



*Rochester*  
CATHEDRAL  
Growing in Christ since AD604

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022



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The primary purpose of Rochester Cathedral is to be a centre of Christian worship and mission; it is the seat of the Bishop of Rochester and the Mother Church of the Diocese of Rochester. Everything we do is rooted in prayer and worship.

## Dean's Introduction

One can only ever provide a snapshot of any year in an Annual Report. I ask pardon, therefore, to those who discover sins of omission. I have attempted to give an overall picture of the Cathedral as it has emerged from the Covid pandemic and begun to restructure and address the new challenges and opportunities that face Rochester Cathedral.

The Cathedral's ministry covers a wide geographical expanse including the Weald of Kent, some of the South London Boroughs and the immediate area of the Medway Towns. It is an exciting and diverse area with endless opportunities for service.

## Chapter and Staff

We said goodbye to several staff members during the year. Lynne Bax, Karen McKenzie, Isabelle Johnstone, Laura Chesmer, Alexandra Oak-Parsons and Jerusha Jardine all left us. Sadly, our Sound Consultant Andrew Coulson, passed away in November.

Adrian Bawtree (Director of Music), Andrew Clark and Ben Legg (Vergers), Jayne Dunbar (Cleaner), Charly Finn and Jenny Foreman (Visitor Services Assistants), Michelle King (Events Officer), Ophelia Thompson (Café Assistant) and Larry Deabreu (Safeguarding Officer) all joined the team during the year.

## Development Plan 2022-2023

**In December 2021 we revised our Development Plan to bring to the fore the need to rebuild our resources after the massive shock caused by the awful Covid pandemic. Nevertheless, the Cathedral community remains focussed on achieving the five Key Aims of our Plan:**

1. To become a more sustainable and resilient organisation.
2. To grow our communities through prayer, worship, and action.
3. To develop opportunities for personal, spiritual and community growth.
4. To strengthen our engagement with our partners and stakeholders through listening and collaboration.
5. To maintain and improve our historic buildings, spaces, monuments, and collections.

These are underpinned by prayer, with a particular aspect of the Plan being part of the daily cycle of prayer in the Cathedral.



## KEY AIM

## 1

# Become a more resilient and sustainable organisation

With the ensuing financial difficulties experienced by so many, we could not expect significant increases this year in the average donation per visitor, yet it has gone up from 36p per visitor in January to 67p by December 2022. Given that there has been a reduction in the number of Vergers, and fewer Welcomers and Visitor Service Assistants on the Cathedral Floor at times, it is heartening to see signs of returning to something which might be called 'normal' in this respect.

Since the end of Covid lockdowns it has been encouraging to see a gradual increase of visitors to the Cathedral.

The Visitor Service Assistants demonstrated resilience in keeping the Cathedral open and providing a warm welcome. This is evidenced by the numerous letters and emails of appreciation received over the year. Visitor numbers were 213,128, up from 66,036 the previous year. This was testimony to the popularity of the events programme and the growing confidence with which people have felt able to visit and re-visit the Cathedral.

Specific outreach events included artist Peter Walker's moving exhibition, 'The Leaves of the Trees', which was displayed after Easter and commemorated those lost during the Covid pandemic. It was immediately succeeded by Luke Jerram's 'Gaia' installation in May, encompassing the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. 'Gaia', hanging in the nave, was launched by an environmental lecture by Dr Ruth Valerio, our Canon Theologian, which highlighted our commitment to reduce the Cathedral's carbon footprint. Dr Valerio was able to announce that the Cathedral had been awarded the 'A Rocha UK Silver Eco Church Award' in recognition of the progress already made towards reaching carbon zero. We continue to work towards the Gold Award.

During the busy summer holiday, visitors gazed in awe as the world's longest model brick bridge was squeezed into the nave. This amazing suspension bridge, all 36 metres of it, was accompanied by a series of family activities, all brought to us by the Rochester Bridge Trust who also allowed us to offer their fabulous bridge-themed adventure golf course in the Garth. Both the bridge and the adventure golf were available free of charge and proved very popular with families.

The impact of each event and activity was heightened by focussed and frequent social media and website marketing and other content which undoubtedly enhanced visitor and congregation numbers attending the Cathedral, as well as furnishing a substantial 'presence' in the virtual world. This aspect of the Cathedral's outreach, publicity and activity was vital during the Covid pandemic and has remained increasingly so.

