



# 2021 Annual Report

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## **Governance**

The Chapter warmly welcomed Mr Colin Jones as the Chief Financial & Operating Officer when he took up his post at the beginning of January. The Chapter membership remained constant throughout the year, and monthly meetings took place except for July, with in person meetings becoming possible from September. Ms Carol Fletcher of the Church Commissioners was in attendance. The Finance and Risk Assurance Committee met regularly and its minutes underpinned the regular financial management reports prepared for the Chapter. The Council met on 1 July and 15 November to receive and discuss reports on the work and mission of the Cathedral. Chapter members have been deeply grateful to The Dean for his strong and decisive leadership of its affairs during a challenging year.

The Cathedrals Measure 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April, and the process of cathedrals' registration with the Charity Commission has begun. The timing of Blackburn's transfer is not yet known but may be during 2023. Meanwhile, the Chapter at each of its meetings has been considering the principles of governance, as well as updating its policies and procedures, prior to a further revision of its Constitution and Statutes.

Chapter members took part in an away-day of bright sunshine at Whalley Abbey on 7 July. The principal purpose was to prepare for the peer review of the Cathedral under the auspices of the Association of English Cathedrals that took place in September. The visit and preparation for the review was helpful in causing the Chapter to think afresh about the Cathedral's governance and finance. The subsequent report was positive, particularly in the well-earned endorsement of the resilience, courage and dedication of the Cathedral's staff team.

The Safeguarding Management Group met regularly and used the Social Care Institute for Excellence ('SCIE') audit report as its framework for embedding best practice. The role of the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, Ms Jenny Price, has evolved, with a particular emphasis on quality assurance and its strategic development. Casework was managed locally by the safeguarding coordinators and the Revd Canon Dr Rowena Pailing. Policy documents have been updated, including role descriptions for volunteers. A training matrix was developed and it is a pleasure to report that on-line training at several levels has been almost wholly completed in the year, with more to follow in 2022. The Cathedral was also elected to be part of the National Pathfinder Pilot that is to review the structure of safeguarding in the Church of England, especially its effectiveness and accountability.

A special meeting of the Chapter took place early in January 2021, to consider the position of the Canon Sacrist, Revd Andrew Hindley, under the Church Dignitaries (Retirement) Measure 1949, and led to a recommendation to the Bishop of Blackburn that Revd Hindley be retired on the grounds that he was unable, through disability arising from ill health, to discharge adequately the duties attaching to his office. The Bishop accepted the recommendation and



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declared the office of Canon Sacrist vacant on 30 April. Discussions took place thereafter about detailed terms of an agreement between Revd Hindley and the Bishop of Blackburn, with the Chapter as an interested party, and were continuing at the end of the year.

### **Worship and Mission**

The Cathedral worked to Government guidelines and moved gradually towards services open to physically present congregations as the Covid pandemic eased. In addition to marking the great festivals of the Liturgical Year, a special Evensong took place on 18 April to mark the death and to give thanks for the life of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at which the Lord Lieutenant reminisced about visits by the prince. Another special occasion was the collation and installation of honorary canons at Choral Evensong on 9 September, including the Cathedral's second honorary Canon Theologian, the Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah.

The Revd Canon Gary O'Neill as Interim Precentor undertook a review of liturgical practice as part of a larger re-evaluation of the Cathedral's worship. This is a process that will progress incrementally and in small steps, while seeking to further the Cathedral's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in its worshipping life. The liturgical arrangements for the Chancel were provisionally re-ordered, including for lighting and sound equipment (see below), and discussions will continue.

