



Live-Wires

Information Sheet No 4

Deanery life – how does your garden grow?

The Gospels frequently use horticultural analogies and metaphors to express Christian truths – 'the Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed ...'¹; 'every sound tree bears good fruit ...'², 'I am the vine, you are the branches...' ³ and so on. Here, we use a horticultural metaphor to reflect on the results of some research into the life of the Deanery.

1. Background

The 2004 Church House Deaneries Group conference, entitled 'Releasing the Energy', included a session on 'The Deanery and the Church's Strategy for the Future', presented by Rt. Revd Mike Hill, Bishop of Bristol. This included discussion about devolution of responsibility from Diocese to Deanery and led on to the question, 'What are the important issues that lead to good and effective devolution?' Delegates at the conference were asked if they would be willing to do some research to find out more and to try to get a picture of what is happening nationally.

2. The team

Three volunteers came forward.

Dr. Angie Lauener, a Deanery treasurer in Ecclesall Deanery, Diocese of Sheffield, (then) churchwarden and part time lecturer in information systems was attracted by the opportunity to follow up her interest in what makes organisations, including the church, operate effectively.

Canon Cyril Roberts, currently Area Dean of Snaith and Hatfield and former lay chair of Wath, two rural Deaneries in the Sheffield Diocese, has a passionate commitment to finding ways of keeping churches open and the rumour of God alive as the number of stipendiary clergy falls.

Revd. Charmaine Sabey-Corkindale was a curate in a team Parish in St. Abans Diocese and it seemed a very interesting research project to be involved in. During the course of the project she has become team vicar.

3. The research approach

The difficulties of arranging meetings of three far-flung and busy people gave us plenty of time for individual reflection on the best way to tackle this work! Fortunately, each had independently arrived at the same conclusions so when we did

¹ Matthew 13.31

² Matthew 7.17

³ John 15.4

meet for the first time, the approach we decided on was quickly and unanimously agreed. While issuing a questionnaire nationally could easily generate the production of quantitative data, this would require us to have some ideas already about the key issues so that we could formulate questions. One danger of this deductive approach is that our thinking could be channelled so that our questions did not address the important issues. We did not think that quantitative data based on closed questions would be useful at this stage. Any qualitative data from open-ended questions would be likely to be superficial and not very useful because we would have little understanding of its context. Alternatively, an inductive approach aimed at gaining qualitative data would enable us explore with an open mind what the salient issues might be and to gain a richer understanding of the context.

4. Research methods

Therefore, we planned a series of semi-structured interviews (telephone and face-to-face) and a focus group in three of the Dioceses that had offered to share some of their insights with us. Observation within our own Dioceses also provided relevant data. The research participants came from a wide range of clergy and lay roles including bishop, archdeacon, area dean, diocesan secretary, lay chair, finance advisor, churchwarden. Our questions were open-ended and based around the main question, 'What strategic role do you think the Deanery plays in the life of the church?' This was usually sufficient to start off a discussion that allowed the participants to introduce the important and relevant issues from their perspective. It also allowed us to gain an understanding of the context within which they operated.

5. Analysis of results and presentation of findings

The manner in which we decided to analyse results and present our findings has evolved over a period of time as we have reflected on and discussed our data at various stages.

The first stage of reflection was to question the question. Very early in our enquiries we were not sure that asking, 'What makes devolution of responsibility from Dioceses to Deaneries successful' was the right question to be asking. Responsibility for what? How much devolution is appropriate? What precisely does this mean anyway? What is the aim of devolution of responsibility to Deaneries? Is this a Deanery-centric view? What about the Diocese? Where do Parishes fit into the picture?

On looking at what is behind this question, we believe that what is being implied is that the Deanery has a valuable role in the mission of the church and needs an appropriate amount of autonomy to do its job well. In this sense devolution to Deaneries is primarily about a willingness to give Deaneries space to explore a role in the mission of the church which cannot be played as effectively by either the Diocese or by Parishes working on their own; it is a means to an end, the mission of the church. There is a suspicion that this happens more effectively in some Dioceses than others, but more clarity is needed on what causes this variation. What are the factors that promote success and what are the pitfalls?

Now to the horticultural metaphor! In a cultivated garden, as opposed to a wild garden, the aim is to create the right conditions to help the plants grow and flourish in their natural environment to maximise the potential of the seeds and plants.

