

**Introduction to English Cathedrals  
within ‘the mysterious organisation of the Church of England’  
Present and future opportunities for the mission of Cathedrals**

**Talk to the Guild of Stewards by Dean Nicola Sullivan on 19 July 2017**

**Basic structures and terminology**

There are 42 **dioceses** each with one **diocesan Bishop** who has jurisdiction in his/her diocese. There are 44 cathedrals because of the recent amalgamation of Ripon, Wakefield and Bradford into the Diocese of Leeds and West Yorkshire.

Canterbury and York are both **Provinces** and also a diocese led by an **Archbishop**.

York Province has 12 dioceses including Sodor and Man – Southwell and Nottingham is the most southerly and Canterbury 27 plus Europe and Gibraltar

‘Cathedra’ chair/throne as ‘seat of teaching with authority’ for the Bishop

26 diocesan bishops are Lords Spiritual. 21 on seniority and Canterbury, York, London, Winchester and Durham ‘ex officio’

Since the C19th most dioceses have one or more **suffragan bishops** (some called Area Bishop if there is separate jurisdiction as in London and Southwark). This diocese has the Bishop of Sherwood as suffragan – who is able to deputise for the diocesan bishop but also has a specialist role nationally. The pattern of sharing episcopal ministry between diocesan and suffragan varies from diocese to diocese. Retired Bishops are often invited to be **Assistant Bishop**. The diocesan Bishop is the ‘chief pastor’ to clergy and laity and a focus of unity and mission. (See the Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer for a job description and person specification!).

If a parish objects to the ministry of a woman priest or bishop it may seek alternative episcopal oversight by a so called ‘flying bishop’.

The Church of England consecrated the first women bishop in York Minster on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 – the Right Reverend Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport. The first female diocesan Bishop is the Bishop of Gloucester, the Right Reverend Rachel Treweek, consecrated in Canterbury Cathedral 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015. Currently there are two female diocesans – Newcastle is the other. 10+ suffragan bishops.

Each diocese will have a number of **archdeacons** (two here – Newark and Nottingham) who has responsibility for a geographical area called an **archdeaconry**. This is a senior role. The archdeacon has particular concern for churchwardens, clergy appointments, church buildings, church law and shares pastoral care of the clergy with the Bishops.

There are nine **deaneries** in this diocese - a cluster of parishes/benefices who have the immediate oversight of an **Area Dean** (called a Rural Dean in some dioceses) who is usually a priest with full time parochial or other responsibilities.

Every **parish church** is governed by a **Parochial Church Council** (PCC) which is elected at the Annual Meeting as are the two **Churchwardens** who are the ‘Bishop’s officers’ in the parish. They are solemnly admitted to office at the Archdeacon’s Visitation each year. Today churchwardens are primarily involved with ensuring the good order of public worship, the repair of the church fabric and churchyard as well as supporting their incumbent. Historically wardens

had civic duties including the administration of alms to the poor. They have retained the right to make an arrest!

The **Diocesan Office** is Jubilee House in Westgate which is the administrative centre of the diocese led by a CEO/**Diocesan Secretary**. Its work resources and serves the 300+ churches of the diocese. The **Diocesan Registrar** is also based in Jubilee House but the Diocesan **Chancellor** handles most matters such as the issuing of faculties through a 'virtual' Ecclesiastical Court from his or her Chambers.

### **The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Southwell: Minster, parish church or cathedral?**

'Minster' a Saxon word for a large regional church which resourced surrounding parishes. Secular and not monastic. A **Collegiate Church** – hence the title of **Prebendary** and later **Canon** for its governance through a College of Clergy. They took it in turn to be 'in residence' for a period of weeks or months to cover the daily worship, living in The Residence. A **Rector** took care of the parish – with the help of curates no doubt. Income was from glebe lands or 'prebends'. Most of the historic assets of property and land were confiscated by the Commissioners in 1844.

The Minster was made a Cathedral Church in 1884 for the new diocese of Southwell but curiously did not have a **Provost** until James Coneybeare in 1938. With the Cathedrals Measure of 1999 all Cathedral Provosts were titled **Dean**.

It is correct to say either Minster or Cathedral. It is the parish church to c. 5,500 souls of the town's total population of c. 7,750 so we have baptisms, marriages and funerals as any other parish church.

