

Deanery Lay Chairs: A simple role description

Thinking about being a deanery lay chair? Wanting to know what it involves? Read on!

The role is flexible – there is no fixed list of things you ‘must’ do, so what follows is a list of things you might do (though some are more ‘expected’ than others!) How you do them will depend on you – your gifts, your personality, the time you have available. The key thing is to work with your Rural Dean (and assistant rural dean if there is one). With them you form the deanery leadership team, along with the deanery secretary and deanery treasurer. At the heart is building relationships of support and partnership in the gospel – together holding a shared vision for the deanery as it seeks to Grow in God.

Here’s that list of 10 top suggestions – but remember, you are not doing all these things all of the time, and you do not ‘have’ to do them all. Discuss what might work for you with your Rural Dean.

1. Represent the laity – be their voice and enable their voices at deanery meetings. This is the public side of the role.
2. Attend Deanery Synod – and you will probably co-chair it with the Rural Dean. You also be on the Standing Committee and Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee helping to shape the deanery vision. A public role again, but also strategic.
3. Be a listening ear – a sounding board for the Rural Dean. This requires a bit of wisdom, sensitivity - and sometimes tact!
4. Go round the various parishes – attend their services or events, so that you can get a feel of the ‘mood’ on the ground. Be known! This requires a good listening ear, pastoral nous and sometimes the wisdom to know how to diffuse a tricky situation or deal with a grumble.
5. Help form the vision for the deanery and its deanery plan – and help implement it. This is a more strategic part of the role, but also requires the ability to enthuse and encourage others.
6. Help with parochial visitations (annual church inspections). This is a more practical aspect of the role – but it’s also pastoral.
7. Be involved with parishes in vacancy – especially the vacancy process. This will include attending vacancy meetings including the section 12 and interviews. This is about being a supportive voice and offering a local perspective representing the wider deanery.
8. Represent the deanery laity on the archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee (usually 4/ year) and attend the diocesan meetings of the Rural Deans/Lay Chairs with the bishops (usually 2 or 3 days or half days/year). This is the wider leadership role, helping to link the local parish voices with wider diocesan perspectives.
9. Seek election to Diocesan Synod – this is something that some Lay Chairs have found helpful in understanding more of what the diocesan perspective is.
10. Be comfortable with using email and zoom. There isn’t necessarily a lot of additional admin apart from the additional meetings – but you will receive emails within the deanery and from the diocesan office and bishop’s office from time to time. This is about effective and efficient communication.

And last – but definitely not least – be prayerful. Prayer and confidence in God to work through you and each one of us undergirds all we do. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.” (1 Thess 5:16). This is the spiritual aspect of the role – and without it, the role dies.

If you'd like to explore the role further, talk to your Rural Dean or your archdeacon. We'd love to hear from you!