Likewise, in our various attempts at being the church, we are aiming to make mission grow and bear fruit. Returning to the theme of the 2004 CHDG conference, it is about releasing and shaping energy that is stored and available. The structures of the church – Diocese, Deanery and Parish – are a useful means to this end but not an end in themselves. So we realised that we needed to find out what we could about the strategic role of Deaneries in the overall mission of the church. This has devolution implications for Dioceses and Parishes as well as for Deaneries.

6. The results

The data recorded from our research activity consisted of stories, views and observations about the mission of the church in the context of Deaneries from five Dioceses around the country. This data has been interpreted in terms of what would create good growing conditions for the mission of the church and what may hinder growth. All of the results presented here are based on anonymised data from the interviews, observations and focus group. We hope that the value of the horticultural metaphor will become obvious as you read on!

6.1 Environment

For the horticulturalist, the environment – the climate and the soil - are the 'givens', the things that are difficult to change but which affect what can be planted. If you live in an area with sandy soil and a cool climate, this determines the sort of crops that will flourish most easily. Similarly, in the Church of England at this time, there are some givens. These include:

The way it is organised and structured into Parishes, Deaneries and Dioceses;
The reduction in finances available;
The reduction in stipendiary clergy;
Geographical variation.

This is the environment we are operating in – we have no control over it but we have to live with it.

6.2 Growing conditions

These are the things that the horticulturalist does have some control over. If good growing conditions are produced, plant life will flourish. This includes positively encouraging the things that lead to health such as the correct amounts of light and moisture. It also means dealing with things that stifle growth.

6.2.1 Positives – good for growth

In our research activities, we encountered many positive stories and attitudes that we believe encourage effective ministry and mission in Deaneries.

In a northern Diocese, interviews took place with:

Session 1 – Jenny, Deanery lay chair who is also a member of the Bishops Council, together with a diocesan finance adviser, Frank.

Session 2 - A suffragan bishop

Session 3 - A focus group consisting of a Deanery lay chair who is also diocesan lay chair; an Area Dean who is also clergy chair of the diocesan synod; a Parish priest and a churchwarden.

This was a useful set of interviews because the observations from each session were consistent with each other and helped to shape the direction of our research. Brief details are presented below.

Session 1

Jenny presented a very positive image of the relationship between Deaneries and the Diocese, which showed good two-way communication, a mutual respect between individuals, a sense of feeling valued and empowered as a lay person and respect for the leadership by the Diocesan and suffragan bishops. It also showed openness by the Diocese to new and creative ideas, which clergy and lay people are invited to contribute to. She clearly felt that there was good support from the Diocese to help the Deanery and Parishes in their mission and there was some local autonomy. The evidence she provided for this was:

- The suffragan bishop invites lay chairs to supper, annually, and asks them to send any questions they have in advance.
- Annually, there is a meeting of all lay chairs and Area Deans, organised by the Diocese.
- Locally, lay chairs and Area Deans meet regularly.
- A Diocesan conference was held in which lay people and clergy were invited. This was a good chance to talk. They were encouraged to think 'outside the box'.
- There is a 'joined up' feel about the way senior staff operate, and a good two-way rapport between them and Deaneries and Parishes.
- The Diocesan bishop was perceived as someone who spent time doing the things he was good at and was willing to delegate power to senior staff to do the things he was not able to do
- Senior staff invites comment and suggestions for changes
- Bishops were invited to speak at a joint chapter meeting
- The Diocese encourages the Deanery to use diocesan staff, e.g. the Diocesan missionary offering to talk to Deanery synods about Mission-Shaped Church.
- There is genuine lay input in most of the diocesan boards
- A decision was made locally to close a church i.e. the initiative did not come from the Diocese
- Churches are encouraged to join together in clusters, called 'Localities'. The Diocese has issued packs of well-presented, user-friendly information offering advice and support on how this can happen and offering help and support.
- Parishes have grouped together to apply for funding from central grants e.g. to share a part-time youth worker

In session 2, the meeting with the suffragan Bishop of this Diocese, the positive views from Session 1 were echoed. There was clear evidence of 'joined-up thinking' at diocesan level and a willingness to change where old methods and structures were no longer working, and to encourage cross fertilization of ideas between staff at senior levels. The bishop clearly aimed to support the mission agenda in Deaneries and showed this support in a number of ways, including supporting the need for good administrative support for Area Deans.

