

**SPECIAL AGENDA IV
DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION**

DEANERY SYNODS

Diocese of Coventry Motion

‘That this Synod request the Archbishops’ Council to convene a working party:

- (a) to consider the case for legislation (i) conferring incorporated status on deanery synods and (ii) amending their functions so that, whilst they retain their deliberative function, they are also able to take a more executive role in promoting in the deanery the whole mission of the Church; and
- (b) to report to the Synod on its findings with, if appropriate, proposals for the introduction of legislation.’

1. The Diocese of Coventry is seeking to extend the role of the deanery in order to develop effective missionary strategies across wider areas than single parishes. Our *Signposts for the Future* document calls for consideration of devolving greater strategic responsibilities to deaneries and reducing their number in order to “release the missionary energies of the diocese.” This motion arises out of a desire to explore the best ways of doing this.
2. The Diocese of Coventry is not unique in wanting a greater role for deaneries. We are aware that the Diocese of Chichester has been debating a similar motion to ours and we are grateful for the conversations that have taken place between our dioceses. We hope that other dioceses who are engaged in developing the role and significance of deaneries will speak in the debate and support this motion.
3. Our concerns centre on the legal implications of a deanery employing staff, holding property and having bank accounts. All of these activities might form part of a strategy for developing the role of the deanery, but currently the deanery synod is not able to undertake them, because of the nature of its purposes and the fact that it does not have incorporated status so that its office holders (Rural / Area Dean, Secretary and Treasurer) do not have limited liability. We would also like to be able to receive repayments of income tax under Gift Aid. We cannot do this because the purposes for which a Deanery Synod exists are such that it cannot have charitable status.
4. One solution to the problem would be the creation of a free standing charity alongside the each deanery synod that wanted to operate in this way. However, even if the office holders of the deanery were listed as the office holders of the charity, the charity itself would not be a part of the governance of the Church of England. We see this as a significant weakness of this approach.
5. The Diocese of Coventry believes that there are areas in which legislation could strengthen the deanery while still ensuring that the whole life of the deanery is a part of the governance structure of the church. These are:
 - i) To give the Deanery Synod incorporated status so that it can more easily employ staff, hold property and have bank accounts, all with the protection of limited liability for office holders (Rural / Area Deans etc.) without the need to create a further freestanding charity

- ii) To review the constitution and functions of the Deanery Synod (the current functions are listed below) such that it is given the necessary executive functions, alongside the existing considerative/consultative ones, to enable the Synod to employ staff, hold property, open bank accounts and fulfil any strategic responsibilities it may be given. It would be helpful if these functions were defined in such a way as to confer charitable status on Deanery Synods (in the same way as the functions of PCCs allow them to enjoy such status), so as to enable Deanery Synods to receive repayments of income tax under Gift Aid on donations for deanery projects.
6. We do not offer a blueprint of how to achieve these aims since we recognise that there are complex legal issues to be discussed. Our motion invites the Archbishop's Council to set up a working party to undertake this review and come back to the Synod with detailed proposals about how to achieve our goals.

Synodical Government Measure 1969

5 Constitution and functions of Deanery Synods

- (3) The functions of a deanery synod shall be—
- (a) to consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in relation to their deanery, and to consider and express their opinion on any other matters of religious or public interest;
- (b) to bring together the views of the parishes of the deanery on common problems, to discuss and formulate common policies on those problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote in the deanery the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
- (c) to make known and so far as appropriate put into effect any provision made by the diocesan synod;
- (d) to consider the business of the diocesan synod, and particularly any matters referred to that synod by the General Synod, and to sound parochial opinion whenever they are required or consider it appropriate to do so;
- (e) to raise such matters as the deanery synod consider appropriate with the diocesan synod:
- Provided that the functions referred to in paragraph (a) hereof shall not include the issue of any statement purporting to declare the doctrine of the Church on any question.
- (4) If the diocesan synod delegate to deanery synods functions in relation to the parishes of their deaneries, and in particular the determination of parochial shares in quotas allocated to the deaneries, the deanery synod shall exercise those functions.
- In this subsection "quota" means an amount to be subscribed to the expenditure authorised by diocesan synods.
- (5) The General Synod may by Canon or Regulation extend, amend or further define the functions of deanery synods.