

ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD

11 October 2025

Listening Together – Shaping Ministry in Our Diocese

Phase One – Autumn 2025, Spring 2026 – *The Revd Mark Rodel, Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry*

What's this about?

We're beginning an important listening process to help shape the future of ministry across the Diocese of St Albans. This is part of co-creating a broader Ministry Strategy initiated by Bishop Jane and Tim Lomax, looking at how we support formation, deployment and development. (Find out more [here](#).)

This first phase—**formation**—focuses on:

- **Discipleship and vocations**
- **Training for ministry**
- **Wellbeing of those in ministry**

We believe you can't talk about calling (vocation) without talking about how God grows disciples—so we're including that too.

There will be two more phases of listening process that will take place after the completion of phase one. Phase two (deployment) will be looking at curacies, deployment and first incumbency support. Phase three (development) will be looking at ministry in particular contexts (eg: inner city, rural, outer estates) and with particular groups (children, young people, young adults), along with ministry reviews and continuing development. Widening participation with underrepresented groups will be a consideration throughout.

Why this matters

This isn't just about gathering opinions or ticking consultation boxes. We're starting from a deep belief: **God is already at work in every parish, chaplaincy, and school.**

Our job is to listen carefully—together—for how God is moving, and then work out how best to join in. It's not about inventing new ministry structures from scratch, but about recognising, encouraging, and equipping the people God is already calling.

This builds on, not replaces, our existing ministries—Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Readers, Enablers, Lay Leaders of Worship. It's about making the path clearer and more supportive for everyone called to serve.

How we'll listen

We're using a method called **Corporate Spiritual Discernment**, drawn from the [Partnership for Missional Church](#) process. It's all about prayerfully listening—to God, to one another, to Scripture, and to our communities.

The process looks like this:

1. **Start with a shared question**, like "How is God calling, growing, and caring for those who serve?"
2. **Small groups** reflect together on what Scripture, our church life, and our local communities show us.
3. **Each group writes a one-sentence response** (not answer) to the question.
4. **Groups then join together**, combining insights until there's a shared sentence everyone can affirm.

It's a simple, powerful way of listening for God's leading.

This won't replace our decision-making bodies—it will *inform and enrich* their deciding.

What will our question be?

A small, prayerful group will be working together in September to shape a question that can guide our shared discernment. Their question will be shared with the Board for Mission and Ministry and the Bishop's Staff, to help make sure it's something we can all ask together as a diocese.

Who's involved?

We want everyone to take part:

- Members of the Mission and Ministry Department will facilitate Corporate Spiritual Discernment for **Deanery Synods**, the **Board for Mission and Ministry** and the **Bishop's Staff Team** will take part too.
- Members of **parishes** who experience the practice at Deanery Synods and want to run it in the parish will be given guidelines and training on how to facilitate the process.
- **Young people** will join through school or youth group sessions in each Archdeaconry.

We will commence deanery synod visits in **October**.

What support will be available?

Some Mission and Ministry Support Team members are being trained in how to lead the process, and we'll run training for those who want to facilitate it locally. We'll provide **clear, step-by-step guides** for parishes, too. We'll also make sure there's a **youth-friendly version** of the process.

What happens with what we hear?

At each event, the final output is a single sentence. These will be gathered and prayerfully reviewed by a review team in 2026. We hope to be accompanied by a **theological consultant** who'll reflect on the themes emerging. These insights will shape recommendations for the **Board for Mission and Ministry** and **Bishop's Staff** later in 2026, and potentially go forward to the **new Diocesan Bishop** and Diocesan Synod.

What we're asking from you

This short guide gives some background to the journey we're starting together as a Diocese. We won't have time today for the full Corporate Spiritual Discernment process, but you're warmly invited to take part in a shorter version of the listening.

The steps will be:

#	Step	Description
1	Opening	A brief explanation of the aim of the session.
2	Attending to Scripture	We hear Ephesians 4:1-16 and take time for silent contemplation.
3	Grouping	We get into groups of about five.
4	Brainstorming	In small groups we gather words and phrase in response to the question. We focus in turn on three directions: 1. Above us. Scripture and tradition. 2. Among us. Experience in our Christian communities. 3. Around us. Our neighbourhoods and society.
5	Connections	We look for connections between all three.
6	Contemplation	We hear the question read again and contemplate in silence.
7	Conversation	We share in an open discussion on what's emerging for us.
8	Contemplation	We hear the question read again and contemplate in silence.
9	Composition	In our group, we craft a response to the question, beginning with 'God is...', with God as the subject of an active verb
10	Sharing	Each group shares its sentence.

Contact

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