Dean provides a crucial link, between clergy, laity and wider communities within the Deanery, and with the Bishop and his staff in the process of crafting our common life in Christ.