



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

Diocesan policy on THE DEANERY AND THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

THE DEANERY

How is the universal Catholic Church structured? The whole people of God is a communion of dioceses, each entrusted to the pastoral leadership and care of a bishop. The diocese is then 'divided into distinct parts or parishes' (*Code of Canon Law*, 374.1). Each parish is by nature an integral part of the diocese. What then is a deanery? 'To foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighbouring parishes can be joined together in special groupings, such as deaneries' (*Code of Canon Law*, 374.2). Each deanery is led by a Dean appointed by the bishop to act in his name. In a scattered diocese such as ours, with many small parishes, working together in deaneries can be very fruitful, not only for the mutual support and care of the clergy, but also for pastoral and spiritual collaboration at local level.

In each deanery, there are to be regular meetings of the clergy, priests and deacons, diocesan and religious, of that grouping of parishes. All are expected to attend such meetings and participate as fully as possible in deanery life and work.

In each deanery, there are to be regular meetings of lay representatives of each parish with all the clergy of the deanery, so as to facilitate active participation by lay people in local pastoral action and decision-making.

The following norms for the role of the Dean came into effect from 21 November 2003.

THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

1. The role of the Dean is primarily pastoral, a sharing in the Bishop's ministry as shepherd of the diocese. It is an office of apostolic caring for a particular area of the diocese, and of promoting and sustaining action among parishes as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council. In carrying out his role, the Dean should give priority to affirming, encouraging and supporting the priests and deacons of the deanery.
2. There should always be a special collaboration between each Dean and the Bishop. The Dean is the Bishop's personal representative in the deanery, and acts in the name of the Bishop when he presides or is present at liturgical functions, meetings of clergy and/or lay people, local civic events, ecumenical activities, etc. The Bishop delegates the necessary pastoral authority for this role on appointing a Dean. As the Bishop's representative, the Dean works in close liaison and partnership with the Bishop, the Vicar General, and any other Episcopal Vicars and officers appointed by the Bishop.
3. The Dean is a servant of communion and channel of communication among the parishes of the deanery, and also between the deanery and the Bishop. This implies a two-way flow of communication: on the one hand, the Bishop relies on the Dean to communicate and help to implement at deanery level all major diocesan decisions, policies and recommendations; on the other hand, the priests, deacons, religious and lay people of the deanery have access to the Bishop through the Dean, so that their ideas, concerns and needs can more easily play a part in the formation of the pastoral priorities and plans of the diocese. To facilitate this role, the Dean is an *ex officio* member of both the Council of Priests and the College of Consultors.

THE APPOINTMENT OF A DEAN

4. When a new Dean is due for appointment, the Bishop will consult all priests and permanent deacons of the deanery. He will send a letter to each, inviting them to suggest by a given date which of the priests of the deanery they would like to have as Dean. They may do this either by using an anonymous ballot paper enclosed with the Bishop's letter, or by replying more personally with suggested names and thoughts on the needs of the deanery which may affect the choice of dean. Any priest of the deanery is eligible for nomination. The clergy should nominate a priest who has their confidence and the ability to initiate and sustain, together with the priests, deacons, religious and lay people, projects and activities which will help to realise the potential of the deanery. [*Canon 553.2; 554.1*]
5. In the light of the responses, the Bishop will appoint the new Dean. The term of office of a Dean lasts for three years, after which he is eligible for re-appointment. [*Canon 554.2*]
6. If the Dean is moved from the deanery during his time of office, or ceases to be able or appropriate for the role for some reason, the Bishop will immediately initiate the process of appointment.

