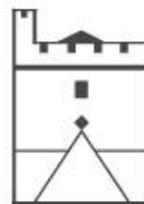


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BRECON CATHEDRAL
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The Dean's Pastoral Letter to the Congregation:

The Very Reverend Dr Paul Shackerley

JANICE Turner, a columnist for The Times newspaper, commented on the broad nature of the Church. ‘**Christmas**’ she wrote, ‘is a time to reflect on things that matter, family, values, faith, and wellbeing. Christmas is a time to remind ourselves of the need for generosity, kindness and openness. The crib, the carols, the stories, speak to us about God in flesh, the divine and human meshing together, seeking the light in dark places.’ As I write this in the third week of Advent, our readings and prayers, our waiting and expecting, are moving us on our journey to celebrate the incarnation: God with us. We come to the Cathedral not only at Christmas, but all year round, because this holy and peaceful place is an important part of our lives, even for those who come only one once a year to visit. There has been a great deal of hard work and preparation for Advent and Christmas by so many. So, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who make the Cathedral a special place to worship and visit. I am filled with a sense of gratitude and pride that I have been called to be the Dean of Brecon. And my thanks to all of you who support me, and pray for me in my role as your Dean.

IT has been quite some time since my last Pastoral Letter in July. This is largely due to the number of projects we have been working on. I wanted to wait for a time to communicate progress. The **July Chapter** meeting was largely taken up in discussion with The Very Rev'd Michael Bunker, Dean Emeritus of Peterborough Cathedral, and Nigel Morgan. They presented their report to Chapter and explained the pathway towards a launch of a major fundraising campaign in the autumn of 2017. They will both be involved in the preparations and the campaign. Since September, Nigel has worked from the Cathedral Office on Mondays and Tuesdays. If anyone would like the opportunity to chat with him about the future of the Cathedral, he is very willing to meet with you. Chapter also presented a gift, and offered our thanks to Archdeacon Robert

Williams, the Archdeacon of Gower. He served on Chapter for many years, and we miss his wise counsel and pastoral care that he brought to Chapter.

FOR the second year, the **Chapter Canons** came to the Cathedral for the Sunday Eucharist on 11 September to celebrate our Patronal Festival of Holy Cross. If you were present, you had the opportunity to meet with Chapter over lunch, before we moved to the Chapter House for our meeting. This was then followed by Choral Evensong at 3.30pm. These are usually long days for us, but are gatherings that both Dean and Chapter thoroughly enjoy. The next one will be on Wednesday 17 May 2017. The fellowship and ‘getting to know each other’ is so important to build up our common life together. I am grateful to the Chapter Canons and Chapter Clerk for all the hard work, time and commitment they give to the Cathedral.

THE newly established committees of **Fabric and Buildings, and Finance**, chaired by Canon Keith Evans and Canon Rowland Edwards respectively, have served Chapter well. These committees have proved valuable in moving forward with the challenges of the buildings and finance. I continue to be immensely grateful for the many hours of work given by our Chapter Clerk, Dr Mike Williams, whose efficient administrative skills ensure that Chapter meetings are well prepared.

Other issues discussed by the Dean and Chapter included new fundraising initiatives, changes in the law relating to staff pensions, Cathedral investments, the car park (always a painful discussion for me with many people), the Wi-Fi, insurance of the Cathedral’s art work, Charity Commission regulations and requirements, other policies, and setting the 2017 budget. These are important and necessary topics for the Dean and Chapter to progress as Trustees. All this might sound rather arid, but it is essential that good governance and management are in place for the professional leadership of the Cathedral, especially as we need to comply with the Charity Commission expectations.

