

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

Annual Chapter Report, 2018

Welcomes

The work of the Cathedral has progressed steadily over the year, led by the Dean. There were two important arrivals. On 5 May 2018 the Bishop of Blackburn installed and collated the Revd Dr Rowena Pailing as Canon Missioner and we were delighted to have her join the Chapter. In July the Bishop welcomed, installed and commissioned The Right Reverend Dr Jill Duff as Bishop of Lancaster, making the Bishop's senior team complete once again.

Governance, finance and buildings

The Chapter paid particular attention to governance. At Pentecost the revised Constitution and Statutes, approved on behalf of the General Synod, came into effect, and were noted to anticipate some of the changes that will come about as the result of the national Cathedrals Working Group. An audit of the Cathedral's governance was undertaken by Haysmacintyre, and their recommendations were received and accepted by the Chapter in the autumn. The Chapter also turned its attention to the Cathedral's strategic planning process, and progress under the facilitation of Mr Charles Hobson will continue in 2019. The exercise began with a blank sheet of paper and no presumptions about plans or priorities, thus allowing considerable freedom for new ideas to emerge and be tested before inclusion. There will be widespread consultation about the contents of the plan before it becomes policy.

The Cathedral's finances continue to be under strain, and much time and effort was spent in monitoring and managing the situation. The Finance Committee has been reinstated and Mr Jonathan Wood welcomed as its chairman. The Chapter is clear that even more effort must go into income generation and, amongst recent initiatives, the Cathedral gin project led by the Dean has attracted favourable attention. Another is a forthcoming Life Treasury arrangement for the placement of cremated remains and keepsakes in a purpose-built cabinet within the Columbarium. Blackburn will be the first cathedral to have such a facility and has received a significant premium on its installation as well as the expectation of substantial revenue.

The Cathedral Court development has won a national conservation award from the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. The negotiations with the main contractor for the scheme, and with the insurers for the construction engineers, have continued during the year. Under the chairmanship of Mr Keith Roberts from the spring onwards, Blackburn Cathedral Developments has drawn on the expertise of Mr Ian Yule of Shoosmiths to re-appraise the claim against the construction engineers. Additional snagging problems have come to light, in the form of defective installation of the damp proof coursing beneath the coping stones at eaves level, and of the uneven first floor slab of the Deanery, both of them the responsibility of the main contractor.

Work on the development phase of the refurbishment of the Crypt, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, was led by Ms Emma Birkett as project manager. Approval for a project that would bring the Crypt back into use as a liturgical community resource and an interpretative space for exhibitions and displays was given by the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, and the challenge is to find the £1 million match funding that will be required for a

Round 2 bid to the HLF. The Cathedral has been given a six-month extension of time to raise this sum, led by the Blackburn Cathedral Trust.

Cathedral life and teaching

The Canon Missioner has taken safeguarding as part of her brief, with the aim of promoting a safer environment and culture for everyone involved with the Cathedral. She chairs monthly meetings of the Cathedral Safeguarding Group, and against the background of a sobering report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, made an audit of current practice and areas for development. The Cathedral Safeguarding Policy, which is robust, has been updated with new contact information and Canon Dr Pailing, as an approved safeguarding trainer, has delivered training sessions with more to follow on a rolling programme. Work has taken place on implementing safer recruitment processes that are compliant with national guidelines, including for volunteers, and on the storage and use of personal and sensitive data, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation that come into force in May 2018. The safeguarding activity is supported with advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Ms Sharon Hassall.

The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral, with the Dean as President and Mr David Thornton as acting chairman, held four lunchtime talks, with the fourth and last being at Stonyhurst College in September. They provided catering for, or hosted, lunches and receptions, including for the International Women's Day in March and the Advent Carol Service in December. Their annual general meeting took place in May, at which Canon Dr Pailing was the guest speaker. The Friends have also funded Cathedral flowers. Discussions are under way about how best the Friends can align themselves with and support the emerging strategic plan of the Cathedral.

The worship of the Cathedral is supported throughout the liturgical year, including special occasions and commemorations by its seven choirs. The Director of Music, Mr Samuel Hudson, leads a music department whose choirs sing at home and away, including at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast. There is an active outreach programme and all choristers are encouraged to take the RCSM singing examinations. The Renaissance Singers continue to contribute strongly, including a week of residence at Ripon Cathedral and a summer concert at Whalley Abbey. The Cathedral's scholarships for singers and organists attract excellent candidates who go on to cathedral posts that have in recent years included Wells, Lincoln and Carlisle. Mr Hudson will be leaving the Cathedral during 2019 to take up the directorship of music at Worcester, opening up a wonderful opportunity for a successor to build on his work.

The bell ringers, led by their Ringing Master, Mr Raymond Hutchings, were delighted to recruit seven new ringers after the 2017 fall in numbers. There were only four Sundays with no ringing, and the regular Thursday practices went well, including with the learners. There were five quarter peals and two full peals rung during the year, and special events included the welcome to the new Bishop of Lancaster on 4 July. On the hundredth anniversary of the end of WW1, the lives of the five ringers from Blackburn who were killed between 1914 and 1918 were gratefully remembered, and their individual anniversaries were each marked with appropriate ringing.

The Education Department, overseen by the Canon Missioner, is led by the Education Officer, Mrs Sian Howell-Jones and provides a service to the schools of the Diocese and county. Content of the educational trails has developed to include more hands-on activity by

pupils and opportunities to embrace the essence of Christian faith. An example is the Spirituality Day for the whole of year 7 at Preesall School, now in its fifth year with the help of twenty volunteers, which with increased resources could be offered more widely. Almost 1500 school pupils attended the Cathedral during the year from Key Stages 1 to 4, and income topped £4000 for the first time.

The Sunday School, also supported by the Canon Missioner, has further developed as part of the Cathedral's ministry to young people. A move to the Chesters Room in the Crypt in the spring brought improved light and space, and allowed for two events - an official opening and a Christmas drop-in – that built relationships with the congregation and helped to ensure the school is an active part of the Cathedral family. An Easter Garden was made and displayed at the back of the Cathedral and the annual summer party was held in the Cathedral Court garth for the first time. All the teachers and assistants completed on-line safeguarding training, and held two social events, the first led by the Dean and the second by the Canon Missioner, to share in worship and get to know each other better.

The Flower Arrangers continue to produce their lovely displays on a weekly basis. There is a team of seven arrangers, with help from other Cathedrals at busy times. Flowers are supplied by a local florist at discounted prices, but additional donations (including Gift Aid) are always welcome to commemorate loved ones or some special event in a person's life.

The Mothers Union programme for the last year has been interesting and varied including Speakers, the Christmas Meal Outing and the Strawberry Tea as well as the Opening Service which was conducted by Canon Michael Wedgeworth. Sprays of flowers have been donated for Mothering Sunday to be given to the Ladies of the Congregation. The Cathedral Mothers Union has supported Mothers Union Services throughout the Diocese and Deanery, the main one being the Mary Sumner Day Service (our Founder) at the Cathedral. The Deanery Festival Service was held at St. James, Blackburn and the Spring Festival at St. Silas, Blackburn.

And thank you!

The Chapter is grateful for the wonderful gifts of time and effort that are reflected above. In addition its members would like to express their deepest thanks to all members of the Cathedral's staff and volunteers, whatever their roles, for their tireless and unstinting contributions in making Blackburn Cathedral the successful, worshipping and accessible community that bears powerful witness to the Christian faith across the Diocese and beyond.

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February 2019