

BEACON

The regular newsletter from the Development Office of Rochester Cathedral

FEBRUARY 2021

From the Dean's desk...



Spring cannot come too soon this year and with it the promise that the landscape will once again laugh with 'refreshing dyes'. As I look out into the orchard the snowdrops are already peeping through sodden leaves and the daffodils pushing resolutely through hard earth. Epiphanies of joy banishing the winter greyness as we yearn to enter a brightness no longer overshadowed by Covid-19. The vaccination programme has given us all hope, like the prospect of, 'aconites in cups of gold'.

Being the Dean of a cathedral is a rare privilege; not least because of the wide range of people you meet and the wonderful occasions you attend. Last year, of course, was completely different with minimal socializing and no events. Sadly, the Cathedral Trust was compelled to abandon its exciting calendar of activities. However, one shining success has been the launch of the Gundulf Society which has been an encouragement to all. Thank you to those who have made it possible.

Since March 2020 life has been different but no less of a privilege to serve in an English Cathedral. There have been many challenges. At Rochester we have attempted to respond compassionately and creatively to situations with which we have been confronted whilst maintaining the rhythm of prayer and worship 'in season and out', like a steady heartbeat. It's been a privilege to work alongside staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly in a challenging environment.

Covid-19 has made us reassess what is of value. This was addressed by the former Governor of the Bank of England, Dr Mark Carney in his superb Reith Lectures. In them he asked the question why financial values have come to be considered more important than human ones? Certainly, the Covid pandemic has rightly thrust human values to the forefront of the debate surrounding where we put our resources and what is of real value.

It has also confirmed my conviction of the need for places like cathedrals which point beyond themselves and lift the human spirit; large spaces where people can walk freely and where they can simply 'be'. During the pandemic I can confidentially say that Rochester Cathedral has been a place of 'well-being' for those struggling to cope. For many, coming to the Cathedral has been a beacon of light in a dark time, its solidity, a sign of reassurance, a point of reference in a time of change and anxiety. This has cut across gender, race and age, as demonstrated by the large number of single young people who have come to the Cathedral for solace.

It was the right decision to allow the Cathedral Crypt to be used as an asymptomatic test centre. The mission of the Church is always to embody the love of God in real and practical ways. The Crypt is an independent area and so did not affect the Cathedral's daily operations. It has provided an important service in the fight against Covid in Medway. It has emphasised the importance of cathedrals being places of healing for there is no clear gap between the physical, mental, emotion and spiritual health of a person. It is no accident that the Greek word for salvation can also be translated healing or wholeness.

As we dare to look beyond the restrictions of Covid, we do so in the hope of being able to gather once again and to enjoy the company of other people in person; to encourage human flourishing by welcoming people back to the Cathedral, the Orchard and the Gardens. As we re-envisage Trust events please be assured that your support and presence is a crucial part of keeping this Cathedral the truly special and important place it is.

The Very Revd Dr Philip Hesketh
Dean of Rochester

Rochester
CATHEDRAL
Growing in Christ since AD604

Please note: You are receiving this newsletter because we think you have an interest in Rochester Cathedral and its events. If we have got this wrong please let us know by emailing development@rochestercathedral.org or telephone 01634 810074.

In order to process your kind donations, keep you updated with news and events, and carry out our work effectively, we will need to store and use the information you have provided to us. We are committed to treating your information with respect and in a transparent way. To find out more, please read our fundraising promise at <https://www.rochestercathedral.org/cathedral-trust/>

Pledges and gifts from 1st January to 31st December 2020 total **£447,085**

Business Guild News

A reminder of our next webinar which is being presented by **Jay Sahota** from Jarman's Solicitors who will be speaking at our February webinar which is being held on Friday 12 February. Jay will be talking about the importance of good contractual terms and conditions as well as sharing some great ideas on effective debt recovery which I am sure many businesses are struggling with right now. You can register in advance for this webinar using this link tinyurl.com/1v24yifo



Phil Hibben who is the Head of Strategic Planning for the EU Exit Transition will be talking to us about the challenges he faced in getting ready for the transition and how he thinks the changes will impact on us going forward at our Zoom breakfast meeting which will be held on Thursday 18 February starting at

8am. Further information can be found on the Business Guild section of the Cathedral Trust page on the Cathedral's web site. www.rochestercathedral.org/business-guild

JARMANS Solicitors

Cathedral Fabric Projects to be tackled in 2021

We had such a great year in 2020 for getting things done, mostly because the cathedral was so empty and workmen were able to get on with the jobs, that we look forward to getting more work done this year.