VISITORS continue to be an important part of our **mission and ministry of hospitality and welcome**. The visitors’ book bears witness to some wonderful comments written by those who have been impressed by their encounter of peace and welcome. And, the welcomers, who met for lunch at the end of the tourist season, remain a highly-committed group of volunteers who ensure the experience for visitors is warm, welcome and positive. We have a good supply of volunteers, who give much of their time, including matrons for the choristers, choir parents, altar servers, Sunday stewards, Eucharistic assistants, flower arrangers, and shop volunteers. I hope I’ve not missed anyone out. That is one of the dangers when giving everyone a mention. However, we can always do with recruiting more of course. And, my thanks go to June Jones and Colin Jones

for their many years of service as Cathedral Wardens. Both stood down in September. Marilyn Phillips and Betty Spackman are also standing down from flower arranging after sixteen years of committed service. Thank you to you all. Your gifts, skills and commitment contribute to the life and breath of the Cathedral's ministry and mission. Toni and Andy Borgia, who work so hard in the Pilgrims Tea Rooms, continue to be an inspiration to work with. On Monday 19 December the directors of the Tithebarn Company, which I chair, have invited Toni and Andy to attend their regular meeting to discuss future partnership in working together.

THE **Christmas Tree Festival**, which took place from Friday 9 December until Monday 12 December, was a great success. I would like to thank everyone who took part in the planning. It demanded a great deal of time and hard work, and my particular thanks to Dr Gill Todd, Karen Schiebe, Heather Parry, Judy Day and Richard Williams. The festival was very popular with children and families, and it was an inspiration to see so many people working together, experiencing a great atmosphere and enjoying themselves. The Cathedral became a living and breathing sacred space with a difference. We continue to have a positive relationship with Martine Woodcock, the Education and Access Officer from Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery, who led a number of Victorian Christmas workshops with Llanfaes School on 9 December, and Ysgol Y Cribarth School, Abercrave on 12 December. Fifty-six children and six adults attended the workshops. And, the Cathedral clergy were very popular conducting the children's tour of the Cathedral. I am grateful to Martine and her team, as well as Toni and Andy Borgia, and Rachel Duthie, for working closely together in these positive partnerships.

THE Cathedral **website** continues to be very successful. Do take time to look at the website, which includes up-to-date news of events. There are some lovely photographs of the Christmas Tree Festival on it. The website has received 716,917 hits from 15,430 unique visitors. Eighty-five per cent are from the UK and seven per cent from the USA. The number of visits are increasing and the busiest day for visits is a Monday. We don't know why! A meeting of Cathedral staff took place on 8 November to discuss the website and how it could be improved. It was agreed to make some changes to the design and content of the website. The front page has been redesigned to make it easier to use and to find information on weekly events and services. Alongside this, we now have Wi-Fi in the Cathedral. If you want to access the internet in the Cathedral, the password is *Benedict543*. I thought, with the Cathedral foundation being Benedictine, it would be an easy password to remember. Benedict died in the year 543 AD (some believe he died in 547 AD, but 543 is easier to remember).

THE **Cathedrals of the Church in Wales Review Report** has been discussed by the Bench of Bishops, who met with the Provincial Deans on 12 October in Cardiff. This report will be made public soon, and will be presented to the Governing Body in the spring 2017 for discussion and debate. This report was set up to research and review how Cathedrals in the Province are resourced. I will tell you more about this in 2017.

A NUMBER of **fundraising initiatives** have been put in place since my last Pastoral Letter, thanks to Mike Williams. Online fundraising has been established with JustGiving donation buttons on the website. The Give-as-you-live Online Shopping App has been launched and is attracting users. Currently, eight people have signed-up and have raised £73.21, and at no cost to anyone. The 200 Club was launched and 37 people have bought tickets. The first draw took place on 4 December, and there were three lucky winners, winning £175, £90 and £50 respectively. It was agreed that more advertising is necessary for the club, possibly to the Cathedral Friends. We will be taking this forward in 2017. Please let your family and friends know about the 200 club. We still have some way to go to reach 200. There are forms and information on the table at the west end of the Cathedral.

I AM pleased to report that the **repairs to the dormer window in the song room** was completed on time, and nearly on budget (just over £26,000). BBC Radio Wales recorded two services on 13 July for Holy Cross Day and Remembrance Sunday. We received many positive comments and compliments after the broadcasts went live. Thank you to everyone who took part, especially as we had little notice to prepare, and, in particular, to the choirs for whom the end of term was fast approaching. The choirs had a great tour to Tuscany in October, and a wonderful time was had by all. Some of us were at the Cathedral on a very cold and dark early morning to wave them off. A special thank you to Mr Mark Duthie for all his hard work preparing for the tour, and all those who assisted with the supervision of the children.

