

## **PRESENTATION AT THE AGM 2018** by the Dean of Chelmsford

Last Sunday at both services in place of the sermon I delivered essentially the first part of the Annual Report - a reflection on the last year seeking to draw out some of the major challenges and opportunities. If you weren't here last week or would like to listen to it again it is now on YouTube - here is the link <https://youtu.be/LPsBR6rAag8> which you can also find that by going to the "Sermons" page on the Cathedral website.

Here I want to focus specifically on the Visitation and on the Round Table conversations in February and March.

The Visitation delivered a wide range of recommendations. Some of those were addressed immediately, and since September then Chapter has continued this work, monitoring progress regularly against each recommendation. You can find the full report on the Cathedral website.

The Round Tables in February and March drew out from the Visitation those areas which specifically concern the congregational life of the Cathedral.

I know this often seems like a difficult distinction to make, but it is important. Indeed confusion about this is often the source of misunderstandings in our life together.

Let me put it as clearly as I can. In a parish church the governance, accountability and delivery are firmly in the hands of the congregation particularly through the PCC and the churchwardens, who are effectively the trustees. In a cathedral - and I recognise that this is challenging - the opposite is the case. In a cathedral governance and accountability are in the hands of a largely independent body of trustees known as the Chapter. And operational delivery is the largely the responsibility of lay and ordained staff who are not paid by or accountable to the congregations.

As I will suggest later, that makes it even more important for congregations in cathedrals to take real responsibility for the life and mission of the congregations.

That is an important theme for us, and one highlighted in the Visitation. It is fantastic that we have a range of ministries delivered by volunteers, and the Volunteer Support Group is a model of good practice. But the Chapter is also eager to encourage a much greater proportion of those who worship regularly at the cathedral to get involved in active ministry.

This is happening - and I was delighted last week with the first meeting of the young people's server group. But why do so few people volunteer for instance as Sidespeople? This is a great ministry, a really important part of our welcome, and one that anyone of any age can be involved in. It's so important that I know some churches where the whole congregation is put on the rota so that everyone gets a feel for welcome, hospitality and taking responsibility.

Back to the Visitation and the Round Tables.

The Round Tables took three themes identified by the Visitation which have particular resonance and relevance to our congregational life:

- The Cathedral as a school for disciples
- The Cathedral as a transforming presence
- The Cathedral building for the future.

Let me take a look at each of these in turn

## CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL - A SCHOOL FOR DISCIPLES

- What are the challenges and opportunities for the cathedral in worship, fellowship and learning?
- How do we grow and form the cathedral congregations and invite people to go deeper?
- How do we respond to the Visitation's challenge to create a learning programme to nurture new Christians?
- What does it mean to be the "place of formation" in the diocese - hosting students, interns, placements and with our established relationship with St Mellitus College?

This was a wide ranging discussion, introduced by the Bishop, in a series of sections, which inevitably raise more questions than it answered, but that was after all the purpose.

### - **Worship:**

- Real enthusiasm for:
  - alternative and additional patterns of worship such as Taizé.
  - the opportunities of Sunday night still remain to be explored.
  - worship as a context for different patterns of input and teaching
  - making more of midday prayers in the Cathedral,
  - experimenting with alternative evening worship on weekdays.
  - more testimony during services

### - **Outreach:**

- Real enthusiasm for:
  - Mission Sunday in October and for doing more events like it.
  - Inviting other congregations to worship at the Cathedral on some Sundays and special occasions
  - Encouraging more people to join in the daily prayer at the Cathedral
  - establish a rhythm of prayer within the community.
  - gap-year programme for young people exploring ministry
  - leaflets with a simple introduction to Christian faith
  - Being prepared at coffee time to chat to people we don't know and pray with them
  - Newcomers events
  - How does someone coming into new ministry walk a journey in faith?

### - **Welcome:**

- Having an open building and a good welcome
- Welcome inside and outside of the cathedral, screens outside of service times
- Encourage young people to become welcomers

### - **Priestly presence in the Cathedral:**

- Rota for retired clergy to be available in the Cathedral in similar way to day stewards.
- Team of listeners available at services and in the week (day chaplains) with name tags
- Supporting Welcome on Wednesday

### - **Courses / Teaching:**

- Alpha & Emmaus Courses
- Sermon series, perhaps with debate / discussion sessions afterwards
- Greek Lessons!
- Reintroduction of Emmaus suppers and teaching more about the Bible and discipleship

- Teaching people to PRAY
- Cross denomination teaching
- Sharing 'What God has Taught me This Week'
- Learning about Anglicanism
- Assisting people to learn listening and skills to help others
- Developing people's confidence and skills to lead introductory courses about the Christian faith
  
- **Development of current activities**
- Raising the profile of fellowship groups and communicate more about what they do, and increasing the number of fellowship groups
- Enhance and develop Breakfast with the Bible and other learning opportunities
- More written information about Lent groups and sermons
- Using the Cathedral building more as a teaching place for the diocese, eg. School of Prayer
- Linking learning more to practical spiritual life
  
- **Outreach within existing Cathedral events**
- Try to engage Friday Concert goers - make aware of the Cathedral ethos, services and activities
- Clergy attending Friday Lunchtime Concerts
- Could include information about the Cathedral as a place of worship at concerts in concert programmes.
- Do people coming for guided tours learn about Jesus?
- 'We are not capitalising on the Cathedral as an excellent venue to lead people to find out more about Christianity'
  
- **Outreach with Universities**
- Engage with ARU and Writtle Uni Students
- How can we interact with the University down the road
- 'WE NEED A CULTURE OF LEARNING'
- A welcome for new students from ARU in the Cathedral when the new year starts
- Develop links with University/World of Work eg. Ethical issues forum, medical school/legal ethics. Business ethics.
  
