

## What is a deanery?

A deanery is a group of parishes within an Archdeaconry. There are three Archdeaconries in the Diocese of Rochester: Rochester, Tonbridge and Bromley & Bexley. Orpington Deanery is in the Archdeaconry of Bromley & Bexley.

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 Rochester has seventeen deaneries, each headed by a rural or area dean appointed by the Bishop.

## What is a deanery synod?

Deanery synod consists of:

- a house of clergy led by the Area Dean, and
- a house of laity led by a Lay Chair elected by the lay members.

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. Every three years each parish in the deanery elects lay representatives in proportion to their electoral roll. In addition, licensed lay workers, and lay members of General or diocesan synod resident in the deanery, are members of their deanery synod.

### *The Deanery synod acts as a forum:*

- 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',
- for the airing of parish views on any common problems, and
- for the communication of diocesan synod decisions, the consideration of relevant business and the referral to diocesan synod of matters of concern.

## Other practical functions of the deanery synod

- To elect representatives to **Diocesan synod** (every third year) and the diocesan representatives to **General Synod** (every fifth year).
- To consider and debate issues referred to it by diocesan synod
- To develop shared initiatives on ministry and mission.
- To encourage co-operation between parishes
- To share expertise and knowledge between local churches (and indeed with other deaneries)
- To encourage collaboration on fund raising opportunities
- To organise deanery events such as pilgrimages or quiet days.
- To organise cross-deanery training days and courses

## Roles in the deanery and deanery synod

Deanery synod is chaired jointly by the area dean, generally the incumbent of one of the parishes in the deanery, who is appointed by the Bishop, and the lay chair. Synod will appoint a secretary and treasurer.

### **Area Dean**

The Area 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 episcopal oversight 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 deputise for the archdeacon in his parish visitations.
- During a vacancy the Area dean will work closely with the officers of a parish providing them with spiritual and practical guidance.

### **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 Area 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.

### **Standing Committee**

- The standing committee will typically comprise the Area dean and Lay chair, and an equal number of lay and clergy members of synod (typically three 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 larger ones, 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 mission sub-committee or a deanery prayer group sub-committee.

### **What do I need to do as a Synod Member?**

- Synod will meet at least twice a year to pray and worship together. You will be expected to attend these meetings.
- Come prepared to contribute to the meeting, bringing views, experience and expertise from their own parish, to debate and discuss at synod.
- 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.
- 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!
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Support events and projects as the deanery leadership seek to develop mission and outreach across the deanery.

### **What do I need to bring as a Synod Member?**

- An understanding of any concerns and problems that a parish or parishes may be experiencing.
- A generous understanding of the grace of giving and mutual support.