

## THE STRUCTURES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

By Ian Collins

### 1. ORDERS OF MINISTRY

There are three Orders of Ministry – DEACON, PRIEST, BISHOP. All clergy, whatever their particular job, are in one of these three Orders. Normally a deacon is ordained priest after one year as a deacon.

### 2. GEOGRAPHICAL STRUCTURES

The Church of England is divided into two PROVINCES – Canterbury and York. Each Province has an Archbishop with Canterbury being the senior.

Each Province is divided into a number of DIOCESES – 29 in the Province of Canterbury and 14 in the Province of York. The Diocese of Southwell is in the Province of York. Each Diocese has a Bishop and in most cases he is assisted by other Bishops (see ‘Diocesan Structures’).

Each Diocese is sub-divided into a number of PARISHES. No longer is it possible for each parish to have its own Parish Priest, so frequently, especially in rural areas, a number of parishes is grouped together.

For administrative and support purposes parishes are also grouped into RURAL or AREA DEANERIES. One of the clergy in the Deanery is appointed by the Bishop as Rural Dean (see ‘Diocesan Structures’).

There are a number of churches in the Church of England which, for historical reasons, are outside these structures. They are called PECULIARS. In some cases, such as Westminster Abbey and St. George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle, they are ROYAL PECULIARS. In each of these cases the Dean is responsible directly to the Sovereign and no bishop has any jurisdiction.

### 3. DIOCESAN STRUCTURES

The head of each Diocese is the DIOCESAN BISHOP, in the case of Southwell, the Bishop of Southwell.

Under the Diocesan Bishop may be an AREA or SUFFRAGAN BISHOP. In the case of Southwell Diocese the Suffragan Bishop is the Bishop of Sherwood. Some of the larger Dioceses, such as London, have Area Bishops who have almost total responsibility for their ‘area’, unlike a suffragan bishop who works in the whole diocese under the diocesan bishop.

In addition there are often ASSISTANT BISHOPS in a diocese. These may be retired bishops who have come to live in a particular diocese and undertake some work for the diocesan bishop.

Under the Bishop of the Diocese there are ARCHDEACONS who assist the Bishop in the pastoral care and discipline of the clergy and parishes. In this diocese there are two Archdeacons – Nottingham and Newark. They each take responsibility for part of the diocese – Nottingham the south-west and Newark the north-east. Despite being called Archdeacons, they are in priest's orders!

AREA or RURAL DEANS assist the bishop and the archdeacons in the administration of the diocese and they liaise with the parish clergy in their deanery. They are also responsible for convening the clergy 'chapter', that is calling to meetings the clergy of the Deanery and they chair the Deanery Synod (see 'Synodical Structures')

The PARISH CLERGY are variously known as Vicar, Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a parish or group of parishes. The difference between a vicar and a rector is historic and there is no difference today. They each have the freehold of the parish which they serve, which means that they cannot be moved from that parish except for some offence or upon reaching retirement age. Priests-in-Charge are in all respects as vicars or rectors except that they do not have the freehold but are appointed for a number of years and may be moved at the end of that time if the bishop so wishes.