Drainage

One of the jobs that needs doing urgently is the drainage in the Garth. You will have seen the very ugly but necessary drain pipe outside the south door – it will be great to say goodbye to this!

A soakaway and boreholes under the Garth lawn need to be installed to help in taking water away from the southern roof and improvements need to be done to the drainage system on the southern side of the cathedral. You may remember a few years ago when we had just finished the new floor in the Crypt and it was flooded! We want to try and ensure that doesn't happen again.

Fortunately we are talking to an organisation who may be able to help with this project, we will keep you informed.

Lighting

A complete replacement of the internal lighting system in the cathedral is to be undertaken (except the Crypt, Library and Vestry). The new system will be LED digital. A lighting specialist has been appointed to develop the design and this project has been funded by The Friends of Rochester Cathedral.

Health & Safety – Railings & Pavement

Health and safety remain at the top of the list and safety for our visitors and staff remains paramount. 38 meters of railings need to be installed alongside St Mary's Meadow where the war memorial is, to prevent falls down the grass embankment. Also capping to existing railings is required to prevent injury to passers by. This project has been funded by a donor to The Rochester Cathedral Trust and can commence now planning consent has been received.

Levelling of the paved areas and roadway on the west front and north precinct is also to be done to prevent trips and falls. Discussions are underway with a corporation that could help with this project.

CCTV

We will continue to try and find funding for this project to provide coverage of external areas. This is a recommendation of the Anti-Terrorism report that was recently produced.

Heating

The cathedral does need an upgrade to the heating system. One of our Trustees is working with Chapter with suggestions on what is required to remedy the deficiencies.

How we spent the funds raised in 2020

Income for 2020	£447,085
Cost of fundraising	£28,323
These costs are inclusive of office running costs	
Net profit	£418,762
Projects funded as follows:	
Transfer to Music Endowment	15,409
Contribution to music running costs	21,000
Lay Clerks funding received	25,650
Children's Community Choir	3,416
Project: N Nave Clerestory/Glazing	148,022
Project: South Quire/Clerestory	169,120
Project: Triptych	6,000
Project: Web Cam	14,360
Project: Cloister Garth	13,566
Subtotal	£416,543
Closing balance	£2,219

Interview with The Precentor



Like other cathedrals in this very unsettling time, we have had to adapt very quickly to a changing environment. It was vital that we were able to start livestreaming services from the Cathedral and our Precentor, Canon Matthew Rushton, took up the challenge and has got a very good system up and running almost single-handedly.

We are also incredibly grateful to our donors, Tina Clark and the late Dr Derek Clark for their generosity. We would not have been able to offer this facility to the community without it. Tina has had the following to say:

"Derek and I chose to sponsor "PewTube" (as we nicknamed it!) because we were aware of many people inside and outside the Cathedral Community unable to attend services but wanting to feel included. For those sick, disabled or just unable to attend, we started a fund. In 2017 we asked people attending our 10th wedding anniversary celebration in the Cathedral if they would please consider making a donation to our project. Our guests were most generous and Derek decided he would match the donations. It took longer than anticipated to get going, but if one good thing can be attributed to COVID19 it is the speed at which everything came together. The number of people viewing the Cathedral online services are proof of the need to reach out in this way. Derek would have been delighted to see it!"

We had a chat with Matthew to get the story behind the project.

1. What was the plan for live broadcasting from the cathedral?

We very much had to improvise at the start of this journey. Lockdown came suddenly upon us so we had to use what we had and learn new skills very fast. Initially, we had little of the necessary equipment or infrastructure apart from our own phones and cameras. We had – thank goodness – managed to get the lay clerks together to record some Evensong material – recorded and edited by the wonderful Revd Jonathan Jennings, part of the diocesan communication team.