His view was that a 'top-down' approach to mission planning would not work because it was 'too wooden', believing that a consultancy model would work better. He also invests in a leadership development course for 25 clergy per annum.

The focus group in Session 3 provided an opportunity to find out how some of the ideas mentioned above work out in practice. Generally, there was a positive attitude to the 'Localities' initiative. Leadership from the bishops was perceived to be collaborative and affirmative when working with others. They explained how Deaneries were empowered to work out how groups could form and that growth was organic, i.e. it happened naturally between churches that had some affinity with each other, e.g. based on geography or churchmanship. It was a matter of 'pressing a button that was already doing something.' It was to be expected that this could be quite a slow process. One of the practical outputs of this working together was a locally agreed localities covenant, outlining how they would work together. This occasionally involved locality groups meeting during Deanery synods. Some of the potential challenges to the smooth running of this type of initiative are mentioned later in this report.

A visit to a suffragan bishop of a Midlands Diocese provided further examples of Deanery autonomy. He stressed the importance of ministerial needs being assessed locally by a Deanery pastoral committee and cited a successful Deanery initiative to begin to equip people theologically to help them meet these needs. A theological perspective was thought vital if Deaneries were to avoid becoming bogged down with questions about the number of stipendiary clergy they could afford. A growing theological perspective changed the climate of debate about the deployment of Deanery resources to embrace ways of coming together for mission and learning. This included the appointment in one Deanery of a Deanery vocations advisor and in this Deanery all training, whether it is for lay or ordained roles is initiated locally and overseen by the bishop. He also stressed the importance of building up a sense of belonging in a Deanery and found that one Deanery had become much more united by initiating and developing an overseas link. If Deaneries are to avoid becoming inward looking and introspective they might consider the usefulness of finding something outside the Deanery to focus on. He also gave examples of Deaneries that were large enough to sustain their own sector ministries. This had implications for Parishes and the appointment of clergy where Deaneries should not only encourage churches to grow their own ministries, but be prepared to receive those sent by the bishop. He also stressed the importance of praying, worshipping and studying together as well as being willing to meet socially. It was also important that bishops, archdeacons and Area Deans were able to exercise a leadership function which was both collaborative and affirmative.

In another northern Diocese, the initiative for Deaneries to take more responsibility for deployment of clergy for effective mission came from a joint working party set up by two diocesan boards. It was promoted by a 'champion' - an effective communicator, who visited each Deanery synod to explain the rationale, and backed up by a detailed explanatory report that offered some practical guidance. However, Deaneries were urged to find their own methods and an interesting range of approaches emerged. This included some Deaneries employing external consultants to facilitate discussion. Another Deanery took a 'bottom-up' approach by organising a Deanery Speed Dating event to encourage resource sharing. At this event, representatives from each Parish met each other briefly to describe the resources they would be willing to offer to other Parishes in the Deanery.

In a third northern Diocese, a Diocesan review had taken place, which led to Deanery mission plans. The Diocesan review addressed three questions:
What is God's mission?

What are the ministries we need to support this?

What resources do we need?

This provided a strategy that was passed down through the Deanery mission plan to be operationalised at Parish level.

It is important to note that this Diocese had a 'learning culture', where individuals felt empowered to try new initiatives and were not afraid of failure because it provided an experience from which to learn for the future.

In a conversation with a large southern Diocese, some of the positive effects of the Deanery as a more manageable unit within the Diocese were explained. There is the general benefit of better local knowledge at Deanery level, including understanding of the financial situation of Parishes and the appropriate deployment of resources and creating mission plans. In addition, for very large Dioceses, at Deanery level there is more opportunity for local clergy and lay people to flourish and to feel that they are taking an active and valuable part in mission in a more informal, less threatening environment, e.g. as guest speakers or by involving key people in other roles. They also saw the Deanery as a place to offer courses, e.g. on biblical studies or pastoral work studies. They valued the role of Deanery synods in providing education to the Parishes about the Deanery. They were aware that the weight of influence fell on the lay chairs and the Area Deans. This was not such a good aspect because the workload could be crippling, they become slightly dislocated from their Parishes and their Parishes pay the price. However, they solved this problem by having a part-time administrator in a supporting role for the lay chair and Area Dean. They were also aware of the value of training of Area Deans, and that much more training should also be provided for lay chairs. Further positive suggestions included inviting lay chairs to clergy chapter and ensuring churchwardens and treasurers meet up on a regular basis to share ideas within the Deanery.