THE DEAN AND THE CLERGY

7. The Dean chairs the clergy deanery meeting. In his absence, the priests and deacons present elect a priest to chair the meeting. All clergy of the deanery, diocesan and religious, are expected to attend deanery meetings and participate fully in deanery life. Apologies should be sent to the Dean if for some very good reason a priest or deacon is unable to attend. [*Canon 555.2.1*] It is understood that deacons may have work commitments which take precedence over deanery meetings. A copy of the minutes of each deanery meeting should be sent to the bishop.
8. The Dean is the leader, helper and guide of all the priests and deacons of the deanery. Special care should be given to those in difficult circumstances. He is to encourage and facilitate the ongoing formation and spiritual renewal of the clergy. Formal deanery meetings and other gatherings should from time to time involve input and discussion on matters of teaching and practice, as well as opportunities for prayer together. Days or half-days of reflection, or occasional holy hours, could be organised by the Dean for the clergy of the deanery. (cf. *Policy on Ongoing Formation*)
9. The Dean should seek to promote fraternity and friendship among the clergy of the deanery, and to develop a real sense of mutual concern, support and cooperation among them. This should include informal social events. The Dean's own personal knowledge of and care for each priest and deacon is a central and essential dimension of his pastoral role.
10. The Dean will normally be consulted by the Bishop on priests' appointments in the deanery.
11. The Dean should make a point of getting to know newly-appointed parish priests and assistant priests, as well as other priests and deacons who join the deanery. He is a servant of welcome and hospitality as they settle into their new appointments and accommodation.
12. As a colleague and friend of all the clergy, secular and religious, the Dean should be available to them in times of need or dispute, without prejudice to their right of direct access to the Bishop and Vicar General.
13. The Dean should have a special interest in the retired priests and deacons living in the deanery, and should, where appropriate, arrange for their involvement in the life of the deanery.
14. The Dean's care extends to sick priests and deacons, helping to ensure that proper medical treatment and spiritual care is received, in liaison with the Bishop and the Diocesan Financial Administrator. The Dean will help to organise immediate 'supply' for the parish and chaplaincies involved, ideally from within the deanery. He should ensure that the Bishop is informed of the sickness and details of the medical care (e.g. hospital, ward, etc). The Dean should visit sick clergy and ensure their continued contact with the deanery.
15. In the case of the death of a priest or deacon, the Dean should ensure that the Bishop has been informed, that supplies are organised, and that personal and parish property is safeguarded.

16. In any sudden unexpected absence of the parish priest for whatever cause, the Dean should also make sure that books, documents, keys and correspondence are not lost or removed from the presbytery, and that the normal administration of money and correspondence is properly handled. In order to be prepared for such eventualities, deans should know where they can find the keys for churches and presbyteries, and should be in possession of a spare key for each presbytery. [*Canon 555.3*]
17. Special care should be given by the Dean to the wife and family of a married priest or deacon who dies or is seriously sick. The ongoing care of clergy widows needs particular consideration.

THE DEAN AND STUDENTS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

18. The Dean should see it as a special role to initiate and sustain vocations work among the priests and deacons of the deanery, each of whom has a responsibility in this area.
19. As far as possible, the Dean should get to know any applicant for priestly formation and student for the priesthood whose home is in the deanery. Such men could be invited to deanery events, especially social events, and made to feel at home in the 'circle' of the deanery.
20. When advised by the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate, the Dean should meet applicants for the permanent diaconate. After consulting with their parish priests and others in the deanery, the Dean advises the Bishop and Director on their suitability for acceptance.
21. In liaison with the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate, the Dean should meet students for the diaconate on a regular basis (at least three times each year). He should give guidance and encouragement; discover the student's abilities with a view to his possible future ministry; introduce him as appropriate to the priests, deacons and people of the deanery; discuss the pastoral needs of the deanery; assess the progress of his training; discover any need for further or specialised training; as appropriate, involve him in the pastoral and administrative work of the deanery, and ensure that he has the opportunity to exercise those ministries proper to him.
22. The Dean may invite a student for the diaconate to attend meetings of the deanery clergy.
23. When a student for the diaconate applies for the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, for Admission to Candidacy and finally for Ordination as a Deacon, the Dean will be asked by the Director for his assessment of the candidate's suitability. Along with other such references, the Dean's advice is an important part of the process of discernment.

