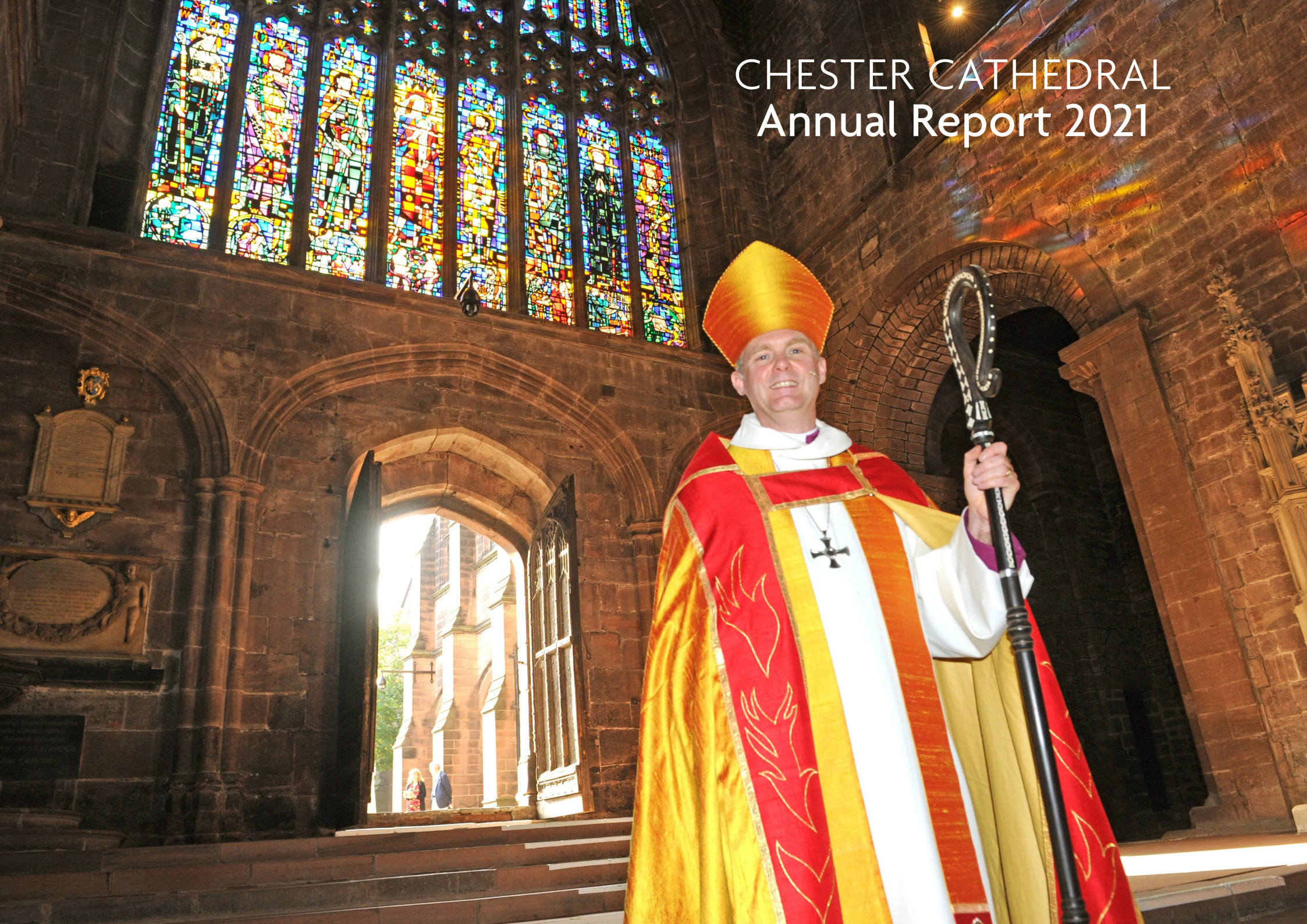


CHESTER CATHEDRAL Annual Report 2021



The Dean's Report as Chairman of the Chester Cathedral Chapter

A bit like starting again

Albert Einstein said, 'In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity'. The crisis that has beset humanity in 2021 does not need describing here, but it provides the backdrop for this report focussing on the opportunities that have led to change and development at Chester Cathedral. This could not have happened without the energy and commitment of the Cathedral's amazing staff team, volunteers and supporters to whom we owe many thanks.