Commercial activities continue to make an important contribution to the Cathedral's finances. The Café in the Crypt is now operated by paid staff, funded with assistance from the Church Commissioners, and is proving one of Rochester's 'go-to' lunch-time destinations. Under its welcoming arches a Chatty Café scheme is also running, for those who may be lonely. Children's toys are also available, and this very friendly atmosphere attracts young families too. Our retail offer is improving and is making a useful surplus.

Throughout the year the Cathedral diary was packed with activities as we sought to rearrange those events cancelled or postponed during 2020 and 2021. The October lightshow, again produced by Luxmuralis, was the commercial highlight of the year attracting over 12,500 people over five consecutive nights. Entitled 'Life', it saw the inside of the Cathedral transformed into a visual journey to reflect upon life on today's planet in a single twenty-four-hour period. Our public engagement programmes are ably delivered by our Events Manager, Carrie Ryder and her team.



In preparation for the new Cathedral Measure which will come into force for the Cathedral in 2023, a huge amount of work went into developing the Cathedral's new Constitution and Statutes and governance structures. A key element of this will see the Cathedral become a registered charity.



KEY AIM

2

## Grow our communities through prayer, worship and action

Since the Covid Pandemic there has been a gradual increase in the numbers attending services, particularly the Cathedral Eucharist on Sundays at 10.30am. Before 2020 the average Sunday congregation had been approximately 250. This has now grown back to around 190 people but exhibits a different pattern of attendance. Some long-standing members of the congregation have not returned with some finding new places of worship during the pandemic. Meanwhile there have been many other new faces to welcome into our midst.

The total number attending services in 2022 was 70,976 as opposed to 30,329 in 2021. In 2019 the number of worshippers was 86,656 which we believe was a direct outcome of Chapter's decision to increase the number of imaginative free attractions to the Cathedral. Such initiatives continue to be an effective source of outreach and mission.

During 2022, there were ten weddings and two renewals of vows. Marriages are by Archbishops' Special Licence. There were seven baptisms and several funerals taken by clergy not only in the Cathedral but at local crematoria, and there were interments of ashes too.

Attendance at Easter services in 2022 was high but still not at the level prior to the pandemic. However, Christmas services attracted much greater numbers and indicate signs of returning to pre-Covid levels. Carol services were well attended and over the Dickens Festival weekend in early December the Cathedral nave was full for four carol services. Attendance at the Christmas Eve Crib Service and ensuing Choral Evensong were also at very high capacity. This placed a heavy burden on the diminished number of stewards, who then returned for the Midnight Eucharist. Numbers at midnight were contained within the nave for the first time in many years.

Prayer remains at the heart of the Cathedral's life and is offered daily to undergird the mission and ministry of the Cathedral. The Sunday Cathedral Eucharist Prayer Team continued to provide prayer for people during the administration of Holy Communion. Many people came for prayer either for themselves or others, and it is noted that often people come into the Cathedral seeking support in the face of some personal, national or international crisis. The Prayer Team has been an effective means of pastoral support.

We returned to holding congregational lunches to rebuild fellowship between the new membership and facilitate better communication and interaction with the Clergy and members of Chapter.

Most notably, in September, the Cathedral actioned long-standing plans responding to the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II – 'Operation London Bridge'. Books of Condolence were provided throughout the official mourning period and extra chaplains made available on the floor of the Cathedral to pray with and listen to people. Cathedral staff and volunteers responded admirably in both a caring and professional manner. Important maintenance work was being carried out during this period and so needed to be accommodated. The flexibility of those on the floor of the Cathedral is to be commended. A Solemn Evensong was held the day following the announcement of the death of the Sovereign which was well attended. A Requiem Eucharist was held later in the week for the civic community and people of Medway and Kent.

The King's School continued to worship in the Cathedral in the morning during term time. Girl and boy choristers are all educated at King's School with Cathedral funding towards their music lessons. Bursary fees are provided by the King's School rather than the Cathedral. There is an agreed joint protocol for the safeguarding of the Choristers and weekly meetings are held between the School and Cathedral to discuss their welfare and safeguarding arrangements.

The congregation is more ethnically diverse and younger, with growth in the 25 to 35 age group.





Under the enthusiastic leadership of Coral Roberts, the Rochester Cathedral Childrens' Choir provided outreach into over twelve different Medway schools on a termly basis. These sessions can involve over 60 children in music education and engagement. At two schools, she led 90 children in singing activities. In addition, the Choir helped lead worship in the Cathedral at all-age worship services. Rehearsals are held in the Cathedral on Thursday nights.