Mr John Robinson, Director of Music, was fully involved in the discussions with liturgical change. He welcomed the increased visibility of both boy and girl choristers, as well as the strengthening of the back row, including female altos for the first time in the Cathedral's history. Much thought has been given to enabling the boy and girl choristers to take an equal share in the choir, and there is clear evidence that the new arrangements are working well for all concerned, underpinned by pastoral support. A new Cathedral voluntary choir, St Paul's Voices, sing on the first Sunday of choir holidays: some very experienced members take part, including three men who between them have been singing for the Cathedral for over 160 years. The Cathedral Youth Choir goes from strength to strength under the leadership of Ms Helen Davies, including out and about in the Diocese.

With Bishop Philip North and Mr John Robinson, Ms Davies has also taken a leading role on the design of graded chorister awards that combine a sound musical education with Christian teaching and understanding. Additionally, the Director of Music reports that the Cathedral Organ is in excellent shape and has benefited from a return to J W Walker, the original builders of the instrument, for its maintenance.

The Chapter in October received and discussed an overview of the Cathedral's mission presented by the Canon Missioner. She also led the planning for the highly successful installation of the Knife Angel outside the east end of the Cathedral from 4 to 30 November. Months of developing and drawing on multi-agency partnerships – statutory, educational and charitable – across Lancashire resulted in a level of engagement from the public that



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exceeded expectations. There were more than 700 entries in a photographic competition, all the workshops were booked out as soon as advertised, and extensive media coverage resulted. Over one hundred knives were surrendered into a secure box near the installation, and the legacy work from the project continues.

The Cathedral continues to offer and develop opportunities for those who worship at the Cathedral to deepen their Christian faith. Three already established house groups continued throughout the year, to which were added two standalone study courses in the Autumn. The Lent programme took place online, with about fifty weekly participants. Confirmations were delayed because of the pandemic, but took place at Michaelmas, when the Cathedral's young and adult candidates were joined by others from St Jude's in Blackburn.

The continuation of lockdown and restricted movement during most of the year, and the increased risk of social isolation, meant that the work of the Pastoral Care Team was particularly significant in enabling those unable to attend the Cathedral to feel part of a community. This activity continues for the housebound, while at the same time work is underway to allow individual members of the congregations to flourish within the different Sunday and midweek worshipping communities, and to create spaces and relationships where pastoral care can be offered more effectively. Welcome and Christmas cards, and an Advent sermon series on the theme of welcome were part of a developing programme.

The Sunday School has been particularly affected by the pandemic, partly because of the national guidance but also because of the high incidence of Covid infection amongst young people, leading to the cancellation of some planned sessions. However, the Sunday School team, directed by Ruth Watton, has been keeping in touch with the young people and their families, and the intention is to resume gatherings early in 2022.

Education is a key element of the Cathedral's mission. While the constraints of the pandemic and a two-day a week appointment limited what could be provided during the year, the evaluations received from participating organisations from across the Diocese were highly positive. Offerings included an on-line resource pack, a trail round the Cathedral's main features, Cathedral Mosque days, and Knife Angel workshops. The concluding months of the year were particularly busy, with nineteen visits between October and December that represented 86% of the total for the year.

Ringings of the bells was inevitably severely affected by the pandemic. A suspension from September 2020 was not fully lifted until May 2021, although two tollings on 10 and 17 April took place to mark the death and funeral of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Ringings thereafter included one for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Ellacombe chiming apparatus, two each for ordinations and weddings, and a special one on 7 July for cyclists,



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including The Dean, who took part in the inaugural Cathedrals Cycle Route Challenge as they left Blackburn en route to Carlisle.

Flowers were brought into the Cathedral for its beautification every week except for Lent and Advent, by a team well versed in their arrangement. Contributions to their cost are always welcomed, and the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral help in this way. This support is one of many ways in which the Friends help the worship and mission of the Cathedral, with the gift of eighteen pew Bibles being another donation during the year. A further important project was the installation of high-resolution cameras and sound equipment for the live streaming and recording of services and other events in the Cathedral. In consultation with Canon O'Neill as project manager, two contributions totaling £25,000 from the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral were agreed, and just ten days before Christmas five cameras were out into position. The location of the equipment is temporary at present, so that decisions that might impinge on the fabric can be taken in the light of experience of use.

