

Annual Report and Strategic Plan Review 2007/8

In the Annual Report for 2007, the Dean reviewed progress on the 2006-11 Strategic Plan under the four main headings of the Vision Statement, and identified ongoing issues to work on in 2008-9.

Summary of ongoing issues from 2007:

1. Bradford Choristers and the future of the Cathedral choir
2. The more systematic provision of structured opportunities for personal spiritual growth, pastoral support and the nurture of faith
3. A mission and evangelism emphasis in partnership with Hope Bradford
4. The renewal of books in the Library
5. Making theological reflection a regular part of Cathedral life
6. Encouraging visits from parishes and deaneries
7. Establishing better links with diocesan link partners
8. Having more formal links with the University
9. Further development of interfaith work and connections between the congregation and other faith groups
10. Work on property, regeneration and signage
11. A more assertive marketing strategy
12. Local involvement in justice issues – with asylum seekers?
13. Improved retention of newcomers at services
14. The installation of handrails and refurbishment of the Holy Spirit Chapel
15. The production of audited accounts from 2003
16. Setting priorities for development, and then using resources to identify and apply for further grant funding

Narrative Report

1. The Cathedral should be a well-developed Christian community

The electoral roll was renewed in 2007, and 157 names were enrolled: this number is a realistic measure of current commitment. Average Sunday attendance figures across the year were 240 adults plus choristers; usual Sunday attendance on a 'normal' Sunday was about 140, the difference indicating the large numbers attending over 21 special services over the year.

Canon Ward led a study course in Lent looking at the Cathedral's worship, which followed up work done in autumn 2006. The conclusion was a change to the pattern of worship: regular Sunday evensong was moved to 4pm, making the Sunday 6.30pm service available for more mission-oriented services. There was a wide variety of these through the year, ranging from small and intimate Taizé prayers or Compline to hundreds of people coming in for quarterly Prayer for Bradford events. Matins now takes place only on the fifth Sunday in the month, and monthly healing prayer at Holy Communion has moved from the evening to the morning service. Overall numbers were slightly up on the previous year, and evensong has been growing a small but regular congregation.

The choir continued to thrive, with recruitment doing well among both boys and girls, though retention was more difficult owing to the parental commitment involved. Discussions with the Bradford Choristers, the independent men and boys choir which split from the Cathedral 26 years ago, over the last two years or so led to the Choristers moving into the Cathedral in September and beginning to integrate together with the Cathedral choir, looking towards a full merger in 2008.

Another minor change was to have evening prayer at 5.30pm daily, to enable people working in the city to attend. The residential community has been joined at daily worship by a few others, which has been an encouragement, and the regular Lent Eucharist and breakfast, and the

Wednesday morning Communion & Coffee, have been well attended. There is further work to be done in the area of personal spiritual growth, and plans to do this have been delayed by lack of resources till a later date.

Pastoral care has been led by Canon Williams, and has drawn in a number of the congregation in caring for others more formally, as well as the informal caring that already takes place. Two choristers were baptized by immersion and admitted to communion, as well as 2 infants. Choir instruction overseen by our Education Officer became a regular feature of Saturday morning chorister practice. The Youth Group continued to meet on Monday evenings with a meal, and some members went to Taizé and summer camp. The Boys' Brigade also continued to meet through the year thanks to the dedication and hard work of its leaders. During 2007 three couples were married. There were also nine funerals, a number of those connected with the Cathedral. Further work to develop pastoral care and nurture is planned for 2008.

Apart from the regular services and study groups – including a fortnightly study and fellowship group during the day – there were a variety of activities to draw people into the Cathedral community, ranging from a barn dance to lunch in the Close houses. These were primarily social rather than evangelistic. Canon Williams became part of the Hope Bradford Steering Group, and the Cathedral will work with Hope Bradford during 2008 with a greater mission emphasis. Social action regarding becoming an eco-Cathedral and in support of Fair Trade continued to develop, and giving to overseas mission continued at the rate of 10% of congregational giving.

Canon Ward with the Canon Theologian and others set up the Bradford Theological Network to encourage theological exploration and debate: this has largely engaged people from the diocese rather than the Cathedral, which has helped the Cathedral to be seen as a resource for the diocese. Books were culled in the library to make space on the shelves which will need to be filled in due course if the ambition to be a place for study is to be fulfilled: some new books have been obtained. There has been some other theological reflection, and appreciation of the standard of preaching at the Cathedral; but this will need to be developed more systematically to become an instinctive part of Cathedral life.

