

Guidance for Deanery Lay Chairs



DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS – VISION STATEMENT

Living God's Love is the vision of the parishes, church schools and chaplaincies across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and Barnet. This Vision is grounded in our love of God and love of neighbour flowing from God's love for us. Its three priorities are:

going deeper into God

transforming communities

making new disciples

Using Mission Action Planning we are developing confident and outward looking mission and evangelism, leading to spiritual and numerical growth.

Information about synods, boards and committees: <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/governance/>

Living God's Love:
<http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-god-s-love/>

Resources for parish officers:
<http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/parish-officers/>

And finally...

Thank you! The ministry of DLCs and the part they play in leading mission in their deanery often appears to go unrecognised and unseen, but it is valued and appreciated – in parishes, by Rural/Area Deans and by senior Diocesan staff as together we seek to Live God's Love.

Guidance for Deanery Lay Chairs

Preface

Some years ago John Wallace, who is currently Lay Chair of Diocesan Synod and Lay Chair of Dunstable Deanery Synod, received a booklet from the Diocese of Chester and gained permission to adapt it for use within the Diocese of St Albans. From this Canon Robin Brown, who was the Local Ministry Officer and John Wallace together produced a booklet of Guidance Notes for Deanery Lay Chairs.

This is an updated edition which draws on the material of the first edition and includes wisdom and insights from a training day which was held for Deanery Lay Chairs on 8th June 2013.

My thanks go to those who participated in that day, and especially those who presented different sessions: John Wallace, Tony Boon (Diocesan Assistant Accountant), the Ven. Trevor Jones (Archdeacon of Hertford), Revd Canon Richard Hibbert (Rural Dean of Bedford Deanery) and Hannah Potter (Lay Chair of Bedford Deanery).

Being a Deanery Lay Chair (DLC) is a ministry which demands pastoral and administrative skills, prayerfulness and a vision for the mission and ministry of the Church focused in a given location. Lay Chairs play a significant role in helping deaneries and parishes catch the vision for mission that we seek in this Diocese through Living God's Love. The importance of the role is sometimes not recognised by parishes and Deanery Synod members and its potential contribution to the life of a Deanery can therefore be lost. My hope in producing this new edition of Guidance Notes is that it will give confidence to existing and new Deanery Lay Chairs. Every Deanery is different, so it is important to read these Notes not as a prescriptive list of what must be done, but as an opportunity to reflect on what could be done. It will also be a source of information and perhaps even inspiration to others who may read it such as Rural/Area Deans and Deanery Synod members, so that those who have the gifts may be supported and encouraged to offer themselves in God's service as Deanery Lay Chairs.

Revd Jeanette Gosney
Parish Development Officer
September 2013 (slightly revised December 2014)

DLCs can sign up to receive the electronic diocesan newspaper, See Round. Sign up at <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/seeround>. DLCs can also ensure they are aware of Diocesan events by looking at the e-bundle via the main See Round page here: <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/news/diocesan-newspaper>. They can play an important role in encouraging Deanery Synod members and parishes to become involved in and aware of the wider Diocese, perhaps by sending in occasional articles for See Round.

DLCs are invited to the annual meeting of Rural/Area Deans and Lay Chairs from across the Diocese, which is an excellent opportunity to meet with bishops and other senior Diocesan staff as well as to meet their counterparts from other Deaneries. Meetings within archdeaconries may also take place.

Archdeacons also welcome invitations to Deanery Synods, and in some cases have a policy of visiting at least once a year.

DLCs can encourage parishes to invite bishops and archdeacons to take services or come to events – parishes sometimes complain that they don't see enough of senior staff, when a simple proactive invitation would overcome that feeling.

15. Support and Training

DLCs are encouraged to network with each other, especially when they have a particular concern. This often works best within an archdeaconry, but other channels may also be fruitful.

The Equipping God's People programme aims to put on a training day at the start of each triennium for both new and returning DLCs. This has proved helpful in the past as an opportunity both to learn more and to share good practice.

