

Developing Our Deaneries

The recent discussions in Diocesan Synod about the nature of deaneries led to the creation of a small working group, tasked to “develop a vision of what deaneries could be”. We invite Synod to consider the renewed vision and purpose for our deaneries which we offer and, if they broadly support it, to pass on that invitation to each deanery. We are very aware that the vision we offer prompts many questions about the practicalities of deanery life. We have deliberately not explored these and encourage Synod not to at this stage. Instead, we encourage the Synod to be clear about the vision that God is calling us towards. Then, in the light of this vision, to initiate reflection on the many practical issues that flow from this.

Our past and present experiences always affect our perception of the future and this is certainly true when we think of deanery life and how it can be developed. We wish to encourage a creative and imaginative approach which sees our deaneries as a network of churches, inspiring, influencing and leading mission and ministry locally, and not simply being defined by the Deanery Synod or Clergy Chapter. Our diocesan vision, ‘Generous Churches, Making and Nurturing Disciples’, encourages us to ensure that mission is increasingly shaping our shared life and structures. We long to see deaneries that are shaped and informed by the imperative of mission and are contributing to the fulfilling of our diocesan vision.

Our Shared Life & Mission

As members of the Body of Christ, we belong to the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. God has called us to know him, not simply as individuals but in community, a shared life which is reflected within the trinitarian life of God. Christ prayed that we might be one and that we might know and experience a deeper unity as his people which is expressed through mutual support and resourcing. The Anglican way challenges individualism and congregationalism and expresses this wider sense of belonging through parishes, benefices, deaneries and the diocese. As the Church of England, we have always understood each of these to involve relationships far beyond the gatherings of ‘members’ alone. We are a missionary Church, called to share in the mission of God, with a self-understanding which assumes that at every level we will engage with our surrounding communities and contexts. This self-understanding, along with the challenges and opportunities of our present time, highlight the importance of mission shaping our parishes, benefices, deaneries and the diocese.

The Role of the Deanery

We wish to assert that the deanery has a vital place in the life of the diocese and that there are areas of mission and ministry which can only be expressed at a deanery level. Where deaneries are not taking up these opportunities, nobody else is in a position to do so and the Church’s life and mission is diminished.

Whilst the parish remains significant for us, there are times when a wider vision, larger resources, broader perspectives and recognised local leadership are needed if we are to engage with the ever changing contexts and challenges around us. We suggest that our diocesan vision of ‘Generous Churches, Making & Nurturing Disciples’ cannot be delivered through the parishes alone. If the Church is to respond to the challenges and opportunities that surrounds us, and be resourced effectively to do this, then breathing fresh life and purpose into our deaneries is essential.

The principle of subsidiarity is one that we uphold. We need to be clear about what is best done at each of parish, benefice, deanery and diocesan levels. All parishes need to be engaging beyond their boundaries and the deanery is a natural place for this to occur. The deanery is able to provide wider resources and a sense of a ‘critical mass’ that is often missing in parishes. It enables and encourages wider initiatives where churches can contribute to something bigger. Often the deanery is the natural place for lay and ordained ministers to receive training and support. It is also the place where the wider local context can be particularly borne in mind, for instance in terms of deanery plans and engaging with local issues.

A Vision for the Deanery

The deanery : “a network of churches, inspiring, influencing and leading mission and ministry locally”

Deaneries with a renewed sense of purpose would be characterised by

- **Enabling Mission**

Engaging with contexts which are wider than benefices and with those who relate to local networks and not to places

Identifying and facilitating partnerships among churches

Specific initiatives and projects – both one off events and ongoing commitments

Speaking for the Church in a wider context and addressing social issues

Working ecumenically across larger local areas

- **Resourcing Ministry**

Training & Events for laity and clergy

Finding the funds to enable deanery initiatives

Encouraging the Freewill Offering process through the ‘Deanery Partnerships’

Identifying people to enable mission initiatives & offer expertise

Sharing stories and vision which encourage change

- **Overseeing Strategy**

Deanery Plans for deployment of ministry resources & the development of churches

Identification of new projects and initiatives

Identifying and encouraging collaboration

- **Supportive Relationships**

Encouraging prayer across the deanery

Healthy forums for different groups including, Clergy, Readers, RPA's, churchwardens, PCC treasurers and secretaries

Engaging with ecumenical partners

Mutual support and encouragement for all churches

Renewed Deaneries

We offer this vision for our deaneries in the belief that healthy and purposeful deaneries are essential if our diocesan vision is to be fulfilled. We recognise that developing deaneries in this way has many implications and prompts many questions, not least in the areas of leadership, resources, context and communication. In time, this extra work will need to be done but we cannot tackle those issues until we have clarity about the vision and purpose of our deaneries. We encourage you to listen to one another and to God, as we seek to develop a shared understanding of God's vision and purpose for our deaneries.

The Deaneries Working Group

Ven Andy Broom (Archdeacon of the East Riding); Mrs Ros Brewer (Lay Chair, Scarborough & General Synod Rep); Rev'd Ian Houghton (Rural Dean, Mowbray); Mr Mike Stallybrass (Lay Chair, Southern Ryedale); Mr Keith Steven (Deanery Secretary, York) and Revd Dr Gavin Wakefield (Director of Training for Missional Ministry).

Developing our Deaneries : the process through Synod and beyond . . .

The following process is proposed to take forward further consideration of the vision for our deaneries and the implications that it has for them.

Motion for May 2015, Diocesan Synod :

"This Synod:

- (i) welcomes the proposals of the Deaneries Working Group and affirms the vision set out in paper DS 15/03, and
- (ii) commends the Group's vision to Deanery Synods for consideration within deaneries, with responses to be sent to the Archdeacon of the East Riding by 23 October 2015."

Questions for discussion in the Deaneries

The Deanery Synod, and any other forums within a deanery, are asked to consider :

1. How do you respond to the vision for the development of our deaneries?
2. What would your deanery need to fulfil such a vision?
3. What might restrict your deanery from fulfilling such a vision?

The invitation to the deaneries is not only to the Deanery Synod but to any other forum that meets within the deanery to consider it. This might include the Clergy Chapter, the Deanery Standing Committee, Gatherings of Readers etc.

Please send your reflections to Ven Andy Broom, at ader@yorkdiocese.org , by Friday 23 October 2015.

November 2015

The Deaneries Working Group would meet to reflect upon the consultation and a presentation would be made at Synod on November 7th to share this. If the Diocesan Synod supports the Vision being proposed, it would be asked to give the Deaneries Working Group permission to begin working on the detailed implications of such a vision for the way deaneries are organised and led.

May 2016

The Group would aim to bring their initial proposals to the Diocesan Synod in May 2016.