Our initial plan in March 2020 was to produce pre-recorded services for Holy Week and Easter using existing material and readings and other material recorded by individuals at home and outside. I produced a weekly pre-recorded Evensong which was broadcast via our website and Facebook and proved to be very popular. We also produced a prayer video each day with a short reflection

and prayer for the day called **#stillpraying**, which ran daily for 3 months until the lockdown was eased. We knew, however, that we need to accelerate our plans for being able to record and livestream services to a high enough quality for a cathedral and therefore needed to acquire the necessary equipment to do that. Thanks to a generous donation, we were able to buy the basic equipment required for images, audio and livestreaming, which we started using in June, initially to livestream a weekly Eucharist, and, once the choir returned, we started livestreaming regular Choral Mattins, Choral Evensong and special services.

We have also broadcast other events including two excellent organ recitals, which were very well received. We now need to expand this temporary set up into a more permanent system that can be set up and operated easily by more staff and will become part of our regular offering of worship.

2. Would it have been possible if we did not have a donor/funds available?

Absolutely not. We rely on donations for these sort of projects. We have learnt a great deal from our initial experiences and we know that establishing and expanding this area of our mission and ministry takes skill and commitment from our clergy and staff, but also financial resources.

3. How did you get the project started and what have you learned?

Based on our experiences we knew what sort of infrastructure might be useful, but of course, we had to take expert advice. Having used the equipment for many months now, we have a better understanding of how livestreaming, recording and broadcasting regular services interacts with our worshipping life and the logistical and aesthetic challenges involved as we move to the next stage of planning for the future.

4. What kind of response have you had from the congregation?

Very positive, but these experiences have underlined for me that we do not have one congregation. A cathedral has a diverse pattern of worship throughout the week – and throughout the year – and different groups interact with the cathedral at different times and in their own distinct ways. Many people who would have attended the cathedral, say, for Evensong during the week, or on a Sunday morning, or for an annual service, have engaged with the worship online. But there have also been many others who perhaps do not attend regularly or who have never even been to the cathedral – as well as those who engage with the cathedral for concerts, heritage, tourism etc. As a cathedral, we have a mixed economy of visitors and worshippers and the last few months have asked some fundamental questions about how we relate to all of them.

5. Do you know how many people you reach?

It is difficult to say because some of the huge numbers of 'views' that are reached on social media may only be an interaction of a few seconds whereas others interact for extended periods and become regular online worshippers. But

we do know that viewing figures and the numbers of people engaging with our online worship has been impressive and surprising. There have been particularly high responses to particular services, for example the service for VE Day and, of course, our Nine Lessons and Carols – Choral Mattins has also been surprisingly popular and that is something we can build on in the future.

6. Going forward, what expansion plans would you like to see?

Principally, we need to expand our current equipment to give greater coverage of the cathedral, improved audio quality, and easier and more sustainable operation going forward. This will involve both additional equipment for image and audio capture and processing and also upgrading existing systems, as well as professional support and upskilling staff. The long-planned replacement of the sound system is fundamental in all of this.

Every cathedral in the country is having to go through a similar process so we are on a common journey, but, I believe, a worthwhile one as we invite people to share in our worshipping life and increase engagement with this holy place that may be ancient, but has shown that it can adapt to changing circumstances.

Thank you Matthew!

Gundulf Society Relaunch



Lars Lemonius
Chairman, Gundulf Society

Despite the hardship of 2020, this year also saw the successful relaunch of the Gundulf Society in support of the fabric and musical tradition of Rochester Cathedral. A total of sixty-one individuals and couples came together as Founding Members, each subscribing to an annual contribution of £500. An enormous thank you for your support and commitment.

Unfortunately, the Gundulf team was unable to perform any sort of inaugural event to celebrate our new founding members' generosity. We did design and promote an online virtual event showcasing some of the Cathedral's fabric and the Cathedral choir, but were scuppered at every turn, when we tried to book a date, as the pandemic developed. In the process we received many

encouraging messages from members – thank you. We will endeavour to make up for this in 2021 and await with anticipation the effect of the current vaccination programme.

In the meantime, thank you to everyone for your support in 2020 and your patience and understanding. I look forward to meeting you all at some point in 2021.