THE DEAN AND DEACONS

24. In liaison with the Diocesan Director for the Permanent Diaconate, the Dean should oversee the ministry of deacons within the deanery, ensuring that they are encouraged to carry out all of the ministry entrusted to them, and only that ministry. Special consideration needs to be given to situations where a deacon has been entrusted with some degree of pastoral care of a community, as the canonical pastor of such a community has always to be a priest.
25. With considerable sensitivity to the family and work commitments of a deacon, and to his pastoral involvement within the parish or parishes to which he may be assigned, the Dean could give him further roles and responsibilities within the deanery.
26. The Dean should meet regularly with deacons to encourage them in their ministry, and to help to ensure fruitful harmony and cooperation with the priests and people of the deanery. Such care by the Dean also extends to the family of the deacon, and to ensuring that at very least the deacon's expenses incurred in parish and deanery work are fully reimbursed.
27. The Dean should be seen by each deacon as someone they can easily turn to for guidance, encouragement and support as appropriate.

THE PASTORAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DEAN

28. The Dean is to 'promote and coordinate common pastoral action' in the deanery [*Canon 555.1.1*].
29. The Dean ensures that, where appropriate, chaplaincy work in hospitals, colleges of further and higher education, prisons and other large institutions is shared by the clergy of the deanery.
30. The Dean oversees special ministries in the deanery, such as in areas of pastoral renewal, vocations, ecumenism, catechetics, justice & peace, adult education, youth work, etc. This will involve working with the Deanery Coordinating Catechist, Deanery Youth Council and Youth Commission, and other deanery bodies and deanery representatives on diocesan bodies.
31. It is the Dean's responsibility to ensure that all inter-parochial schools receive pastoral care from chaplains from the deanery.
32. The Dean helps religious sisters, brothers and priests to become involved, as appropriate in the life and work of the deanery.
33. The Dean has a special responsibility to ensure good relations and cooperation with civic authorities and the leaders of other Christian communities.
34. The Dean will often preside at special liturgical celebrations, and attend important functions, including social ones, in the deanery.
35. The Dean is strongly encouraged to initiate and help to implement special liturgical celebrations in the deanery, especially a regular Deanery Youth Mass.
36. The Dean administers a fund, to which parishes are to contribute, for the covering of deanery expenses. He arranges for the deanery clergy to appoint one of their number as Deanery Treasurer, and another as Deanery Secretary.
37. As expressed in the Code of Canon Law, the Dean has the duty and right 'to ensure that religious functions are celebrated according to the provisions of the sacred liturgy; that the elegance and neatness of churches and sacred furnishings are properly maintained, particularly in regard to the celebration of the Eucharist and the custody of the Blessed Sacrament; that the parish registers are correctly entered and duly safeguarded; that ecclesiastical goods are carefully administered; finally, that the parochial house is looked after with care' [*Canon 555.1.3*].
38. The Dean is responsible for arranging for the distribution of the Holy Oils to the parishes of the deanery after the annual Chrism Mass.
39. Recognising the many responsibilities involved in the office of Dean, he may delegate some of those duties to one of the priests or deacons of the deanery, with the agreement of the deanery clergy. If the Dean is to be absent from the deanery, he will appoint another priest of the deanery to act on his behalf, ideally in consultation with the deanery. There is no longer a position of Vice-Dean in our diocese.

PARISH VISITATIONS BY THE DEAN

40. The dean is to make a formal visitation of each parish, at a time agreed in liaison with the Bishop and the College of Consultors. [*Canon 555.4*] Shortly before the visitation, the parish priest will receive a questionnaire which will serve as a check on canonical observance, administrative detail and pastoral progress. This should be completed in consultation with any assistant priest and deacon, and returned to the dean in good time before the visit.
41. The actual visitation provides an opportunity to discuss the pastoral activity of the parish, the welfare of the clergy, and any particular challenges and difficulties.
42. The Dean is to ensure that the parish registers are correctly entered and securely kept, including the register of Mass Offerings. The Dean will discuss any concerns there may be about the administration and upkeep of parish property
43. After the visitation, the Dean will complete a report, and send copies to each member of the parish clergy as appropriate, and to the Bishop.