MR Eryl Jones has been appointed as the **Diocesan Communications Officer**, and started work on 3 October. His role is to assist the Diocese and parishes to communicate positive activities and good news stories that are taking place. He has considerable IT ability and is a journalist with experience in many areas. You will often see Eryl at events with his camera, and he is very efficient communicating and advertising through social media. I chaired the interview process for his appointment, in the absence of the Bishop who was poorly with a bug, back in September. The Rev'd Michele Bailey has been appointed by the Bishop as the Rural Affairs Advisor for the Diocese. Much work continues in developing Ministry Areas across the Diocese, and the Bishop is encouraging

parishes and Ministry Areas to be inaugurated by the end of 2017. Brecon Ministry Area will be inaugurated by the Bishop on Sunday 29 January in St David's Church, Llanfaes at 9.30am. Father Steven Griffith has been the lead priest in the Brecon Ministry Area. Finally, the consecration of the new Bishop of St David's will take place at Llandaff Cathedral on Saturday 21 January 2017. This is a ticket only event. We pray for Canon Jo Pemberthy as she prepares to take up her weighty responsibility as the next Bishop of St David's.

I CONTINUE to preach and preside periodically across the Diocese. Since my last Pastoral Letter I have preached and presided in Crickhowell, Morriston and Gorseinon. On Sunday 20 November, the Bishop installed the new Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the Diocese, and on 20 September, installed the new Archdeacon of Gower, The Venerable Jonathan Davies. On Saturday 12 November I gave a two-hour seminar to the Lay Readers of the Diocese, entitled Leadership: Borrowed not Owned. If anyone would like a copy of the seminar, let me know.

THE Bench of Bishops issued a pastoral letter concerning the admission of all those who are baptized to receive **Holy Communion**. Children from the age of five, and with parental consent, will be able to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist in both kinds, or without consent in one kind only, namely bread alone. However, there will be an expectation they will come to Confirmation and make a public witness to the Christian faith later in life. You have already received papers and information regarding this. If you were absent, and did not receive the information, let one of the clergy know. Also, the Be a Cathedral Detective leaflets, created by Professor (!) Frank Banks, have proved a resounding success for the children who visit the Cathedral. This is a good way for children and parents to explore the Cathedral in a fun manner. When the children have completed the quiz and investigations, they receive a Cathedral Detective sticker.

TWO final comments. I am pleased to say that on 14 December I received confirmation from the Diocesan Parsonage Inspector and Administrative Assistant that the National Parks have granted permissions for the remaining work in the **Deanery**. This means work can proceed, at last. However, it may yet be some time before I move in. Thank you all for your care and interest in the Deanery. Simon Holland and Liz Wheat in the Parsonage Board work tirelessly in caring for the buildings across the Diocese, and not only the Deanery. The workload is heavy between two of them. I remain grateful to them both for their patience and work. Finally, it only remains for me to wish you all a joyful Christmas. I hope you will have a peaceful 2017. I anticipate further significant developments in the Cathedral in 2017 as we journey together in our Christian discipleship. There remains much work to do. But, I am hopeful for the future,

and continue to enjoy our journey together. Pray for me, as I pray for you, that we may have a holy and joyful Christmas season, and look to the future with hope and joy.

The Very Reverend Dr Paul Shackerley
Dean

BRECON CATHEDRAL'S VISION

Brecon Cathedral is a place that proclaims God's love in worship so that holiness can dawn and lives are transformed. We are a community of Christians who are committed to grow in discipleship, and offer hospitality to all who visit.

KEY PRIORITIES

- To offer worship and prayer to the glory of God
- Promote the Christian faith and engage in mission and outreach, demonstrating justice and equality
- Review and establish good governance, responsibility and accountability
- Secure long term sustainability through managing finance, fundraising, buildings use for mission, and personnel resources
- Develop a Communication and Marketing Strategy
- Develop working in partnership with the Diocesan Office, tourism, schools, businesses, ecumenical partners, and others
- Understand and communicate that the Cathedral close and buildings are assets for mission, not burdens that consume energy
- To engage volunteers and visitors in the rich cultural heritage of Brecon Cathedral that is also a place of rich history and a place of worship and prayer