6.2.2 Negatives – issues that can stifle growth

By analysing our findings, we have produced a checklist of attitudes and behaviour that were flagged up by our research participants that could prevent healthy ministry in Deaneries. These are issues that have the potential to stifle growth. These issues arise from all levels – Diocese, Deanery and Parishes.

At Diocesan level, the results presented in Figure 1 show that healthy growth will be stifled if the Diocese is too controlling, is unwilling to delegate responsibility and to empower others. In order to do this, trust and openness to ideas and suggestions are needed. The results also show that communication from the Diocese needs to be clear and appropriate; that Diocesan-led initiatives need to be seen to be part of an overall plan, with follow-through, and it is important that they inspire confidence in the leadership. Provision of financial support for initiatives shows willingness by providing practical back-up.

- Diocese unwilling to let Deaneries have their say.
- Lack of involvement of bishops and archdeacons at Deanery level.
- Diocese taking charge of initiatives regarding buildings when it is more appropriate to do this at local (Deanery) level.

- Initiative fatigue – too many diocesan-led initiatives that are not followed up
- Senior staff is not open to suggestions; lack of openness to lay input on Diocesan boards/committees.
- Lack of joined-up thinking at senior levels
- Long documents explaining initiatives in too much detail do not go down well at Parish level.
- Less than wholehearted support from the bishop could dilute efforts to introduce initiatives at Deanery level.
- Unwillingness to invest in training clergy and lay people for different ways of, showing a lack of central commitment to it.

Figure 1 Comments made at interviews and focus groups that refer to unhelpful attitudes and behaviour at Diocesan level

At Deanery level, the results show that healthy growth may be stifled if there is a lack of openness to trying new approaches, poor leadership and poor communication. Figure 2 lists relevant comments.

- Money is a very powerful issue. If attitudes to money are not good and healthy, the Deanery will not work well.
- Fear of being responsible for finances at Deanery level. Dioceses need to keep overall control of finances to allay this fear.
- Deaneries may not want to pay for sector ministry because they do not feel the benefit of it themselves.
- Deaneries only look inward and not outward.
- Lack of leadership from Area Deans.
- Talking about Deanery strategy may be off-putting to some. It may better to talk about 'Who are we? Where are we going?'
- Poor relationship between lay chairs; lay chairs do not feel empowered.

Figure 2 Comments made at interviews and focus groups that refer to unhelpful attitudes and behaviour at Deanery level

By far the largest grouping of comments on attitudes and behaviour that could stifle healthy growth were those relevant to Parishes, i.e. clergy and lay people in Parishes choose to behave in this way, and it is within their power to act differently. Many of these issues are to do with poor relationships and lack of collaboration and mutual support, i.e. being too parochially focussed. Figure 3 summarises the comments.

Clergy exclusiveness, i.e. lay people do not feel involved – clergy are not willing to work as a team or share responsibility.

Poor attitudes to unity and diversity; lack of tolerance of differences in churchmanship.

Poor relationships – clergy-clergy and clergy-lay.

A dependency mindset – unwillingness to take ownership locally.

Competition rather than collaboration between Parishes.

Unwillingness to share resources.

Lay people do not see the need for any changes.

Strong Parishes may not perceive the need for Deanery level working together.

Busy-ness of clergy, which means they may not have the energy for new initiatives.

Anxiety about change and loss of independence by working together in clusters.

Wanting things to change too quickly – an unwillingness to see that things may take time to change and grow slowly.

Unwillingness of the laity to take decisions as they do when there is an interregnum.

Forward in faith Parishes may not work with others.

Clergy feel threatened by changes and lay involvement

Some clergy do not believe in the value of the Deanery.

Figure 3 Comments made at interviews and focus groups that refer to unhelpful attitudes and behaviour at Parish level

Finally, there are some other general issues that may cause unhealthy growth that do not call exclusively into any one of the three categories. These are listed below:

- Poor communication in general.
- Top-down approaches for promoting new ideas may be resisted.
- The word 'Deanery' creates a poor image of Deanery in some people's minds.
- At Parish level, many lay people are not really aware of the Deanery.
- Parish boundaries could deter joint working.
- Fear of making mistakes - unwillingness to believe that 'the die is not too cast' i.e. no change is cast in stone – an experimental approach needed, together with a willingness to learn from experiments that may not work.
- Lack of willingness to be proactive and creative.

