



As a lay representative do you have, or could you develop, some of the following qualities?

- > A vision and passion for the wider church to flourish;
- > A commitment to work with others in prayer, listening and study to seek God's will for mission in the Deanery;
- > An ability to see the role of your own parish within the bigger picture and understand and accept differences in view;
- > A commitment to mission, growth and engagement across boundaries;
- > An openness to new and different approaches and a willingness to listen to and learn from others, share ideas and experience and embrace change;
- > An ability to speak confidently and challenge respectfully;
- > An ability to provide relevant feedback to your own congregation and PCC;
- > A commitment to see things through.

THREE COMMON OBJECTIONS

“I’m too busy and I haven’t got the time.”

Actually membership is not very demanding, even for very busy people. There are about four meetings a year. And if the membership is made up of busy people, the Deanery Synod will not be a time-wasting space.

“It’s all talk and no action.”

If Deanery Synods do not have competent laity in them, then naturally they become talking shops. The structures for the Diocese need effective communication between various levels of synodical life, and Deanery Synods need to be business-like to play their part. But there are some really important issues coming up in the Church in the next few years, and it is important that the right kind of talking is done by the right people, leading to the right kinds of action.

“You can’t really change anything.”

It depends on what you want to change. It is often said that the laity in the General Synod are not proper representatives of opinion in the parishes. However, the quality of the lay voice in the Church's affairs in the end depends on having the right people in the place where change can be effected. It is up to the Deanery Synod to ensure that they elect the right people to understand and represent the views in the Diocese and make things happen.

So...

1. **Make sure you are at your next Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM);**
2. **Remember that the system is electoral – you have the right to lobby and canvass;**
3. **Think hard and pray about who you would like to represent you in the Deanery Synod;**
4. **And ask yourself “Why not me?”**

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DEANERY SYNOD ELECTIONS

WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY MATTER



Diocese of Bristol
Creating connections

Why are Deanery Synods important?

Deaneries are an important part of the life of this Diocese. It is vital that the most suitable lay people are elected on to Deanery Synods. Deaneries and Deanery Synods offer opportunities for using the gifts and developing the skills of all God's people.

It is the lay members of the Deanery Synod who elect the members of the House of Laity in the Diocesan Synod and General Synod and they can lobby General Synod members on any subjects of concern. In this way, they can make the local voice heard in diocesan and national issues.

It is vital that the members you elect to the Deanery Synod represent the views of people in the pews. Please ensure that the people elected will listen, pray and do just that.



Where does the Deanery Synod fit into the structures?

The General Synod is a national Synod of the Church of England. It consists of the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. It works on a sort of parliamentary model, meets in London and York, drafts Measures and debates topics of varying importance. The Archbishops are the Presidents. The members are elected by different groups, some Diocesan and some national.

The Diocesan Synod considers the affairs of the Diocese as these arise from three directions – nationally, when referred by the General Synod; locally, when raised by parishes and deaneries; and diocesan, when required to think about such things as policy and finance. It, too, has three houses, although they are not often separated. The Bishop presides and sometimes shares the chair with the Chairs of the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. Members are elected from the clergy and laity of the parishes.

The Deanery Synod pulls together the thinking of the Church's life in the Deanery. It is sometimes asked to consider matters referred to it from the Diocesan Synod and from the General Synod. It is the place where the voice of the parish is first heard beyond the PCC. The Area Dean and Lay Chair preside. The clergy in the Deanery are members and lay members are elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs) of all the parishes in the Deanery.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) has legal duties and considers parochial matters and national affairs as these impinge on each particular parish.

Deanery Synods matter. People can influence Diocesan affairs and can discover new things about the church and the world.



What is the Deanery?

The Deanery is legally a collection of parishes put together for administrative convenience. In the Diocese of Bristol, we have seven Deaneries.

The Deanery Synod is a key part of the synodical system. Each parish elects representatives to the Deanery Synod, the number depending on the number on the parish's electoral roll.

The Area Dean assists the Bishop in the pastoral care of the clergy and parishes in the Deanery. The Lay Chair is elected to share the chair of the Deanery Synod with the Area Dean.

The Deanery Chapter includes all the clergy in the Deanery who hold the Bishop's licence. They meet for study, prayer and mutual encouragement.

What does the Deanery Synod do?

The Synodical Government Measure gives it a long list of things to do:

To connect with the parishes of the Deanery and bring together the views on common problems;

To discuss and formulate common policies on those problems;

To foster connectedness and community among those parishes;

To promote in the Deanery the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

In accomplishing even a few of these roles, the Deanery Synod, being a strong link in the connection chain of communication from both Diocesan and General Synods to the parishes and vice versa, has an important part to play in the overall structure.