There is a biennial national conference for DLCs which enables DLCs to gain an even wider perspective. Funding for this can be made available from Deanery and Diocesan sources, to which DLCs are encouraged to apply through the Rural/Area Dean, Archdeacon and/or Parish Development Officer.

All DLCs should have an up-to-date copy of the Diocesan Directory (shortly to be available online) which contains the names and contact details of all bishops, archdeacons, other diocesan officers and parishes. Diocesan staff are always ready to offer support where possible. Please contact them!

The Diocesan website contains a wealth of information relating to parishes. The following pages from it might be especially useful for DLCs:

Guidance Notes for Deanery Lay Chairs

1. The purpose of Deanery Synod

The Synodical Government Measure 1969 defined one of the major objectives of a Deanery Synod as:

To bring together the views of the parishes of the Deanery on common problems, to discuss and formulate common policies on these 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.

The role and duties of the Deanery Lay Chair (DLC) in helping to make this objective a reality is described in the rest of this booklet. Undergirding it all is the call to pray – for the Deanery and its parishes, the wider Diocese and for one's own role and contribution as DLC. For it is only through the guidance and wisdom of God's Spirit that gifts will grow and the missional ministry of the Church will flourish.

NB: There is a Diocesan pamphlet available 'Rules for Deanery Synods' (June 2011 edition) which can be found on the Diocesan website (<http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/governance>) or is available from The Diocesan Secretary. This gives detailed information about the functions, procedures and rules for Deanery Synods.

2. Statutory position of the Deanery Lay Chair

The statutory duties of the DLC are few and are outlined in the following paragraphs:

The Synodical Government Measure 1969 and Canon C23 lay down that a member of the House of Laity shall be elected to be Joint Chair of a Deanery Synod with the Rural/Area Dean.

The Measure also states that the duties of the Joint Chairs are:

- a) to take the chair in the Synod, as agreed between the two and
- b) to convene and chair any meetings of the separate House of Laity or House of Clergy.

11. Deanery Chapter

The Deanery Chapter is a regular meeting convened by the Rural/Area Dean for Deanery clergy. It is attended by the stipendiary parish clergy and other clergy if they wish such as self-supporting ministers (SSM), chaplains and retired clergy. Readers sometimes attend – practice varies from Deanery to Deanery. The DLC has no automatic right to attend a chapter meeting, but some chapters invite the DLC once or twice a year to help strengthen the relationship. This should be discussed with the Rural/Area Dean.

12. Financial matters

The DLC is not directly responsible for the finance of the Deanery – the Deanery Treasurer holds that responsibility. However, it may be helpful for a DLC to be aware of the issues and pressures facing parishes relating to the parish share and share factors so that they can support parishes and participate in any discussion in an informed manner. Advice and information can always be obtained from the Diocesan Finance Department in the Diocesan Office, and there is a wealth of information on the Diocesan website. DLCs, along with the Rural/Area Deans and Deanery Treasurers, are informed on a monthly basis as to how the payment of parish share is progressing.

A DLC may be involved in the annual Deanery meeting which recommends any Pastoral Aid Support Grants to parishes which are finding it difficult for various reasons to raise their parish share. They may also be involved in the discussions within the Deanery on the distribution of the parish share, or in discussion of the triennial review of share factors, which is initiated by the Archdeacon.

13. Expenses

DLCs are entitled to claim for any travel or other expenses incurred in the exercising of their role. These should be claimed from the Rural/Area Dean's allowance.

14. Relating to the wider Diocese

The role of the Deanery Synod is to act as a link between the Diocese as a whole and the individual parishes. As already indicated, debates and motions can be sent up from parish through Deanery Synod to Diocesan Synod - and potentially General Synod, as well as being sent in the opposite direction. The DLC will therefore probably want to be aware of some of the key issues and initiatives of the Diocese in order to encourage and inform Deanery members and Deanery Synod agendas.