During the pandemic the costs and operations at Chester Cathedral were successfully managed down in the anticipation that full re-opening and re-recruitment might be eighteen months ahead. This involved restructuring in preparedness for that task. During lockdown our retail, events, Refectory and admissions roles were severely affected. Our subsequent restructuring has focussed on separating the commercial operations from management of the infrastructure by creating a new role of Commercial Director to sit alongside that of Executive Director in the Leadership Team. All commercial and income generating operations report to the Commercial Director except for the Estate Manager. As the pandemic has subsided the Cathedral has rebuilt its commercial teams and brought the Refectory in-house.

The new commercial teams have sought to maximise the opportunities that emerged as 2021 unfolded. These have included small windows that opened up at the beginning of the year when business as usual was briefly possible.

The chances have been seized and opportunities maximised. In the first half of 2021 Chester Cathedral was closed under severe covid restrictions. During the subsequent six months, when the Cathedral opened to visitors, the touristic footfall was approximately 10% higher than the same period in 2018 and 2019. Over this time the new retail and in-house Refectory teams have worked hard through the teething problems of re-opening to renew their offers whilst developing their working practices. They have learned much as well as achieving very promising results. Our events and hospitality work began slowly with some small-scale gatherings of friends and stakeholders. These provided the opportunity for new staff to learn how the Cathedral works and grow their capacity. By the end of 2021 the Cathedral's new retail, Refectory and events teams were fully formed with a well-developed new offer and the capability to run at increasing capacity.

The new environment

Despite the rise in footfall that has been achieved and the growing capacity of a new and ambitious commercial team, visitor income and donations have been significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, although the trend has been improving. This may largely be accounted for by the complete loss of our international and long-distance visitors with an increased reliance on local people whose reasons for visiting the Cathedral are different and maybe more important.



The Very Revd
Dr Tim Stratford



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The Dean's Report as Chairman of the Chester Cathedral Chapter, continued...

The resources that have been made available for a national recovery from the pandemic have proved to be of huge value. Two grants from the DCMS and NLHF Covid Recovery Fund (CRF) have been very significant. They have not just provided compensation for lost income and balancing the books, but also have given means for real improvement and change that has enabled the Cathedral to cater well for new visitor expectations. These include a better digital offer online and on-site, high-capacity public Wi-Fi, secure credit card transactions, signage, wayfinding, environmental sustainability, fire safety and security, etc.

The Cathedral has also been a participant in the KickStart scheme to improve people's employability after a period of economic inactivity. The young people who have undertaken work experience here have been a real asset to the Cathedral through this stretching period in our history. They will also hopefully have received the support they need to become fully employable with a bright future ahead of them.

A new Fundraising and Development Manager's post was created during the mid-pandemic restructure. This provided the capacity and skills for the Cathedral to make its successful funding applications. As well as the CRF grants to develop and maintain the cultural and touristic business, we have been granted further CRF money to restore and secure the stonework on Abbey Gateway, a grade 1 listed building that was at risk; we have been given money by the Architectural Heritage Fund to develop plans for improvements to our visibility in the City Centre and visitor access to the building; money has been granted by the Hamish Ogston Foundation via the Cathedrals Workshop

Fellowship to grow in-house heritage skills expertise including stone-masonry, carpentry, conservation and archival works; we have been generously supported by Lord Leverhulme's Charitable Trust to install a fine new Pilgrim's Porch inside our Great West Doors enabling the wooden doors to be opened; and, the Friends of Chester Cathedral have increased their offer of funding to buy a new nave platform and altar furniture.

Alongside this financial support the Cathedral has also built a number of important partnerships over the course of the year. These include partnership with Transforming Lives Together, which now provides two posts at the Cathedral supporting the mission of churches across the diocese; the Citizen's Advice Bureau through the Money Buddies project providing free budgeting and debt advice; Pete Waterman's group of model railway enthusiasts who installed last year's ground-breaking Making Tracks exhibition; and, Chester University alongside a wide range of art collectors who supported the Global Images of Christ: Challenging Perceptions exhibition.

These funding and project partnerships have made a large contribution to the benefit that we have brought to Chester's visitor economy, culture, social provision and spiritual life.

We have also sought to work in partnership with public health services. Over the course of 2021 Chester Cathedral has been used by the local authority and the National Health Service as a covid testing centre and as a vaccination centre.



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The Dean's Report as Chairman of the Chester Cathedral Chapter, continued...

