

A Third Archdeaconry – Cover Sheet

- i. Attached is a proposal to divide the diocese into three archdeaconries instead of two.
- ii. This is something I have wanted to do for several years, both to cope with the workload of the senior staff, and to enable us to be more supportive of the parishes and more outwardly missional.
- iii. This year seems a good time to make this move, both because of major local government changes in Northamptonshire, and to coincide with the retirement of one of our archdeacons towards the end of this year.
- iv. This is emphatically not about “moving the deckchairs on the Titanic”. It is to enable better care for clergy and parishes, better support for and involvement in the civic structures, and a more outward-looking and missional diocese.
- v. There are various ways of making such a change. A traditional pastoral scheme would take a long time, and include various stages of formal consultation with everyone who might be affected. A more recent system is the “Bishop’s Pastoral Order” which simply signs the change into effect much more simply, and doesn’t require all the consultations.
- vi. In order to bring the change in and advertise for two new archdeacons to start in January, which would involve interviewing in September, I propose using a Bishop’s Pastoral Order rather than a pastoral scheme. However, I will consult widely, and listen carefully to any representations which are made.
- vii. There would be a financial cost to this, but in stipend terms it is covered by other central diocesan posts not being filled in the same way when they fall vacant. We would still need to use a house which might otherwise have been let out. Admin support for a third archdeacon would be covered with present staffing.
- viii. There would be some consequential changes in terms of committee and diocesan synod membership, and the creation of a new archdeaconry pastoral committee, but these would be straightforward.
- ix. I commend this proposal strongly. It would result in a better service to the parishes, and a more missional and outward-looking diocese.

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A Third Archdeaconry

1. Archdeacon Gordon's retirement falls at around the same time as the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire.
2. Archdeacons have a legal standing within a diocese, but this is mainly about the authority and role of the archdeacon. Archdeacons have legal responsibilities to do with church buildings and land, finances, pastoral reorganisation, and clergy discipline. They are also part of the bishop's senior staff team (in this diocese called the Bishop's Management Group), and are given major diocesan-wide portfolios by the diocesan bishop.
3. Currently the Archdeacon of Northampton chairs the Diocesan Board of Education, and the Archdeacon of Oakham exercises spiritual oversight of diocesan finances as vice-chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance. Rural deans are legally the archdeacon's deputies, and although an archdeacon is appointed by the diocesan bishop, he or she has a degree of independence from the bishop in a number of areas. Some separation of powers, rather than an all-powerful bishop, is a good thing: we achieve this with a lay person as chair of the DBF, and with archdeacons acting in their geographical and portfolio areas.
4. We have previously sought to link our structures with local government boundaries, for example in my predecessor's time: in the creation of the current Peterborough and Rutland Deaneries, absorbing the former Barnack Deanery; in the creation of Greater Northampton Deanery, roughly coterminous with the borough, losing the former Wootton Deanery; and in the then Bishop of Brixworth holding responsibility for civic and ecumenical relationships in Northants. Some aspects of this worked better than others.
5. The County of Northamptonshire, its boroughs of Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough, and its districts of Daventry, East Northants, and South Northants, all ceased to exist as local authorities at the end of March. They were replaced on 1 April by two unitary authorities: North Northamptonshire (based in Kettering and comprising the old areas of Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough), and West Northamptonshire (based in Northampton and comprising Daventry, Northampton, and South Northants).
6. Part of our mission must be to have good relations with local government. This affects schools, new housing and planning, youth work, social care provision, civic services, and much more. This should involve a recognised civic church, traditionally All Saints Northampton for Northants, All Saints Oakham for Rutland, and St John the Baptist working alongside the Cathedral for Peterborough. I am glad to note that St Peter & St Paul Kettering is already taking up that role for the new North Northants unitary authority.
7. Those good relations, and thus our mission, would also be enhanced by a senior church figure being responsible to relate to and work with the leaders of the local authorities. This works well in Peterborough, with both the Cathedral and the Bishop close at hand. Rutland has some years related well to us describing Peterborough as "our Cathedral", and requesting civic and episcopal services both in the Cathedral and in the county.

8. I believe we should now take the initiative in creating strong relations at a senior level with the two new unitary authorities. Geographically our current archdeaconry boundaries closely match these new areas, with Wellingborough Deanery as the only real anomaly.
9. Currently Wellingborough Deanery lies in Northampton Archdeaconry. Two benefices: Cogenhoe and Great Houghton and Little Houghton with Brafield on the Green, and Yardley Hastings, Denton and Grendon with Castle Ashby and Whiston, are mainly in West Northamptonshire, while the rest of the deanery is in North Northamptonshire.
10. My proposal is to replace our two archdeaconries with three, matching local authority boundaries. An Archdeacon of Northampton would oversee the deaneries of Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry, Greater Northampton (including benefices named in paragraph 9), and Towcester. An Archdeacon of Kettering would oversee the deaneries of Corby, Higham, Kettering, Oundle, and Wellingborough (minus the same two benefices). An Archdeacon of Peterborough and Rutland would oversee the deaneries of Peterborough and Rutland.
11. The archdeacons' role descriptions would then include responsibility for establishing and maintaining good relationships with their local authority leaders, together with specific support for the incumbents of the civic churches (in paragraph 6 above). This would be a healthy change of culture for archdeacons, with outward-looking, missional, and "public square" elements to their role as well as the traditional "engine room" work of maintaining diocesan structures. Smaller archdeaconries would enable this extension of their work.
12. The Archdeacon of Peterborough and Rutland would have a smaller patch than the others, and I believe should be part-time, probably 60%, with the other 40% looking after a small parish, or serving as an associate in a larger parish, or similar. We are regularly looking to fill such part-time posts, and this could provide the housing necessary for this new position.
13. A third archdeacon would give us a stronger senior team, covering more portfolios, and to have one archdeacon overseeing mission across the diocese as well as one on education and one on finance. The oversight of ordinands and curates, chaplains, and retired clergy, would remain with the suffragan bishop; my chaplain would continue to oversee pastoral care of the clergy; and I would retain responsibility for parish clergy and lay ministers.
14. The cost of this would be a part-time archdeacon stipend and the use of a house. We are already making savings in other areas which I believe will cover this. I propose that we get the current two archdeacons' secretaries, or their successors, to work more closely together to serve the three archdeacons, probably from the Peterborough office. This sort of arrangement works well elsewhere, and provides good cover at lower cost.
15. Some may argue that we are appointing more senior staff while losing parish posts. Unlike many dioceses, we have no plans to cut parish posts, though a few could become part-time if that is what parishes want. Our senior staff are currently very stretched, and I believe this new 60% senior post will provide better support both for parishes and for our mission.
16. I stress that this is about mission. Three archdeacons would have new public-facing roles. One would have mission as their diocesan-wide portfolio.