7. Reflections on these findings

All of the findings summarised above arise from observations and comments provided by the individuals who participated in the research. They increase our self-awareness as individuals, Parishes, Deaneries and Dioceses about how we are operating in fulfilling the mission of the church. They summarise what the research participants perceive as behaviour that will promote good conditions for the church's mission to take place and also what they perceive to be potential hindrances. Ultimately, they represent how we, in our humanity, respond to the call to be the body of Christ and to share the Gospel.

These findings also provide detailed evidence that reflects the thoughts of some other writers. Martyn Percy⁴ describes the nature of the organisation of the Church of England as "a complex spaghetti of democracy and autocracy, synodical and Episcopal, local and national, clerical and lay, voluntary and professional". In terms of our horticultural metaphor, this is another expression of the environment in which we are trying to grow healthy mission and ministry, where structures may hinder rather than help because of their complexity. However, Gillian Stamp⁵ explains that structures may create positive conditions for growth when used as "patterns of responsibility and answerability that people establish when they choose to work together for a common purpose". The key thing here is the choice of common purpose. This is a choice that Deaneries could make in order to bring clarity in a complex environment. Colin Hill's⁶ 'fifteen easy ways to start to make the Deanery work' are reliant on the Deanery first agreeing a common purpose

The concept of having a common purpose returns us to the horticultural metaphor in a more general sense because of its link to systems theory, one of the underpinning theories on which the Grubb Institute⁷ bases its leadership training programmes for clergy. Plants are natural systems, and they display typical systems characteristics – they exist in an environment over which they have no control but which affects them; they consist of a number of parts or subsystems, there is good communication between subsystems so the parts work together to achieve survival and growth and all of the parts are necessary to create the whole, a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. This theory can also be applied to organisations as systems, including the church, and supports the case for clarity of vision and purpose, taking a holistic view of the organisation in order to achieve an agreed common purpose to which all activity is directed. In our investigations into a northern Diocese, we found a good example where it was clear that a holistic view had been taken at Diocesan level, resulting in joined-up thinking. The diocesan boards and senior staff were in support of the aims and these aims were communicated effectively to Deaneries by user-friendly presentation in document form and personal approach. This Diocese also invested in training for clergy on leadership programme provided by the Grubb Institute.

⁴ 'Can church leaders learn to be leaders again?' in *Creative Church Leadership*, edited by John Adair and John Nelson, MODEM 2004.

⁵ Does the Deanery make a difference? Source? Date?

⁶ Loosing the apron strings, Parish and People, Date?

⁷ www.grubb.org.uk

The idea of thinking of the structure of the church in terms of 'wholes' and subsystems relates to an interesting point made by Gillian Stamp⁸ where she contrasts hierarchy in management of a business with the structure of the church. Unlike management in business, she claims that "in a church, parts are not superior or subordinate to each other; each is a whole. The local church *is* the church. The smaller whole is subsumed by the larger but not subordinated to it. From this, it follows that the larger serves but does not direct the smaller". She uses this to support the notion of a Deanery as a unit better placed to meet local needs than the Diocese, whose role she believes is to serve the Parishes rather than giving direction from the centre. This approach was borne out in the evidence from our northern Diocese, which put emphasis on offering support from the centre to local initiatives in Deaneries and Parishes.

This now leads on to the point made by Bishop Mike Hill⁹ about the concept of subsidiarity, which he states is a problem for hierarchy organisations. The Oxford English dictionary defines subsidiarity as 'the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level.' The Latin root of the word means 'support, assistance'. Charles Handy¹⁰ is more emotive about the need for subsidiarity in the organisation of the church, quoting that it is 'against right moral order' for a higher order body to do what properly belonged to a lower order body, in other words, 'stealing other people's choices is morally wrong.' This could be due to mistrust in the lower bodies to make the right decision, a sin of which he claims the church is not guiltless. However, equally, giving people responsibility for tasks that they are not correctly equipped to carry out can be wrong. In our research, we saw, for example, how some Deaneries were fearful of taking on responsibility for quota payments.

8. Further research

Although Deaneries are formally embedded in the structures of the Church of England, there is very little knowledge of what Deaneries do. They exist in a precarious no man's land between Parishes and a Diocese. They rarely elicit the same sort of commitment as a Parish or Diocese: their function is nebulous; their role is unclear.

