

### THE CATHEDRAL IS PRAYING FOR YOU

As 2021 begins, the Covid-19 infection rates in Cumbria and in Carlisle in particular mean that we must all be very careful. “Stay at home” is the watchword of the new lockdown period and rightly so. This time, however, places of worship can be open for both private prayer and for socially-distanced public worship. After careful thought, the Cathedral Chapter has decided that **the Cathedral will be open in this way every day.**

To open the Cathedral like this draws us to the essence of what the Cathedral is here for. **At the heart of it all, the Cathedral exists to pray. And that is what we will do each day** – for you, for the people of this city and county, for our nation in the current crisis and for the whole of the world God loves, as it battles against coronavirus and all that frustrates God’s loving purposes.

### A CHRISTMAS LIKE NO OTHER

There are many ways in which Christmas 2020 was unlike any that have been celebrated here in recent years. We doubled the number of carol services. Two “Hurry to Bethlehem” services were held on December 20<sup>th</sup>, and on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> we had services at 2pm, 4pm and 6pm – with the Cantate choir singing at both 2pm services, the Boys and Lay Clerks singing on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the Girls and Lay Clerks on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The Chapter also decided that to ensure everyone’s safety we would have to ask everyone to register and obtain a ticket for our Christmas services because far fewer seats could be made available. Most people quickly saw the point of this; before long it was clear that the greatest demand was for the Christmas eucharists at midnight and on Christmas morning. **We were glad to welcome more than 800 people to our Christmas services - but we know that in most years we come near to our maximum usual seating capacity of 600 at the Christmas Eve carol service alone.**

Because of the second lockdown period in November, our musicians were under tremendous pressure to achieve all the music for Advent and Christmas. Led by our Director of Music, Mark Duthie, and supported by outstanding organ playing by Edward Taylor, they rose to the challenge magnificently. They also had to sing all the congregational carols on behalf of all those present since congregational singing was not permitted. Mouthing the words of “Hark the herald angels” behind our face coverings helped some of us to feel engaged with Wesley’s words and Mendelssohn’s music but was, I fear, no substitute for singing out loud.

Just before Christmas, on December 13<sup>th</sup>, we were able to bid **Farewell to Canon Jan**, who presided at the 10.30am eucharist. Many came to express their warm appreciation of her ministry as Canon Warden here over the last seven years. A presentation was made. Jan was delighted to receive a specially commissioned painting of No 3 The Abbey - painted by a local artist who is one of our chorister parents - along with a cheque which will allow her to frame the picture and leave a good sum for her to spend as she wishes.

## KEEPING SAFE

With the New Year has come the further lockdown period and the need for everyone to be especially careful. Within days of the government's announcement, I have had occasions, both publicly and privately, to say that **people must consider with great care whether it is right to come to public worship at the Cathedral in these troubling times.** We are fortunate both to have a building that allows us to manage the flow of people who come to worship here carefully and to have staff who are working hard to make sure the building is safe when people are present. The cleaning regimes that are in place are very rigorous and we are grateful to everyone who comes, for their help in keeping everyone safe by use of hand sanitiser and face coverings. It is also very important that social distance is maintained before and, particularly, after services as we disperse. Your help to ensure this happens matters a great deal.

## MUSIC IN LOCKDOWN 3

News of this third lockdown period means, sadly, that we have had to review, again, the part music can play in our worship. What we set out on January 3<sup>rd</sup> under Tier 4 regulations has to change. With schools now working online, the Chapter has decided that it has no option but to suspend choristers from singing (both in the full choir and in the consort) at services. I am glad to say, however, that **the Lay Clerks will be singing at services during this period** – but at a limited number of services. The Lay Clerks will lead our music when people gather on Sunday mornings at the 10.30am eucharist. They will also sing Choral Evensong on Mondays and Tuesdays each week – but on these two evenings, the service will not be open to the public, but rather will be live-streamed. All other services will be said in private.

## THE EUCHARIST ON WEEKDAYS

As I announced on Sunday January 3<sup>rd</sup>, **the weekday Eucharist will now be celebrated on weekdays (Monday - Saturday) at 12.30pm.** We are aware that a number of local churches, for very proper reasons, are not opening for public worship during the lockdown period. Our hope is that having the Eucharist in the middle of the day may make it possible for some to come to worship at the Cathedral when they are in the city. The Cathedral will be open for **private prayer** before and after the 12.30pm Eucharist – **from 11.30am to 2.00pm.**

## OTHER CATHEDRAL ACTIVITIES

There is an inevitable sadness to see our wonderful new Café standing empty and to know that the activity we are so keen to bring to the main Fraternity Hall and to the Undercroft is postponed for a further period.

The present restrictions mean that the Chapter has again had to furlough many Cathedral employees and we are grateful for their understanding that this is the best way to secure posts in the long-term. Other employees will be working from home during the lockdown period and that means that **the Cathedral Office will be closed until further notice.** The best means of communication will be by email at [office@carlislecathedral.org.uk](mailto:office@carlislecathedral.org.uk)

The Chapter is currently revisiting its financial forecasts and the budget for 2021, acutely conscious that the income streams that were so compromised in 2020 will continue to be affected in the first part of the New Year. A glance at visitor numbers in 2020 makes it clear that numbers visiting the Cathedral fell by almost 100,000, or by some 68%. Financially, of course, this has a massive impact and **we are grateful to all our regular worshippers and supporters** who have maintained – and even increased – their giving during 2020. Your giving is hugely important to us as we meet costs that cannot be avoided - costs which have not decreased in proportion to our lost income.

In December, thanks to a grant from the Church Commissioners' Cathedrals Sustainability Fund, the Chapter was able to appoint a **Head of Fundraising** – this is a post which we recognise has particular importance at the moment and will help us to take best advantage of any funding opportunities that come available.

### **PASTORAL CARE**

We are grateful to Kate Whiteford, our Reader, who is faithfully keeping **in touch with so many we know who are housebound or isolated**. Canon Michael, with the assistance of Father David Jago (a retired priest whom some of you will know and who attends on Sunday mornings) is in the process of developing an additional pastoral team to help keep our congregations in touch, and offer support where requested. Being the only church open in the city centre has also meant we have been able to respond to several people calling in for support – thanks to the wisdom and kindness of our verging team.

### **CANDLEMAS 2021**

One addition to the musical offering outlined above will be our celebration of **Candlemas on Sunday January 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 at 3.00pm**. This happy festival day is one when the Friends of the Cathedral regularly gather at Evensong and I am happy to say that the Lay Clerks will sing at the service. We will also arrange to **live-stream this service** so that those who are unable to come to the Cathedral will be able to join us online. Sadly, there will be no party after the service this year!

### **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETINGS**

Canon Michael and I are very grateful for your messages of encouragement and cards over the festive period. **Thank you** for them all. We are conscious that Emmanuel will be with us through this difficult time and we hope you have the same assurance. We wish you a blessed and resilient New Year.

Mark Boyling,  
Dean of Carlisle