

Dear Friends,

Over the past year, the Chapter has done its best to keep in touch with you through letters, the website, and social media, as we have picked our way through the different stages of lockdown and different levels of restriction. We could not have done this without the support of our wonderful staff. Some have been on furlough, others have continued working, surmounting the difficulties of working from home, or working, sometimes alone in a draughty office. Nor could the Chapter have managed the Cathedral throughout this year without the support we have received from you all, by your prayers, your messages, and your continued donations.

The Cathedral will be open for public worship throughout Holy Week and thereafter. We will still operate under the restrictions we have become accustomed to – face coverings, hand sanitizing, distancing, and so on – until the point at which the Government lifts all restrictions. The Cathedral will continue to be open for individual prayer from 11.00 to 1.00 each day.

We have been glad to host a lateral-flow testing site in the nave. This has been a real service to the city, but there has been less need for it in recent weeks and it will come to and end this week.



### **Activating the Cathedral after the Pandemic**

At the start of the lockdown there was talk, not only of ‘getting back to normal’, but also of ‘the new normal’, as we all began to realise that the world had changed. The Chapter adopted the word ‘activating’ to describe the process of coming out of the pandemic – not *re-activating*, as that would suggest simply going back to where we were before. We can

now begin to see what shape the 'activated' post-pandemic life of the Cathedral will have. The purpose of this letter is to share that with you.

## Visitors

We will re-open the Cathedral for general visiting, within defined hours of the day, as soon as we are allowed to do so. The management of visitor flow during the lockdown has taught us some valuable lessons. The North Door will remain the one entrance and exit for general visiting, and visitors will be greeted during the middle part of the day by our new team of Visitor Welcome Assistants. We are *not* introducing admission charges, but we do need to encourage visitors to give more.



## Music

The Chapter has just announced a major reconstruction of the Cathedral choral establishment. First and foremost, we are establishing parity between the boys and girls of the Cathedral Choir, and we are indebted to the Governors of the King's School for their support for this. Alongside this, we are re-forming our much-loved and time-honoured Voluntary Choir as a choir of both girls and boys, drawn from a variety of local schools. Thirdly, there will be a new Youth Choir, for teenagers. We have recently recognized the Chamber Choir as a full member of the Cathedral's 'suite' of choirs. These four choirs add up to a choral establishment worthy of a cathedral with Worcester's musical heritage.

## Organ

We shall take steps this year to launch a new appeal for the restoration of the Victorian organ in the south transept, finally completing the organ project which began two decades ago.

## Online ministry

The Chapter is committing itself to continue a daily 'livestreamed' service even when public worship has fully returned, as we recognize the value of being able to reach people in their homes. Many people feel connected for the first time to the Cathedral by being members of our 'online congregation'. Several online sessions have taken place under the name of 'Saturday Morning Cathedral' as an opportunity for conversation, sharing news, and to hear from various speakers about their connection with the cathedral. Lent talks, livestreamed through our Facebook page, have been followed by interesting and engaging conversations via Zoom.

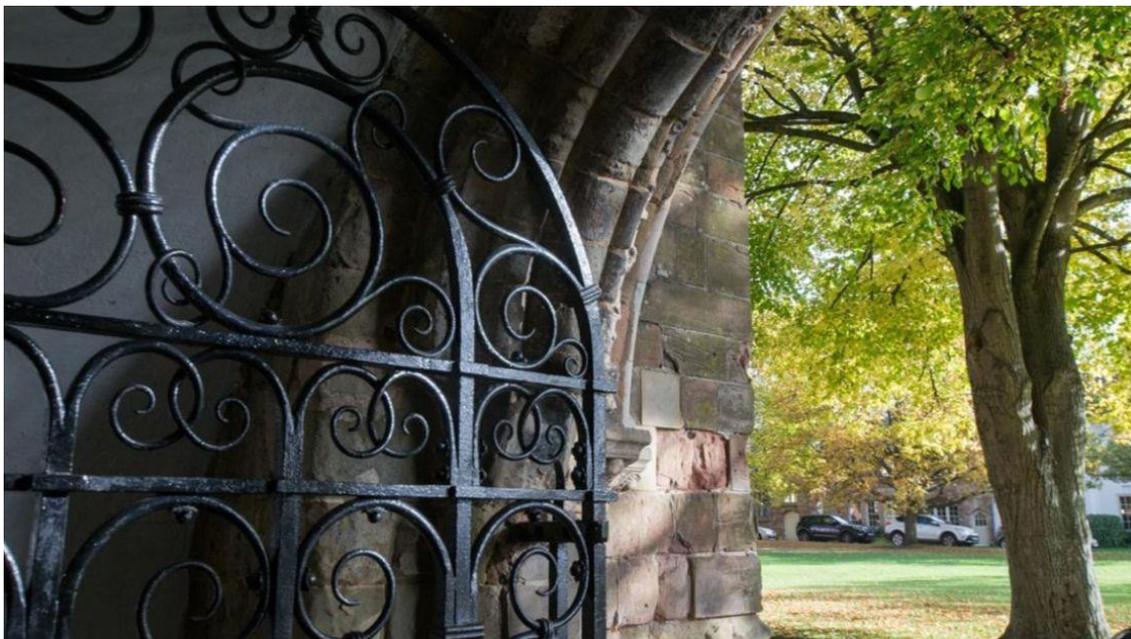


## Undercroft Learning Centre

The capital phase of the Undercroft Learning Centre project was completed during 2020, and we shall celebrate this at the Annual Service for Benefactors at 4 p.m. on Sunday 27 June 2021. We are now working hard to build up a new programme for schools and reaching out to a wide range of community groups as well as businesses as the Learning Centre starts to operate. The conservation of 'Christ in Majesty' – the medieval sculpture in College Hall, to which the Friends have given such generous support – is planned for this summer.