We continued to support those suffering from Dementia through a number of worship activities in the Lady Chapel.

The Cathedral choristers took a massive step forward under the directorship of the new Director of Music, Adrian Bawtree. There has been a marked improvement, yielding greater musical consistency, wider repertoire, and increased confidence. The Choral Scholarship scheme has proved to be successful and the introduction of sung Compline on Monday evenings in term time, led by the Choral Scholars, is serene and well-attended.

The Voluntary Choir continues to thrive under the leadership of Assistant Director of Music, Jeremy Lloyd and has sung at several services, notably during Holy Week and on occasions when the Cathedral Choir were unavailable. They have also sung at weddings. At other times, on Saturdays or during school vacations, we have had a steady flow of visiting choirs, who ably and kindly serve us with their talent and time, enabling sung worship to continue consistently.

In terms of the Cathedral's musical outreach, the Cathedral Choir made its annual visit to the Mercer's Livery Hall in London for their Lent service and contributed to several civic services, including the Major of Medway's Dedication, the Bridge Trust Requiem Eucharist, Remembrance Sunday, Wisdom Hospice Carols, Air Ambulance Carols, French Hospital Evensong, and a Christmas Concert. In September the music department was involved in the enthronement service for the new Bishop of Rochester, The Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Gibbs.

The Sunday Club continues to meet in the Crypt during the morning Cathedral Eucharist on Sundays, and sometimes has separate 'Junior Worship'. This attracts several parents as well as children. Numbers remain consistent around 20 and children continue to be prepared for First Communion and Confirmation. Led by Dr Sugina Hesketh and a team of loyal and dedicated volunteers who have completed the necessary safeguarding training, the Sunday Club maintains pastoral links with families. The Sunday Club was active again on Palm Sunday with a child centred Stations of the Cross activity. Specific activities for Christmas included the preparation for the nativity service which attracted approximately 600 on Christmas Eve. The Sunday Club, however, remains under-resourced.

The Guild of Flower Arrangers provided outstanding displays to enhance the worship of the Cathedral and especially at festival times. The Easter Garden and Nativity scene remain destinations for many visitors who will then light candles as part of their private devotions. Similarly, the Embroiderers' Guild continue to make and mend Cathedral fabrics, with their quiet, often unseen service and skill.

Dementia-support activities were led by the Cathedral's Anna Chaplain, Chris Bostock and 'Anna Friend', Annette Morgan.

During Black History month we welcomed Onjali Q. Raúf, award-winning children's author, to talk about her books and the plight of refugees. On 29th October we marked the month with a special event focussing on 'Amazing Grace' (the anniversary of which fell in 2022) and were joined for a day conference by the Bishop, and representatives from local organisations as well as members of the public. The keynote address was given by Professor Anthony Reddie. While the Lampedusa Cross was in the Cathedral between September and November there were also other collaborative events in particular with the Huguenot Museum.

The Learning Team continues to be ably led by Learning Manager, Helen Bradshaw. Despite reduced resources the team has been active in rebuilding relationships with schools which had been disrupted during Covid. 2022 saw 7,328 school-age students visit the Cathedral. It will take time to increase the numbers to pre-pandemic levels. 'Gaia' attracted new schools and uniformed groups. The expansion of the Learning Assistant team has allowed a greater number of school visits. Working with the Diocesan Education Team, the Diocesan Schools' Festival was reintroduced in a new format, which worked very well and will be continued. In partnership with the Diocesan Board of Education a very successful "God and the Big Bang" day was hosted in September. Thanks to the support of a small team of volunteers we have been able to offer families a variety of holiday activities across the year.

Information stations were introduced as a way of helping Visitor Experience Volunteers engage with visitors and these have proved popular. Walk-in tours drew in around 300 customers and are now offered regularly throughout the year. In terms of continuing professional development our tour guides have led a variety of special tours and talks to volunteers and staff. We plan to keep these as a regular feature across the year. Garden tours have also proved very popular, bringing in many new visitors. Four art-themed workshops were delivered by local artist Luna Zsigo – these have become a regular feature in our annual programme.

Since the pandemic, the number of volunteers has increased under the Volunteer Manager, Sandy Struben.

New volunteers were trained in Safeguarding and in awareness of domestic abuse and modern slavery.