Given our present state of knowledge of Deaneries and the sense that there are no firm landmarks to help us find our way, we believe that the best way forward, having highlighted in our qualitative research a few possibilities, is to undertake an assessment of Deanery life as it is in real life, to find out what good things Deaneries actually do and what seems to help them to do it well, and to be pragmatic in identifying the fruits that might last. All this needs to be done with some urgency before too many conflicting and possibly confused expectations are laid at the door of Deaneries with the inevitable results of stunted growth and meagre, unpalatable fruit. A lot is beginning to be expected of Deaneries. If these expectations are to be met, we need to know what they are, how well and by whom they are owned and

⁸ Does the Deanery make a difference? Source? Date?

⁹ The Deanery and the Church's Strategy for the Future in 'Releasing the Energy', 2004 Deaneries Conference report

¹⁰ 'One question and ten answers' in Creative Church Leadership, edited by John Adair and John Nelson, MODEM 2004.

what factors can speed their delivery. The proposed outline of a more quantitative research approach is our attempt to begin to clear the ground in this ongoing, but important, debate.

A questionnaire survey throughout the Church of England of lay chairs of Deanery synods, diocesan secretaries, rural (or area) deans, archdeacons and bishops, might discover how well the Deanery plant is growing and what kind of fruit it might produce. The aim of this second phase of the research might be to increase understanding of the emerging role of Deaneries in the mission of the church and encourage its future development.

Here are some of the questions suggested by our research so far which might form the substance of a questionnaire survey. There will be others.

How is good communication between Parish, Deanery and Diocese achieved?

What are the critical factors that empower clergy and lay people to work together in Deaneries?

How can Parishes and Diocese become more open to the emerging role of Deaneries?

How can bishops and senior staff work with Deaneries to facilitate Deanery initiatives?

How can Deaneries facilitate the sharing of resources?

To what extent do Deaneries function in smaller groups to promote mission and what effect does this have on any sense of Deanery identity?

What role do Deaneries play in the deployment of clergy, in the fostering of clergy and lay vocations and decisions about planting and closing churches?

How useful is a focus outside the Deanery in building up a Deanery sense of purpose and identity?

How do area deans and lay chairs work together to exercise effective leadership in the Deanery? How do they relate to Parishes and the Diocese?

What use is made of external consultants, facilitators or mentors in developing and evaluating Deanery initiatives?

Do Deaneries play a teaching and training role for clergy and lay people, how is this done and what benefits does it have?

What role do Deaneries play in the financial management of Parishes and Diocese?

Is there resistance to the changing role of Deaneries and how can this resistance be channelled creatively?

9. Conclusions

Recently, the Church of England has begun to face the problem of reducing the number of its stipendiary clergy. Although this has been going on for a number of years, it has historically largely affected small rural Parishes. It is now poised to affect the Church of England more generally. One response to this problem is to reduce the number of churches. Another response is to widen the ministerial base so that the increasingly scarce resource of ordained ministry is employed more appropriately. This carries with it the corollary that if ordained ministers are to be freed to do the things they were ordained to do, many of their current tasks must be jettisoned, or given to people who are not ordained. There is some sense that Deaneries might play an important part in the local exploration of these two approaches. Perhaps individual Parishes are too small and a Diocese too large to find a workable mix that will further a vision of mission.

Against this background, Deaneries are beginning to sense a new role and purpose.

Seeds germinate but what do Deaneries do? We know that some Deaneries foster vocations, deploy clergy, close and plant churches, talk about mission and ministry, pool resources, broker Parish share and lubricate relationships between the Parishes and Diocese. We know very little about the factors that enable Deaneries to work effectively.

Seedlings grow into plants, how do Deaneries grow? Some Deaneries build up relationships between clergy and lay people, some form clusters, some promote learning and discipleship, some work closely with bishops and senior staff, some use external consultants to help them reflect, some share Parish administration and specialist knowledge. We know very little about how Deaneries grow into their work.

Plants flower or bear fruit but what is there to show for a Deanery that is growing vigorously? We know that some Deaneries have a "feel good" factor, some are well regarded by bishops and senior staff, some have impressive mission plans, some share the burdens of Parish life, some allocate Parish share. But we know very little about the expectations of Parishes and the Diocese from their Deaneries. We hope that the proposed future research can answer some of these questions.

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