## Other Projects

The lighting in the Lady Chapel has been replaced, with grants from the Heritage Emergency Fund and The Laslett's Charities. The Library roof and windows have undergone urgent repairs and we have installed running water in the newly-refurbished ante-library for the benefit of volunteers and visitors. The Library project has been funded by the Cultural Recovery Fund.



### Gardens and Grounds

The Chapter is determined to make the most of our open spaces: to encourage more visitors to enjoy them, to manage the parking better, to improve the connection to the riverbank, to deter vandalism, and to protect the precious monastic ruins. The City has included, in its application for Towns Deal funding, a proposal to open a new point of access from the riverbank to the Cathedral via the Old Palace gardens.

*Image: Christopher Dobbs*

### Environmental Agenda

A task group has been established to ensure that environmental matters, issues around the climate crisis, and the journey towards net-zero carbon emissions are coordinated across the Cathedral community. This group brings together members of the Cathedral congregation, volunteers, and staff. Information on how to get involved through prayer, learning, campaigning, and personal commitment will be shared in the months ahead and, as activities are planned, we hope to encourage others in supporting this work.

## **Cathedrals Measure 2021**

Following problems in other cathedrals, the Church of England has now approved a new governance structure for all cathedrals, embodied in a new 'measure' (or article of church legislation). For Worcester, this will mean the end of the present Cathedral Council, the enlargement of the Chapter with the appointment of new 'non-executive' members, the establishment of a new Senior Management Team, and a new structure of committees and advisory bodies. We have begun work on this already, and later in the year the Constitution and Statutes will be revised.

## **The Cathedral Community**

The new Measure defines the 'Cathedral Community' as 'persons over the age of 16 who worship regularly in the Cathedral or are engaged in work or service connected with the Cathedral in a regular capacity' – in other words, our staff, our volunteers, and our regular worshippers. A new Community Roll will have to be formed, and the functions of the present Community Committee will be aligned with the new Measure.

## **Staff**

In the course of the past year, the Cathedral staff has been re-organized. The lockdown led to changes in the way the staff operated, and some teams have been reduced in size. We have adapted to the need for home-working and video-conferencing, and are realizing the environmental benefits of reducing paper, photo-copying, and travel.

The main impact of the lockdown in 2020 was cushioned by the Job Retention Scheme (furlough). On the other hand, emergency funding from the Church Commissioners and other bodies has enabled the Chapter to make some new (and long overdue) appointments. So we welcome Emily Draper as our new Estates Manager and Abi Thomas as our new HR and Safeguarding Officer. Sarah Bowyer will start in May as our new PR and Digital Communications Manager. As well as our new team of Visitor Welcome Assistants, these are very welcome new members of our staff team.



### Old Palace

In 2019, the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) decided to move the diocesan offices out of the Old Palace, and this will now take place in May. Since the DBF had the responsibility for managing and maintaining the Old Palace, their departure leaves the Chapter, as landlords, with a formidable challenge. The Chapter's plan is to re-locate the Cathedral offices to the Old Palace, and to begin building up a new revenue-stream with other office tenants, and events in the large function rooms.



## **Finance and Fundraising**

A year ago, the financial prospect for the Cathedral was bleak. If we have weathered that year, it is due to the furlough scheme, the emergency funding that has made available from so many public bodies and other trusts, and the generous extra giving of so many individuals. But we are not over the worst. The financial support from the furlough scheme and the emergency funding from other bodies will not continue throughout this year. The income from visitors and events, from our café and shop, will not revive at once. The Chapter is working with a fundraising firm, Pebblebeach (generously supported by the Friends). The fundraising task is ongoing, and I shall be writing to you again about that in the near future.

## **Strategy**

What you have read so far will have given you a glimpse of Cathedral life and activity as we emerge from the pandemic. Well before the pandemic started, the Chapter had been considering a longer vision, and we are now ready to share with you the draft of a five-year Strategy. This includes some of the items mentioned above, and introduces new ones.

You can find the draft Strategy on the Cathedral website with a link to a survey for your comments. The Chapter is glad to share this long-term thinking with you all, in the conviction that you share with us a confidence in the long-term future of Worcester Cathedral.

You will see that the draft Strategy draws on some important themes from the Rule of St Benedict, which governed the life of the Cathedral for so many centuries, and still inspires us today. You will see that we aspire to continue to be a place of prayer, learning, and welcome, and in particular to be:

- A community welcoming everyone to share our amazing heritage.
- A place of breadth and depth in worship and prayer.
- A place of learning, discipleship, and nurture.
- A catalyst for campaigning and raising awareness on the environment and social justice.
- A resilient organisation with stable finances.

Please read the whole document, and to respond through the survey on our webpage:

[www.worcestercathedral.co.uk/about-us](http://www.worcestercathedral.co.uk/about-us)

## **Finally**

My colleagues of the Chapter and I send you our very best wishes for a very happy Easter. We continue to

pray for your safety and wellbeing. We look forward to seeing many of you inside the Cathedral for the Holy Week and Easter services. And we continue to be thankful for your prayers, your generosity, and your encouragement.

*Peter Atkinson*



The Very Reverend Peter Atkinson  
Dean