There remain over 300 volunteers registered, 90% of whom are active. The area of most concern is around the number of Cathedral Stewards who volunteer to enable liturgical events and diocesan and major civic services. Of 33 stewards only 24 are active, causing significant pressure on the reduced team. This exposes services of worship to some risk in terms of health and safety requirements.

Safeguarding is an essential priority for the Cathedral and is sewn into every event, activity, process, and procedural aspect of Cathedral life. The separate Annual Report on Safeguarding to the Bishop of Rochester articulates and analyses each year in terms of Safeguarding and may be read in tandem with this Annual Report. Larry Deabreu has joined the staff as Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, and the Chapter Lead on Safeguarding is the Reverend Canon Dr Gordon Giles. The Church of England's National Safeguarding Team's independent lessons learned review on the recruitment and appointment of William Scott Farrell, former Organist and Director of Music at the Cathedral, was published in May 2022. A Safeguarding Season was held during November 2022. Work with victims and survivors continues quietly behind the scenes. We continue to be supported by, and have an excellent relationship with the Safeguarding Team of the Diocese of Rochester and the National Safeguarding Team.

The Cathedral Bellringers have strengthened their numbers over the year and have rung regularly on a Sundays and for weddings and civic occasions. Notably they rang for the Platinum Jubilee and then during the period of national mourning for the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and they also rang for the installation of Bishop Jonathan. The Bellringers continue to fundraise for the augmentation of the bells, and the Tower Captain was appointed Chairman of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers.

KEY AIM **3**

## Develop opportunities for personal, spiritual and community growth

There was a steady growth in the lay ministry of the Cathedral as servers, readers, intercessors, and the prayer ministry began to return to pre Covid levels.

The Cathedral was blessed by the ongoing ministry of the Cathedral Curate, the Reverend Belinda Beckhelling and the Cathedral Adviser for Health and Wellbeing, Canon Neil Bunker. Belinda's pastoral and listening skills were in evidence over the year and Neil completed a Dean's Audit on the Wellbeing of staff at the Cathedral. His recommendations were presented to Chapter and a number have already been addressed. His quiet pastoral presence and experience have played a significant role in affirming people.

The Cathedral Chaplains continue to provide an important ministry for those visiting the Cathedral and those in need. The number of people arriving at the Cathedral and presenting mental ill health issues increased through the year which continues to provide a challenge for staff and volunteers. Canon Neil has provided a resource and useful material for signposting to wellbeing and mental health services in Medway.

In accordance with a project promulgated by the national church, we studied the 'Living in Love and Faith' material as a Lent course. The ministry and fellowship of 'A Seat at the Table' continues monthly and is much appreciated.

A small number of incapacitated congregation members receive Holy Communion on a regular basis at home, as do the communities of Rochester Gate, and the French Hospital (La Providence), with whom we have an ongoing relationship whereby Belinda acts as the chaplain. Other local and Cathedral clergy assist with the taking of services there.

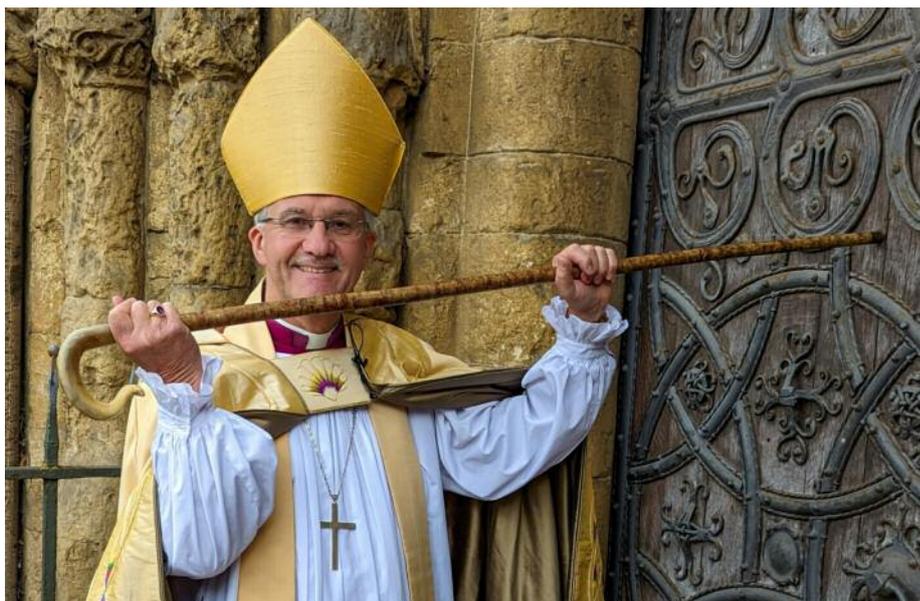
The congregational newsletter, initially created during lockdowns, continued to be produced and was distributed fortnightly to anyone who wished to receive it.



