



BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

Chapter Annual Report for 2022

The year proved to be one of change and transition for the Cathedral, with welcome shoots of growth and fresh development for the future. We deeply thank the Dean for his strength of purpose in leading the Cathedral through challenging times, and were glad he was able to take an extended period of absence in the summer.

WORSHIP AND SERVICE

We joined in the national celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II with a service of thanksgiving on 29 May, including a march past and an address by Bishop Julian Henderson on the significance of the National Anthem. On 18 September we returned to offer up our thanks once again, but this time for the completion of Her Majesty's life of service up to the time of her death on 8 September, with Bishop Philip North vividly recounting her lifelong dedication to the nation.

These were just two of the special services during the year. We began with the Accession Day Choral Evensong on 6 February, and continued with the visit of Archbishop Stephen Cottrell on 29 May, a 40 Years Celebration of Ministry for Revd Canon Gary O'Neill on 10 July with an address by Archbishop John Sentamu, and the final service for our own Bishop Julian Henderson on 16 July. The year was rounded off with two BBC 1 nationally televised services, first for Christmas Eve with a traditional Eucharist and again on Christmas Day, using more contemporary setting. Large numbers of congratulatory messages were received from across the world to the choir, and the creativity and energy that the two services generated will continue into the future.

These occasions marked an unusually exciting and developmental year in the life of the Music Department under the directorship of Mr John Robinson. Organ Scholar Miss Samantha Poh left to become Assistant Organist at Christ Church Cathedral New Zealand and the new position of Organist in Residence was launched in September 2022. Thus Mr John Hosking is responsible not just for organ playing but for building the profile of the organ, through concerts, recordings, streaming and other initiatives. The Chapter supported Mr Robinson's proposal that, following steps in that direction taken during the year, the boy and girl choristers should be mixed from the beginning of 2023.

The junior choral scholar scheme was successfully launched in September, with four ex-choristers as the first recipients. They bring a fresh and youthful sound to the Cathedral Choir and the Youth Choir, with the latter not only singing at the Sunday 9.00 a.m. service under the direction of Ms Helen Davies, but also acting as ambassadors for the Cathedral in the Diocese. St Paul's Voices, the voluntary choir, has been taken under Mr Hosking's wing, with the Director of Music as accompanist.



The launch of the Lantern Music Trust took place at the Christmas Spectacular, with Dr John Bertalot as Honorary President. This was the first step towards an organisation designed to endow the complete costs of music at the Cathedral, paving the way for future generations to become part of Blackburn's rightly renowned musical reputation.

The Cathedral organ is reported to be in serviceable shape, although both short and medium term maintenance work has been identified in order to uphold its standards. The Cathedral has moved its care back to its original builders, J.W. Walker, who bring a high level of expertise to a complicated and unusual instrument. The initiative to record the organ for Hauptwerk, thus making the digital files of every note available for downloading, has resulted in significant international interest in the instrument.

An important innovation, with Bishop Philip as sponsor and supported by £1.4 million of National Church funding, has been provided for the launch of Choir Church, a national project which has now been adopted here in Lancashire. Church-planting has been taking place in Church of England primary schools across the Diocese, using the power of fine music in liturgy, and with Dr Rebekah Okpoti warmly welcomed as Choir Church Coordinator.

Other special occasions included the day-long Festival of Faith in Daily Life on 19 March with a keynote speech by Lord Alton, the launch of the Queen's Jubilee Tapestries by the Lord Lieutenant and his deputies on 1 June, and the concert spectacular on 10 December to launch the Lantern Music Trust.

The ringers have enjoyed a full year. The 70th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession in February, the thanksgiving service for her Platinum Jubilee in May, the celebration of her life on 9 September and her funeral on 19 September were all marked with special peals, as was the proclamation of the accession of King Charles III on 11 September. Bishop Julian's farewell service on 16 July was celebrated with a quarter peal on the back eight bells, and bells were rung for three weddings during the year. While there were problems with attendance at Sunday services and Thursday practices, all of the learners remained with the tower, and ringers from Oswaldtwistle and St Silas also helped out on a reciprocal basis.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

The Chapter met on ten occasions, with input by the Finance Committee and the Safeguarding Management Group, and with Ms Carol Fletcher of the Church Commissioners in attendance on most occasions.

