



Worcester Cathedral Faith in Lockdown

Name: William Gee

What are you missing most about the cathedral?

Among many things, it is Evensong I'm missing the most. After a long day at work, there is nothing that brings me that same sense of calm as I get when processing down the nave of the cathedral into the quire. The sight of it never fails to move me, no matter how many times I've seen it.

What are you finding hardest during the lockdown? What has surprised you?

At the beginning, it was difficult to maintain any sense of routine. It took me a couple of weeks to realise that establishing a 'new normal' was important. I have reconnected with friends who I no longer live near, and made a concerted effort to maintain contact with people. I'm surprised at how well I've adjusted to it. Going back to work in its 'normal' sense, both school and the cathedral, is going to be a big shock!

What's the first thing you want to do once we can travel and leave our homes again?

Now that we're able to see family and friends in small groups, I guess the next thing on my list would be going to visit my sister who lives in New Zealand. I had planned to go over the summer, but obviously these plans have been put on hold. Depending on the current situation develops globally, it may now be a long while until we can see one another again. I will really look forward to that day.

If you could invite anyone to lunch in the cloister café, who would it be?

I would love to have lunch with Herbert Howells. It would be fascinating to hear about his approach to writing sacred music from his secular perspective. Also, it would be intriguing to hear all the gossip from Three Choirs Festivals in his day!

If you could search for any information in the cathedral library - what would it be?

I think as a musician, it would be fascinating to discover more of the musical manuscripts held in the library. On a recent visit, the lay clerks were lucky enough to browse some of these, including the music of Tomkins and Elgar. It would be fascinating to look at the manuscripts of Elgar's choral works which I have sung so many times in the cathedral.

If you could spend an hour with any historic figure from the cathedral's past, who would it be?

Without doubt, it would be Sir David Willcocks. I'd love to get the chance to ask him all about his glorious Christmas Carol descants!

What is your favourite piece of choral or organ music?

Now this is a very tricky one! I don't think I can quite pick out a favourite, but I think one that has a significant meaning to me – *Expectans Expectavi* by Charles Wood. This was the communion motet at my baptism and confirmation in the cathedral. One of my other favourites is Howells' setting of *Salve Regina*, written for Westminster Cathedral Choir in 1915.

What is your favourite book of the Bible – and why?

Although perhaps not a conventional 'favourite' book of the bible, I particularly enjoy Revelation. I sang in the premiere of *Seven Angels* by James MacMillan in 2015 which sets various chapters of this scripture, and it was one of the most astoundingly spiritual moments of my life. I got a real sense of the glory of God.

What is your favourite hymn?

This is definitely the most difficult question! Tying in with Evensong being the thing I'm missing most about the cathedral, I would have to say 'The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, has ended'. Not only does it speak of a day's work being done, it is also a poignant reminder that we are part of the worldwide Christian community.

How does your faith shape your life while you're at home?

I try to spend some time each day in prayer, and being part of a staff body at a faith school really helps with that. I encourage the students who I have responsibility for at school to

take spend some time in reflection and prayer, and in doing this, I inevitably do the same. I also try to spend some time listening to sacred music each day.

What helps or sustains your faith, day by day?

I try, where school work allows, to watch the live services on the cathedral's Facebook page and the 'Daily Music from Worcester' broadcasts. It helps me to know that, somewhere in our beautiful city, people are celebrating our faith and praising God. Even though we may not be able to physically be together and worship, there is still a real feeling of community and togetherness in those acts.