# 4

KEY AIM

## Strengthen our engagement with our partners and stakeholders through listening and collaboration



Photograph by Katerina Gerhardt

In September, we hosted a major diocesan event: the installation of the new Bishop of Rochester, The Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Gibbs.

Other Diocesan events included the Chrim Eucharist on Maundy Thursday and the annual ordinations of deacons, and of priests in September and licensing of Lay Ministers.

The Cathedral community continued to be well-supported throughout the year by its worshipping communities and by the Cathedral Council, the College of Canons, the Friends of Rochester Cathedral, the Rochester Cathedral Trust, and the Rochester Cathedral Business Guild.

The Cathedral is represented by the Canon Chancellor on the Medway Interfaith Association and was involved in the Holocaust Memorial Commemorations in January (which was online). The Dean and the Vice Dean are members of the Bishop's Leadership Team. A number of parishes were supported during interregnums.

The Medway Music Association came to the Cathedral in early December to create carol services with children from all over the region. The University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, and Canterbury Christchurch University all held graduation ceremonies here, in some cases catching up on previous years affected by Covid restrictions. The Rochester Cathedral Trust's Business Guild held very successful events in the Crypt including a revitalised series of breakfasts for the local business community. The City Pickwick Club visited and held a dinner in the Crypt.



# KEY AIM 5

Over £2,100,000 has been spent on the restoration, repair and improvement of the Cathedral building, infrastructure, and facilities since 2018. The next Quinquennial Inspection will take place in March 2023.



## Maintain and improve our historic buildings, spaces, monuments and collections

The last of the major concerns raised in our Surveyor's 2018 Quinquennial Inspection of the Cathedral's fabric were addressed during 2022. A significant amount of this work was made possible through the support of the Rochester Cathedral Trust and the Friends of Rochester Cathedral whose very generous donations made the projects possible.

Two major infrastructure projects were undertaken during the year. The complete relighting of the Cathedral using energy efficient and carbon-reducing LED lights was completed at a cost of over £554,000. The work was carried out by CES Lighting Ltd., and the project was funded by a grant of £468,000 from the Friends and £86,000 from the Trust. Now lit by this wonderful new system the Cathedral has never looked better.

In June, work commenced on the complete replacement of the Cathedral's sound and vision system. Our contractor, About Sound Ltd., managed to install most of the new system in time for the Christmas services and the project is due to be completed in 2023. The new system is much more effective, and the new slim-line speakers are more attractive and have far less visual impact than the old units. Again, we received generous support from the Trust, and from the Cathedral's former Sound Consultant Andrew Coulson, who sadly died before he could see the new system in place. We should record our thanks here to our Head of Operations Colin Tolhurst, his team on the Cathedral floor, and to our expert contractors for delivering these very significant and complicated projects whilst working around an extremely busy Cathedral diary. Disruption to our activities and pattern of daily worship was minimal.

In addition, the Bishop's Gate was restored with help from the Trust; new railings were fitted to the north side of the Quire and Presbytery, and in October, the long-standing problems with the drainage on the south-side of the Cathedral were finally resolved with a new drainage system installed beneath the Garth. Our thanks are due to the Cathedral Surveyor John Bailey and Archeologist Graham Keevil who worked closely with the Cathedral team and our Fabric Advisory Committee.

Unfortunately, a short section of the ancient city wall which forms part of the boundary of King's Orchard, collapsed in November. Surveyors and structural engineers are putting in place a programme of repair for the whole length of wall, the first phase of which will start in the summer of 2023. The cost is likely to run into many tens of thousands of pounds, for which fundraising will be required.

The estate continued to be energetically overseen by the Estates Manager, Sue Malthouse. Two major refurbishments of residential properties were achieved: 6 St Margaret's Street and 2 Prior's Gate House. The former required damp proofing, a new kitchen and bathroom, and internal redecoration throughout. The property was re-let in November with an increase on the previous rent. 2 Prior's Gate House has also benefitted from a new kitchen, bathroom, and internal redecoration.