Today as a **parish church cathedral** (5 of the 42 cathedrals in England are also parish churches) we are governed by the executive body the **Chapter** (Dean and two residentiary canons whose stipends are funded by the Church Commissioners, and six other members, four of whom are appointed by the Bishop and/or Dean for a maximum tenure of nine years, and two are the elected parish representatives who serve for three or six years).

**Residentiary Canons** have different titles depending on their area of responsibility. Currently we have a Canon Precentor (in charge of worship and music) and Canon Pastor (soon to be Canon Chancellor retaining pastoral oversight of the parish while developing educational and visitor work around the Chapter House Leaves project).

The Dean is overall responsible for the running of the Cathedral together with the Chapter. The diocesan Bishop is the Visitor (hence s/he knocks on the West door before entering for installation/enthronement). The only entitlement of the Bishop is to ordain and confirm in his/her Cathedral church and to impose a Visitation to see that all is in order. But in practice it is much friendlier! The Dean is the Senior Priest of the diocese and is a full member of the Bishop's Staff, Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Synod.

The **College of Canons** (16 honorary canons) are appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the Dean. They may be lay or ordained, and at least one is an Ecumenical Canon. They act as a 'critical friend' and as ambassadors for the cathedral and can be invited to preach and participate in other activities. The College of Canons usually meets three times a year. The archdeacons and suffragan bishop are *ex officio* members. Each has an assigned stall in quire and the Chapter House.

The **Cathedral Council** has members appointed from across the diocese and its Chair is appointed by the Bishop. Members come from secular as well as church life, and are lay and ordained. It meets twice a year and annually jointly with the Chapter.

To refer to '**Southwell Cathedral**' in legal terms encompasses the Chapter, College of Canons and the Cathedral Council.

### **What is on the Chapter's agenda?**

Chapter employs a full time Chapter **Clerk** more usually titled the Cathedral Administrator and a number of lay administrative staff based at the **Minster Centre** in Church Street. In addition we support the **Minster School Chaplain**, an education/schools team, vergers, and gardeners. The **Music Foundation** absorbs much expense but is our pride and joy and draws people to worship in the Minster. Unusually our boy and girl choristers attend a state school – the Minster school, to which we trace an 1100 year connection. The six part time **lay clerks** are not housed by the Cathedral and all have to find other employment to supplement their income. There is an **Events and Marketing** department and we share post in finance, **Safeguarding** and press communications with Jubilee House.

The Chapter's budgeted income in 2017 is c. £1.3 m from grants, investments, properties including the shop, visitor donations, congregational giving.

Chapter is wanting to develop the Minster's outreach to both diocese and county and widen our reach to visitors of this holy place of pilgrimage and prayer. We are working in furthering our support for Bishop Paul and the diocese in its vision to 'Grow disciples – wider, younger, and deeper'. As the 'Mother church' of the diocese how can we better be a place of refreshment and resourcing for clergy and parishes as a centre for theological exploration and community engagement? The Chapter owns the diocesan retreat house Sacrista Prebend which is already engaged in offering quiet days for prayer and spiritual nourishment.

The report *Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedral*<sup>ii</sup> identified English Cathedrals as positioned well for the Church of England's mission in the early twenty-first century. Receiving more visitors than ever (for many different reasons) it reported that 11 million adults visit a cathedral each year i.e. 1:4 of the adult population. Against a backdrop of overall declining church attendance many cathedrals are experiencing growing congregations, especially for midweek worship such as evensong.

Many people describe a Cathedral visit in terms of a positive and spiritual experience. Cathedrals (especially city based ones) have opportunities to interact with the civic life of the city and county in a neutral way and are centres for venues for cultural events which draw many to them. The building is usually recognised as a 'hub' and focus for national and local celebrations or tragedies.

Cathedrals are uniquely placed to make connections with people and communities as a key institution for people of faith and no faith. We seek to hold the daily worship of Almighty God at our centre – everything else flows from worship. We pray that the love of God revealed through Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit may be proclaimed through our work and life together here. We are conscious of the immense privilege of the stewardship of his holy place entrusted to us. Thank you for being part of it.

Nicola Sullivan, Dean of Southwell

July 2017

<sup>i</sup> A quote from Sir Roy Strong's introduction in *A Guide to the Church of England*, Martin Davie, Mowbray 2008, ISBN 978 19062 8613 2

<sup>ii</sup> Produced by Theos and the Grubb Institute, 2012