9. Worship

The DLC is involved in a number of services within the Deanery, and should try to attend if possible. There may not always be a visible role 'up front', but the presence of the DLC representing the lay people of the Deanery is important, as well as the opportunity to meet people afterwards over any refreshments. Services to which the DLC can expect to be invited and where there is usually a speaking role in the liturgy include the commissioning of a new Rural/Area Dean when the DLC presents the new Rural/Area Dean to the Archdeacon, licensings, inductions and institutions of new parish clergy and the mandating of Local Ministry Development Teams. Attendance at the licensing of Readers from the Deanery or the first Eucharist of a newly ordained priest in the Deanery might also be appreciated and there may be other special Deanery services which the DLC might choose to attend.

10. Wider role in the Deanery

Some Deaneries put on Deanery events such as missions or special children's or families' days, and parishes often have flower festivals, or centenary celebrations or similar. Other occasions might include a farewell social for a member of the clergy. On occasion the DLC may be called on to give a vote of thanks or say a few words of welcome. There is no expectation that a DLC will attend all such events, but they might like to be aware of them and support where appropriate.

The DLC may make themselves available to go to PCCs on occasion to explain the role of the Deanery Synod. It can also be helpful to call together the PCC lay chairs of the Deanery to offer mutual support and encouragement.

Some Deaneries produce a Deanery newsletter or have a Deanery website and the DLC may choose to be involved in helping to produce or resource information for this.

The DLC may want to offer particular support to church wardens, along with the Rural/Area Dean, during a vacancy.

There is a Christian calling to care for members of Deanery Synod who are in any kind of distress or difficulty, perhaps through bereavement, illness or loss of employment. DLCs may also find from time to time that they are involved in supporting e.g. church wardens or families of clergy where there is a crisis or on-going problem. Such pastoral care should not become an overwhelming burden and clearly needs to be handled with a degree of sensitivity and appropriate confidentiality.

3. Election of Deanery Lay Chairs

Elections take place every three years, usually at the start of a triennium. There is no limit to the number of terms of office a DLC may serve: one is perfectly acceptable and it is recommended that two or at most three terms is long enough, (assuming that the incumbent DLC is re-elected).

Lay Chairs should be elected by an open process amongst the lay members of Deanery Synod. Any lay member of Deanery Synod is eligible for nomination, and can be nominated by any other lay member of Synod. If an election is contested, only lay members of Synod are entitled to vote. NB: In practice, it may be that the Rural/Area Dean will work with the current DLC to find a successor or encourage others to stand, or the current DLC might approach one or two lay members to ask them to consider standing.

The role is not generally sought-after: some consideration could be given to producing a simple 'job description' prior to election so that people can think about what the commitment is and the skills/gifts required.

4. Working with the Rural/Area Dean

The election of a new Rural/Area Dean is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop. However, the bishop may consult, amongst others, both the Deanery clergy and the DLC as part of this process.

The Rural/Area Dean and the DLC will want to build a good relationship. This will inevitably take time and some commitment. Beyond the set times for meeting such as Standing Committee, it may be that the DLC and Rural/Area Dean will choose to meet separately perhaps twice a year to discuss issues relating to the Deanery. They will probably recognise that each has different gifts and want to discuss how these can be used most appropriately in caring for and running the Deanery. In some Deaneries there is also an Assistant Rural/Area Dean who meets regularly with the Rural/Area Dean. It may be beneficial to ensure that the DLC is also included in these meetings.

The DLC may also feel that it is appropriate to offer support, encouragement and in times of stress pastoral care to the Rural/Area Dean. It is always appropriate to pray for them.

5. Deanery Synod Meetings

The DLC should aim to be present at all meetings and in most cases to share the chairing of the meeting with the Rural/Area Dean.

The agenda of a Synod meeting will have been discussed and decided in Standing Committee (see below), but should include topics where lay people can contribute or which are particularly relevant to lay people and parishes. In the course of a year, Synod meetings will usually include a variety of ways of engaging the members: presentations from visiting speakers such as Diocesan officers, small group discussions, debates, as well as contributions and news from individual parishes, General Synod representatives, DBF representatives and the regular reports e.g. on Deanery finances and from the Deanery Pastoral Committee (see below).