These two projects were funded by the Capital Improvement Fund. The annual maintenance budget for 2022 was £49,500. At year end there was an overspend on this budget of £2,900.

The TV presenter and gardener, Monty Don has recently written that, 'Our gardens are more important than ever as places of refuge and solace, and for physical and mental wellbeing'. Progress was made on the transformation of the Cathedral gardens and open spaces to provide an increased resource for health and wellbeing. In terms of the Cathedral mission, the green spaces around the Cathedral have been undervalued and underused in the past. Under the guidance and enthusiasm of the Head Gardener, Graham Huckstepp, this work has moved apace with new volunteers recruited and projects delivered. These include the wildflower meadow areas, which have established a rich source of nectar, pollen, and seed for wildlife; the orchard pond which is now attracting wildlife and large numbers of dragonflies; and the completion of the rose memorial border in the Garth.

Chapter acknowledged that the estate is another area that is under resourced in terms of staffing and the Estates Manager does an extraordinary job covering a very wide brief. Funding is necessary to address this, to implement the reduction of the Cathedral's carbon footprint, and to generate new income.



The garden volunteers have had another successful year and have contributed many hours in the gardens. Garden tours and apple tree pruning workshops proved popular and were fully booked, 56 people visited the gardens on tours which raised £800. Two local schools with pupils with special educational needs, Abbey Court School and Trinity School, visited the gardens for small supervised projects. Plans were drawn up and funding attained for the first phase of the Dean Hole Rose Garden. Three-year funding has been secured from the Dorothy Kerin Trust to employ a fundraiser to assist the work and find new sources of funding.

A temporary licence was obtained from Medway Council to access the enclosed land at the end of King's Orchard which is accessed from Rochester High Street. This is to enable some archaeological investigation of the land. This will be a project involving a local school. It is hoped that permission and funding might be secured to create a sensory garden in this space. The garden designer Rick Ford and the charity Abigail's Footsteps have kindly donated their RHS award winning stillness/bereavement garden. We hope it will become part of the proposals for the Chapter House in the Garth. It will be open to the public as a place of tranquillity and hopefully used as part of the wellbeing programme.

The Cathedral apiary continues to thrive. Bees provide honey and the garden volunteers produced wax candles to be sold in the Cathedral shop.

## Dean's perspective

The Christian worldview is of a Creator God who designed the world as being good, intentionally endowing women and men with value, dignity, and significance.

Despite our inability to live up to these ideals, God continues to work redemptively to renew and transform individuals through Jesus Christ. Transformed individuals, in turn, bear tremendous potential for addressing the world's deepest needs through compassionate engagement and Christian service. The exemplar of compassionate engagement and service is, of course, for Christians, Jesus Christ. Christ calls all who are willing to follow him, patterning their lives after his while teaching others to do the same. This alone, he taught, will lead to wisdom, peace, and a blessed life that may be described in terms of human flourishing.

Perhaps, more than at any other time, we are conscious of the need for human flourishing and that 'peace which the world cannot give'. The Biblical understanding of peace is much broader than simply the absence of conflict. The Hebrew word, Shalom encompasses the whole of our wellbeing in every direction. As a place of hope and of Christian worship, the Cathedral is committed to serving God in and through Jesus Christ and to enabling human flourishing.

Human flourishing refers to a state of excellence in which human beings, as individuals and in community, experience and enjoy fulfilment and peace. Flourishing entails thriving in all areas of life, encompassing the intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person and the communities in which people live. For this reason, the Cathedral dares to engage in all aspects of human life and this Annual Report includes a vast range of diverse activities, yet all rooted in the desire to restore and heal and bring people into the closer presence of God.

As creatures made in the image of God, wellbeing and flourishing in the most profound sense entails communion with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. As individuals and communities pursue the purposes Jesus commends, it becomes possible to experience the blessing of God and the transformation God offers in Christ.

Rochester Cathedral is committed to this Christ-centred vision for human flourishing that intentionally and consistently contributes to the common good and advances flourishing for all, including the wellbeing of the environment. We need to once again embrace that radical vision which is the nurturing of human flourishing in Jesus Christ who renews the whole of creation.



*P. J. Hesketh*

The Very Reverend Dr Philip Hesketh, AKC DL  
Dean of Rochester



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