### **Sustainability**

The Cathedral has faced some difficult financial issues in recent years, and the arrival of Mr Colin Jones as Chief Financial & Operating Officer ('CFOO') allowed for a thorough examination of income and expenditure, as well as of the underlying financial position of the Cathedral. The priorities are to reduce and remove historical indebtedness, and to generate revenue streams that are sustainable for the future. The Church Commissioners have been strongly supportive of the Cathedral in their funding of four posts for three years each, including that of Mr Jones, and the Chapter is committed to filling the other three as quickly as possible. The purposes of all three relate to income generation and sustainability, and so are strategic appointments for the Cathedral.

Steps to bring about income generation from increased deployment of the Cathedral's own premises is important for the Cathedral. The NHS Covid vaccination service functioned in the Crypt from late January onwards and has been an important source of income. The intention is to ring fence it as a reserve fund against future commitments, to the extent possible. Some residential spaces were let out to local hospital doctors, thanks to the work of Revd Canon Andrew Horsfall and Mrs Pauline Rowe. Discussions also took place during the year about the use of Church House, resulting in a proposal to let out space to a charitable organization. The details of a long-term lease were continuing at the close of the year.

Blackburn Cathedral Developments ('BCD'), under the chairmanship of Mr Keith Roberts, made good progress on outstanding matters relating to Cathedral Court. Extensive work took place by John Turner Constructions Limited, in conjunction with Purcell (Architects). To correct the installation of the damp course at eaves level, at no cost to BCD. Some outstanding snagging issues remain for final resolution, as well as additional ones that have



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come to light. A conclusion was also reached with Civic Engineering on the long-standing claim against them. After the legal processes reported for 2020, a meeting took place in April 2021 where an initial failure to agree a suitable figure was followed by an acceptable offer a few days later. On the advice of our legal advisers, this was accepted. The settlement makes a reasonable contribution to the project delays and potential future costs, and covers the professional expenses already incurred.

Last year's report from BCD paid tribute to the contributions made by Mr Kevin Smith to the satisfactory outcomes indicated above. It was with much sadness that notification of his death was received in January 2022 after a brief period of illness.

The work on high level repairs to parts of the fabric, funded by the Cultural Recovery Fund and supplemented by the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral, was completed to time and to cost by 31 March 2021. Although some longer-term projects have had to be put on hold, the Cathedral is fortunate to move forward with fabric of an overall level of soundness that would be the envy of most places of worship.

Trading activities within Blackburn Cathedral Enterprises Limited ('BCE') were necessarily curtailed as a result of the pandemic. Checks & Greys, the Cathedral café, closed its doors and furloughed its staff in March 2020, and did not reopen until 20 July 2021. By then both the Commercial Manager and the Catering Manager had chosen not to return once furlough ended, however, the Head Chef, Laura Palmer, led a core team to welcome customers back. She and the CFOO refined and simplified the menu, produced a special offering to support Cathedral conferences and events, and introduced low-cost advertising and social media interactions to promote the venue.

Careful control of resources has been key to maintaining the trading position, especially the match of staff to demand, but also with a watchful application of special offers on the weekly menu. Day to day trading has grown slowly, while alongside a number of special events have taken place, including the launch of the Emmanuel Theological College, a wedding reception, supper for the College of Canons, and a formal lunch for Bishop's Council.

Catering provision has also been evident in the support of activities marking the return of Cathedral life. The financial targets for the café remain ambitious and continued close monitoring of its range and scope and a focus on promoting the service remain key priorities. Growth is expected to be slow and challenging, particularly as the pandemic has changed behaviours for many, and the hospitality sector remains fragile.

Cathedra Gin, also under BCE auspices, fared reasonably well, with existing stock being replenished as a result of continuing demand. The challenge is to find other special initiatives that will generate both interest and additional income.