A particular role of the DLC might be to encourage those giving reports e.g. from Diocesan Synod and the Treasurer's report to do this clearly and succinctly so that Synod members are genuinely well-informed.

The DLC should try to encourage lay people to participate and engage in discussions, recognising that for some speaking in public can be quite daunting. Discussion in twos and threes with some feedback to the whole Synod is one way of overcoming this.

The DLC will ideally get to know the representatives of each parish, although it is recognised that this will not always be easy. Some Synods encourage members – lay and clergy – to wear badges showing name and parish, but this is by no means universal practice. Encouraging members to give their name and parish when they speak, however, is good practice and aids the process of everyone getting to know each other.

6. The Deanery House of Laity

The DLC may convene a separate meeting of the House of Laity e.g. for the purpose of elections or for debating points of particular relevance to the non-ordained constituency, or for eliciting a particular lay response to a question of the moment. Any such debates should normally be used as a prelude to the issues being debated in full Synod.

The DLC should encourage members of the House of Laity to stand both for Diocesan Synod and its committees and for General Synod to ensure that the representation on these bodies reflects as far as possible the range of views of the wider church.

Separate meetings of the House of Laity are relatively rare, but there may be scope for a less formal gathering of lay members to discuss topical matters. Lay people sometimes feel inhibited by the presence of clergy, and, unlike clergy who meet regularly in clergy chapter meetings, have no other forum for meeting and getting to know one another, so may appreciate an occasional opportunity to do so.

7. Committee Meetings: Standing Committee, Pastoral Committee

The DLC is ex-officio a member of the Standing Committee and contributes to the decisions made on the formulation of policy and the development of the Synod agendas (see above). The DLC will often need to play a part in deciding how best to handle particular Deanery Synod motions that are to be referred to Diocesan Synod. Where a motion is likely to be referred to Diocesan Synod, and possibly onward transmission to General Synod, the DLC is advised to contact the Diocesan secretary beforehand for guidance on wording and time-scales. In setting its agendas, the Standing Committee also needs to be mindful of the timescale required for motions from Diocesan Synod to be discussed in Deanery Synod and parishes. On a more pragmatic level, the DLC will want to be involved in deciding on locations for the meetings of the Synod. In many Deaneries, the location moves around the various parishes of the Deanery.

The Pastoral Committee is sometimes merged with the Standing Committee in terms of membership, but has a distinct role. Either the Rural/Area Dean or the DLC chairs this committee, or the chair may be shared. Its task is to have oversight of the Deanery and its constituent parishes, being aware of current and forthcoming vacancies, potential pastoral re-organisation and any new developments such as new housing. It liaises closely with the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) in planning for any re-organisation. The Diocese has a statutory duty to consult the DLC as an 'interested party' in potential cases of pastoral re-organisation. The DLC plays a major part in drawing up the Deanery Mission Action Plan and report to the DMPC, which takes place every five years, and may be involved in presenting it to the DMPC.

8. Annual Archdeacon's Inspections

Every parish has an annual Archdeacon's Inspection. The Archdeacon may do this, but often delegates the task to the Rural/Area Dean, who may in turn ask the DLC or other experienced Deanery clergy for assistance. Diocesan guidance is always given as to what is required and what specific aspects need to be checked, but beyond this, it is an excellent opportunity for the DLC to get to know the parishes in the Deanery and the respective church wardens. Indeed, experience has shown that it is sometimes more productive because it is a lay-lay meeting, rather than involving clergy. There is some form-filling to be done, but it is the conversations, listening and building of relationships, often offering support when there is a problem in the parish, that are equally if not more important. Some Deaneries have a policy of alternating each year between DLC and Rural/Area Dean, except, of course, in the years when the Archdeacon does the Inspections.