A settlement agreement with the Revd Andrew Hindley was concluded by deed on 28 February and an agreed statement read out by the Dean to the congregation on 10 April. The Bishop of Blackburn commissioned a lessons to be learned review, and interviews were conducted with key people over the summer. The findings from the review are still awaited.



Mr Stuart Jones resigned his position as Chapter Clerk and was replaced by Mr Colin Jones. Mr Jones left his post as Chief Finance and Operational Officer in December.

The Revd Canon Andrew Sage retired from his post at St Stephen's in Blackpool to a residential post on the other side of the Pennines, and hence left the College of Canons and the Chapter. His expertise, particularly on Diocesan housing, will be much missed. Bishop Philip North also left the Chapter on 31 August, and subsequently became the Acting Diocesan Bishop. A Chapter dinner was held for them both, at which grateful thanks for their wisdom and much-valued contributions were offered. Thanks were also expressed to the Revd Canon Andrew Horsfall for his service as a residentiary canon. The College of Canons vacancy on the Chapter has been filled by Canon David Gascoigne.

The Revd Canon Dr Rowena Pailing resigned from her post as Canon Missioner in September in order to take up a senior position with a national charity, and was warmly thanked for her important contributions to the missional development of the Cathedral and to its safeguarding. The Revd James Lawrence, who continues his doctoral study with the University of Oxford and following a residency in New York, succeeded to the post of Canon Missioner and his installation took place on 11 December.

The Cathedrals Measure 2021 was the subject of an informal away day in July. The Dean and some members of the Chapter also attended the Cathedrals Strategic Leadership Event in Manchester at the beginning of November, in preparation for the Cathedral to begin its work on its transition to the new measure in line with the agreed timetable.

Mr James Sanderson resigned his post as Cathedral Architect in September after more than twenty years in post, a period dominated by the development and completion of Clergy Court. Ms Louise Priestman was appointed and gave a presentation to the Chapter on her initial perceptions of the Cathedral's fabric and setting. While the Cathedral is fortunate to be in good condition overall, the Chapter agreed that a quinquennial review should be commissioned a year early to assess needs and opportunities for the institution's estate.

The Chapter continued its watchful scrutiny of the Cathedral's financial position throughout the year. The successful tenancy of the Crypt by the NHS vaccination service came to an end in September, concluding with a planned programme to reinstate the area the staff had occupied. A scheme to lease out Church House was being actively negotiated during the year, but without a final outcome.

Much effort went into the Cathedral restaurant, Checks and Greys, to make it commercially viable and build up its business in the face of challenging economic times. The Chapter was greatly encouraged by the energetic approach of Ms Sian Goggins, appointed as Enterprise Development Officer in September. She at once carried out a wholesale review of the business, including menu revision, staffing, and advertising. Additional event income was explored and revised financial targets, agreed with the Chapter, were exceeded. A large



number of Christmas lunches took place and a Christmas market in the Crypt on 3 December was a welcome innovation.

The Cathedral Safeguarding Management Group continued to meet regularly. Its structure and role were reconsidered early in the year, resulting in continuation of its hybrid nature as both strategic and operational. The group agreed to align its terms of reference more closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and to recruit an independent chair, to which Ms Carolyn Johnson was warmly welcomed in December. The group received and incorporated updates from the National Safeguarding Team and worked closely with the Diocese, including on the adoption of the survivor care strategy and a potential service level agreement between Cathedral and Diocese. The Cathedral is also part of the IICSA pilot, with access to new policy developments as they arise. An important change is a shift away from having due regard to safeguarding measures endorsed by the House of Bishops and towards a Safeguarding Code of Practice.

The Friends of Blackburn Cathedral Council was able to meet in person in the second part of the year, under the continuing chairmanship of Mr David Thornton. The annual general meeting in May was the occasion of an enjoyable and informative talk by Canon Pratt on his work as Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for Lancashire, and at the end of the evening twenty new bibles for congregational use were presented to the Dean. These bibles have been sponsored by The Friends, members of the congregation and visitors, and can include an inscribed dedication by the donors if they so wish. The legacies received in 2021 enabled The Friends to purchase a new Cathedral Service Register, fund the restoration of the Healing of the Nations sculpture, and the purchase of the flowers for the beautification of the Cathedral each week.

The Chapter is deeply grateful to the many people who contribute so fully and generously to the Cathedral's life and mission, and on whom the institution is able to rely for their unfailing devotion and support.