Ministry, worship and sustainability

Prayer and worship remains at the heart of Chester Cathedral's life. This has been severely disrupted by the pandemic, both in the pattern of attendance and in the restriction of what can be done. During 2021 we were able to enthrone Bishop Mark Tanner as the Bishop of Chester following his welcome and "Crozier Service" last year when public gatherings were not possible. There was also opportunity to welcome and install Bishop Julie Conalty as Bishop of Birkenhead and Bishop Sam Corley as Bishop of Stockport. Our ability to host such significant events has grown as the year has unfolded. The Cathedral's online worship has been developed to supplement the limitations of in-person worship. Online attendance remains important even whilst personal attendance is rebuilding. The Cathedral is now committed to the continued development of hybrid online and in-person worship. Future developments will need to concentrate on reducing the impact of TV equipment on the Cathedral floor and using the technology to improve the on-site experience also. We will also be looking for ways to improve online access to Christian giving.

Improved quality and visibility of large screen displays in the nave has enabled the Cathedral to reduce reliance on printed worship booklets. This is further supported by much improved IT skills amongst even our most aged worshipers along with wider portable device ownership. The Cathedral now provides electronic service booklets and displays texts on the in-house screens which in turn has generated significant printing and stationery cost savings.

The paperless slogan we now use for worship services has offered renewed impetus to our zero-carbon endeavours.

Towards the end of the year we secured finance through a blend of loans and grants to install 306 solar panels on the south nave roof. With all permissions in place these are now expected to be installed in mid-2022 and take the Cathedral a step further towards sustainability.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding, especially of children and vulnerable adults, remains high on our agenda. Chester Cathedral is committed to being a safe and caring place for all. This means that we must promote a safe environment and culture, safely recruit and support all staff and volunteers, respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation and to those that may pose a present risk to others, care pastorally for survivors of abuse and other affected persons and for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations. Management, governance and quality assurance structures have continued to develop over the course of the year and are now well embedded. Training has been provided for all Cathedral staff and volunteers and members of the Cathedral Leadership Team have completed the Church of England's Safeguarding Senior Leadership Pathway. The Cathedral has co-operated with the diocese to ensure that the current national Past Cases Review (PCR2) has been fully undertaken.



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The Dean's Report as Chairman of the Chester Cathedral Chapter, continued...

Public Benefit

The charitable objects of the Cathedral Chapter are:

- to advance the Christian religion in accordance with the faith and practice of the Church of England, in particular by furthering the mission of the Church of England;
- to care for and conserve the fabric and structure of the cathedral church building;
- to advance any other charitable purposes which are ancillary to the furtherance of the purpose referred to above.

Chester Cathedral seeks to extend its public benefit by making no charge to enter (except for organised groups and for specific exhibitions) and by providing freely accessible space for private prayer and Christian worship in-situ and online that is open to all. The Cathedral maintains its fabric through trading as ethically and sustainably as it can and by requesting donations. We seek to be an asset to the local community and City of Chester through the maintenance, interpretation and opening up of our physical and spiritual heritage as well as by enabling the Cathedral facilities to be used to meet need in the community. Chester Cathedral supports the endeavours of other charities, local and abroad, by raising funds, making donations and offering expertise.

Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford
Dean of Chester
March 2022



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HELP US on our journey of recovery

Chester Cathedral is many things to many people. You can join our community, share our stories, explore our buildings, enjoy our culture and meet our team.

- **Join us for worship** – everyone is welcome to take part in our mission and ministry
- **Pay us a visit** – we remain proud to be a free-to-enter cathedral and can always provide a quiet space for contemplation
- **Enjoy an event** – with a dynamic music and culture programme in place, there's always something to inspire
- **Discover our unique spaces** – whether you are hosting a dinner, or looking for city centre office space, we can meet your needs
- **Take a tour** – take the family on an adventure to the top of our tower on the Cathedral at Height tour, or join us for one of our seasonal tours, such as our night-time Candlelit Tours
- **Browse in the Cathedral Gift Shop** - and if you can't make it to the Cathedral, click to shop online at chestercathedralshop.com or enjoy lunch in our thirteenth century **Refectory Café**
- **Help us fundraise** – the Cathedral receives no regular government or Church of England funding and costs in excess of £2 million a year to run, so every penny counts
- **Volunteer** - if you love the Cathedral as much as we do and can spare a few hours each week, we would love to hear from you. In 2021, we need more volunteers than ever to help us run our Making Tracks event!
- **Follow us online** – visit our website, sign up for email updates or follow us on Twitter: @ChesterCath, Facebook: /chestercathedral and Instagram: Chester_Cathedral

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