

Deanery Framework 2022

The Church that 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step. Who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelising community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.' (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

'Let us acknowledge our weakness, but allow Jesus to lay hold of it and send us too on mission.'
(Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 131).

Introduction

A renewed vision of the Deanery affirms that it exists in service of the communion and mission of the parishes that make it up and of the particular groupings or partnerships of parishes to which each parish belongs. This document sets out a framework of principles underpinning the supportive role of the Deanery.

The Deanery fosters pastoral care through common pastoral activity among parishes sharing resources to support such common pastoral activity. Common pastoral action requires periodic review of practices, programmes and initiatives, in order to ensure they continue to be fruitful. Equally, it involves attending to new pastoral issues which emerge within the Deanery. By supporting local parish life and ministry, the Deanery serves, too, the developing communion and mission of the Diocese. In this context, as a vital cell of diocesan life, the Deanery provides a unique opportunity for discernment, planning and initiation of common pastoral actions, giving concrete effect to the Church's mission locally.

Such common pastoral actions will generally fall within four areas, highlighted in the Acts of the Apostles (see Acts 2: 42-45), as characteristics of Gospel living:

- Proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel message
- Building up a caring Church community based on Gospel values
- Celebrating faith in worship, prayer and through liturgical participation – in communion with God, in Jesus Christ, and with one another
- Service of neighbour, particularly the most poor and most vulnerable, the work of justice (*Share the Good News*, 36).

The Deanery seeks to facilitate the evangelising mission of local Church communities in proclaiming the love of God and the healing presence of Jesus Christ to the whole of society. When common pastoral actions are being reflected upon and planned, a variety of initiatives should be considered for members of parishes, groupings of partnership parishes, and other forms of local Christian community, for those who no longer participate, for those who have been hurt or ignored or forgotten, and also to connect and engage with those who do not know Christ.

1. Membership

- The membership of the Deanery consists in all appointed priests, deacons, other Religious appointed to parish positions, and Parish Pastoral Workers, as well as those approved by the Archbishop who provide chaplaincy services in the Deanery, and retired priests resident in the Deanery.
- Deaneries will extend membership to include one representative of each Parish Pastoral Council. This may be the Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council or another member specifically designated to attend Deanery meetings on behalf of the PPC. The person must be a member of the PPC and should hold their role at Deanery level for the three-year lifetime of the PPC providing continuity of representation.
- Others may be invited to attend at the discretion of the Deanery

2. Presidential Office

The title attached to this office is Vicar Forane.

The Vicar Forane is appointed by the Archbishop having consulted with the priests and with other members of the Deanery. The appointment is for three years, with the possibility of renewal for a further period of three years.

The Vicar Forane is the priest responsible for the co-ordination of common pastoral actions in the Deanery. The Deanery should endeavour to provide the Vicar Forane with appropriate support in the fulfilling of this office.

The meetings of the Vicars Forane with the Archbishop are essentially to keep the Archbishop informed of the situation in the parishes, to progress the development of parish groupings and partnerships, and to address issues which emerge in such sharings. The meeting of the Archbishop with the Vicars Forane is primarily about assisting and developing parish life and ministry.

It falls to the Vicar Forane to:

- Co-ordinate the common pastoral actions of the parishes in the Deanery (The initiatives for pastoral actions, nonetheless, lie with the Deanery itself)
- See that the priests of the Deanery are supported in the living of their priestly lives and obligations. He should show particular care for those who are troubled or in need of support

- Be mindful and supportive of those others who also exercise pastoral ministry within the Deanery

3. Deanery Meetings

3.1 Responsibilities of Members

- 3.1.1 to prepare for every meeting by reading such material as agenda, minutes, etc.
- 3.1.2 to attend meetings regularly, and to prioritise such meetings, building up the communion and mission envisaged in the Deanery, and ensuring good communications within the Deanery and with the Diocese
- 3.1.3 to listen carefully to others and to be open to ideas expressed, modelling a synodal approach
- 3.1.4 to focus on issues being discussed and to voice opinions, encouraging a full conversation
- 3.1.5 to allow each person to speak freely without unnecessary interruption
- 3.1.6 to participate in, and occasionally lead, prayer and faith-sharing at these meetings