- **Outreach with Schools/Young People**
- Build on School Visits
- Hold Messy Church events
- Make offertory more central to Eucharist including presentation of Sunday school activities
- Bradwell School Pilgrimage in July
- Yr6 transition and prayer spaces
- Schools learning about Art
- Outreach work to schools - can this be expanded (possibly to include more ye 11 and 12)
  
- **Web outreach**
- Web - more videos and interactive stuff - live streaming of services
- Sermons on Website
- Good IT/Website - up to date/accessible
- Expand - downloads of sermons, podcasts
- Cathedral app for works of art which explain the meaning and teaches Christianity
- Something for enquirers highlighted on the website
- Use of Social Media

## **CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL - A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE**

- How does the Cathedral serve the city, the region and the diocese as a whole?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses, our key partners, and what are we missing?
- What could "serving east London and Essex" really mean?
- Locally should the cathedral retain its geographical parish?
  
- **Meeting city needs**
- The removal of the Cathedral's parish may cause confusion in city centre
- Meet needs of Asian / African Christians especially at Christmas. Hold a New Years Eve service for them.
- Support city challenges – particularly homelessness
- Does the Cathedral have the capacity to support a growing parish population
  
- **Ministry**
- Surrounding parishes will not be able to meet the demand of a growing, city centre parish
- Deanery considers it unfair that the cathedral might cherry-pick chaplaincy (councils, etc) but leave the hard work of parish ministry to them
- Should the ARU Chaplain be affiliated to the Cathedral
- Have the capacity and freedom to respond to events
  
- **Improving public knowledge**
- Promote the cathedral's events and services more in shopping centres
- Promote the Cathedral's worship life at secular events
- Build links with ARU.
- Get more media coverage for the Cathedral and its activities
- Improve the website
  
- **Cathedral Role**
- Do East London and Essex want the same thing from their cathedral?
- The Cathedral should look forward in its role as a cathedral, not backward to its historical parish links
- Would ceasing to be a parish have any financial implications?
- The Cathedral should be a flagship to the diocese

## CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL - BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

- As we look forward to a renewal of our financial giving in the autumn, and consider the need for a major capital fundraising project and perhaps a new building, let's seek to prioritise by asking a simple question: "If we had a legacy of £1 million how should we use it?"
- **Investment in buildings:**
- *FINDING OR CREATING SPACE FOR:*
- Homeless people
- A family centre
- Education
- Social outreach
- Base for mission and ministry in our parish
- Multi faith work – even a shared worship space.
  
- HOW DO WE DO THOS?
- Buy the Shire Hall or other existing buildings close to the Cathedral
- a refectory / café / shop in the Cathedral or another building
- Develop the Chapter House as a “parish chapel”.
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- **Investment in people:**
- mission teams for other churches.
- chaplaincy to the homeless, including further developing Welcome on Wednesday and skills learning
  
- **Investment in infrastructure**
- Improving IT / electronic communication, including streaming worship online services
- Install automatic taps in cloakrooms!
- Continue with stage two of the sound system
- Implement the churchyard vision
  
- **Investment in growth**
- Pump prime an HLF bid by employing staff to take this forward
- Improve our visitor offer

## CONCLUSION

What's our response to all that? Well in a moment I simply want you to turn to your neighbours and ask that question.

Things exist because people want them to. The church exists because wants it to be an expression of his love for the whole inhabited earth. Indeed in the words of John's Gospel, for the cosmos, the whole order of creation. God of course has to have a great sense of humour about the church as he does about the world. But through the church God wants us his people to be heralds of God's kingdom – of joy, simplicity and mercy; of justice and compassion; of love. The church is not a social club – although of course we are called to care for one another (and do remember that pastoral care is not a job that the clergy do for the congregations but that all of us do for one another). Nor is the church primarily even a place of worship – though of course worship is fundamental and necessary as it forms us in the values of the kingdom.

The church is here to be a mission centre of the Kingdom of God. What does that look like? Well, I regularly go walking through the post-industrial landscape around Tilbury. There's a fantastic

poster advertising a local independent church which doesn't meet in a fine building but in a sports hall. And they call themselves "Garden of Fruitfulness Parish". I love that. What a fantastic name for a Christian community – a garden of fruitfulness where we are all nurtured to bear fruit for others, and to invite others to know the extraordinary love that God has for the whole inhabited earth, and which he has demonstrated by the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's our calling here. That has always been the calling of the church since those first disciples encountered the risen Lord.

Finally let me simply refer back to my introduction to this year's annual report and recall the four themes that have guided the Chapter's work over the last three years, and which frame our life together:

- 1) The Cathedral as a thriving, outward facing community
- 2) The Cathedral as the church of the Bishop
- 3) The Cathedral as a community shaped by worship
- 4) The Cathedral as public space for everyone

And at the heart of all our life, that line from John's Gospel: "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (20.21)

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21/4/18