

The Role of an Assistant Rural Dean

Introduction

The purpose of the role is to support and work with the Rural Dean. The role is not statutory – not every deanery has one, and there is no set template. It is designed to be flexible so that Rural Dean and Assistant Rural Dean can determine between them how to share out responsibilities and play to each other's strengths and gifts. Don't underestimate the benefits of mutual support and having a 'sounding board'. And more than that, working as a team – which will also include the Deanery Lay Chair – models good practice.

What follows is simply an outline of some of the responsibilities of a Rural Dean which an Assistant Rural Dean may assist with.

Role of the Rural Dean: an archdeacon's perspective

A Rural Dean's overarching role is to be a bridge between the 'centre' of the diocese and the local parishes in the deanery so that the concerns and joys of the parishes are brought to the attention of the bishop/archdeacon as appropriate and information and enquiries from the 'centre' can be transmitted to the parishes. It therefore enhances and amplifies communication across the whole diocese. The deanery is the fulcrum at the heart of this.

Three key elements to make this effective:

- A) Leader in mission: be prayerful and proactive in encouraging vision (mission/outreach)
- B) Knowledge: know your clergy and their families and know the parishes' strengths and struggles (pastoral)
- C) Communication: Talk to your archdeacon and expect your archdeacon to talk to you!

8 specific areas of responsibility in brief:-

1. Vacancies – working with the benefice in vacancy to ensure cover etc; help if required with their profile, run section 11 meeting, attend section 12 meeting, co-ordinate the visit/interview days and the licensing service.
2. Pastoral – care and encouragement of clergy and their families, especially welcoming new clergy in post – new to diocese and first incumbents in particular.
3. Deanery synod and chapter – plan and chair as agreed
4. Deanery planning/Mission and Pastoral committee – hold and shape vision with deanery, convene deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee, attend archdeaconry mission and pastoral committee
5. Parochial visitations – work with archdeacon to ensure these are done.

6. Archdeacon's visitation (admitting churchwardens to office). Liaise with bishop's office to ensure it goes smoothly. Take key role in service and in collecting churchwardens' forms.
7. APCMs/election of officers. Have a copy of Church Representation Rules handy for when queries come your way. Be prepared to cover parishes in vacancy.
8. Safeguarding – encourage all to be positive in their parishes, affirm importance of training. Inform Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and archdeacon if there are concerns.