3.2 Steering Committee

- 3.2.1 The Steering Committee shall consist of the Vicar Forane and not less than three and not more than five others chosen by election or some other means by the membership of the Deanery, representing the diversity of members, at least one of whom, as well as the Vicar Forane, must be a priest. One of the members shall be chosen as Secretary to the Deanery and another as Treasurer. If preferred, a recording secretary who is not a member of the Deanery may be appointed
- 3.2.2 Members of the Steering Committee serve for a period of three years, with the possibility of renewal for a further three years

3.3 Duties of Officers

3.3.1 The Vicar Forane shall

- Chair the meetings of the Deanery and of the Steering Committee
- Develop the agenda for all meetings in consultation with the other members of the Steering Committee
- Encourage the formation of consensus in decision making by the Deanery
- Ensure that one of the members of the Steering Committee chairs the meeting if he cannot attend
- Ensure that a report of each meeting is sent to the Archbishop soon after the meeting
- Ensure that an updated list of members is sent to the Moderator of the Diocesan Curia in early September each year

3.3.2 The Secretary shall

- Keep the records of the Deanery and attend to all correspondence
- Notify the members of the meetings
- Send members the agenda in advance of the meetings
- Keep the minutes of the meetings and distribute them to members of the Deanery

3.3.3 The Treasurer shall

- Oversee the finances of the Deanery, managing the Deanery account in accordance with Diocesan Policy, and making a regular report to the Deanery

3.4 Types of Meeting

- #### 3.4.1 The Deanery shall meet in ordinary session at least four times a year, the members supporting each other in undertaking common pastoral actions at local level

3.4.2 Meetings should be synodal in style, enabling participants to move forward together on the same journey, with all their shades of difference expressed and heard.

3.4.3 Agenda – the agenda for a meeting will normally involve addressing all or some of the following:

- Common pastoral actions
- Attending to matters pertaining to the parishes of the Deanery
- Attending to matters emanating from the Diocese

3.4.4 Special meetings can be called at the discretion of the Vicar Forane

- a) in support of priestly fraternity. Such a meeting, involving the priest members of the Deanery only, should be scheduled as a special meeting on its own
- b) for issues of particular importance. In consultation with at least the Steering Committee, the Vicar Forane may involve a wider representation of those involved in parish life, e.g. Chairpersons of Parish Pastoral Councils and/or of Parish Finance Committees, or their representatives

3.5 Committees

Ad hoc committees may be established to progress particular matters for further consideration by the Deanery

4. Election of the VF

- The election of a priest as Vicar Forane will involve all registered members of the Deanery. Paragraph 1 indicates who can be members of the Deanery.
- Each year, each Deanery should draw up, by the September meeting of the Archbishop with the VFs, a list of members to be communicated to the Moderator of the Diocesan Curia. This will facilitate any new election processes that need to take place during the following year.

5. Timeline for the implementation of the Framework:

- This renewed version of the Dublin Diocesan Deanery Framework will come into operation in September 2022.

Appendix I

Some tips for effective meetings

1. A well-chosen venue for the Deanery meeting can positively enhance the quality of the interaction.
2. Have a well-prepared agenda. Be mindful that the Deanery has, at most, two hours to cover everything.
3. Start on time, don't backtrack for latecomers.
4. Begin with an extended period of prayer prepared by some of the members
5. Agree an amount of time for each item on the agenda.
6. Allow discussion in small groups from time to time to stimulate conversation, rather than expect people to contribute all the time into the main group
7. Appoint a timekeeper, if necessary, to keep the meeting on track.
8. Use a 'parking lot' to note pertinent issues which arise that are not on the agenda but clearly need to be discussed at a later date.
9. If there is too much discussion on an issue, chances are people are not on the same page. Summarise position and see how it might be moved on, e.g., an *ad hoc* committee.
10. At close of meeting, recap decisions made and the next steps planned