Overall the Cathedral had good contacts with the Diocese: the choir sang in Skipton for Ascension Day 2007, which was very successful, and clergy and the Education Officer preached, led quiet days and other events, and provided a considerable amount of service cover during a stressful period of vacancies in local deaneries. Although pilgrimages and visits continued, there were fewer structured visits to the Cathedral from diocesan groups, and this is another area where work is planned in the near future. One or more of the clergy attended deanery chapter meetings locally, and the Cathedral was seen to participate in deanery life. Discussions about working together concluded that the Cathedral is primarily and uniquely concerned with city centre ministry rather than inner-city ministry, and this agreement with local deaneries and the diocese has enabled greater freedom and purpose in the Cathedral's strategic ministry in the city. Canon Ward has been involved with the liturgical committee in the diocese, and Canon Williams with the children & young people's committee. In addition to the Dean's work as an ex officio member of several diocesan bodies, he also chaired a working party on diocesan strategy.

Ecumenical relationships continued to deepen during the year, and there were ongoing conversations with local ecumenical leaders including the Dean and Canon Ward on ecumenical church strategy in Bradford, working towards a new ecumenical body for Christians in the city. The Cathedral was seen positively by ecumenical partners across the theological spectrum, and hosted a number of ecumenical events, reinforcing its role as a venue for all the mainstream churches in Bradford: the larger independent churches however were not on the whole included in this. The process of enabling the appointment of ecumenical canons was concluded in 2007, and five church leaders were installed in February 2008.

Progress with worldwide church links was disappointing during the year. The Dean took on responsibility as the Bishop's main link with Erfurt, and after helping to host a visit to Bradford

from Erfurt in April went there in July for the second time, with the Bishop, to sign an agreement between the Diocese of Bradford and the Evangelische Kirche in the Erfurt region. However, links between the diocese and northern Sudan were difficult, although one person went and reported back on her visit, and one young person participated in the youth exchange with S.W. Virginia. The Cathedral has yet to re-establish more formal links with cathedrals and churches overseas.

2. The Cathedral should be engaged with the whole community

The work of the Education Officer has continued to be one of the success stories of the Cathedral. Many groups have come from local schools (1137 primary age children and 163 secondary), with increasing numbers of young adults from the College, and some from the Cathedral Centre. The introduction of a regular group for carers has been highly significant in enabling them to develop self-esteem and outside support. Canon Ward has made some links with the University, but as yet there are few formal connections. Another meeting for medical staff around St Luke's tide in October attracted a small number; while appreciated by those who came, it indicated the difficulty of drawing busy professional people together from across the city.

More generally, the profile of the Cathedral has been raised through personal links with people in the city and better publicity. The Dean and Canon Ward were engaged in civic work, and the Dean's role as Lord Mayor's Chaplain this year encouraged this. Canon Ward has been working with the Chair of the Bench to develop chaplaincy at the magistrates' courts. There has been mutual working and support with the city centre mission priest. Canon Ward continued to build relationships in Christian-Muslim women's work, and a visit from staff of Blackburn Cathedral to the College of Canons opened up possibilities for further development. Canon Ward and the Dean worked together with other inter-faith practitioners, and the Dean joined the wider group involved in the Bradford District Faiths Forum. The Cathedral was able to welcome members of other faiths in small numbers on education visits and to the annual Civic Service, but generally it is Cathedral staff who have been engaged in this rather than members of the congregation.

As far as regeneration was concerned, 2007 was a frustrating year, with little happening in the way of actual work. An exception to this was the Close house windows, which were repaired to a satisfactory standard after years of neglect. Contacts continued with Bradford Centre Regeneration and the City Council; but the lack of progress on the CVA meant that no talks in earnest were able to begin before the end of 2007. The Dean had positive engagement with Westfield and the Cathedral was seen to be supportive of the Broadway Centre; on the other hand, a scheme to build 115 apartments on Bolton Road behind the Cathedral was successfully opposed at Planning Committee. Planning permission was obtained for the installation of new notice boards, but plans for new signage were halted when the Fabric Advisory Committee indicated its lack of support for the proposed signs, and a new brief had to be prepared for action in 2008.

The Cathedral has continued to be used as a concert venue. The programme of Wednesday lunchtime organ recitals organised by the Organist has gradually grown in popularity, and the regular group attending is now normally over 40 each week. In addition, there was a major exhibition by local Christian artists which brought people into the Cathedral, and will be repeated in 2008. A subcommittee of Chapter named Artspace was convened during the year, which is directed at developing the Cathedral as an arts venue, and which held a concert in November, with further plans for following years. The idea of buying a concert piano led to the Council refurbishing and lodging with the Cathedral a Steinway grand, which is insured and maintained by them and which we can use, in exchange for half-price charges for chamber concerts, which represents a good deal for the Cathedral. There were also two plays stage din the Cathedral in July and December in partnership with the local Paper Zoo Theatre Company, which were well attended.

Some links between outside organisations and the Cathedral developed further in 2007: the carol services for magistrates and for Rotary Club members both increased in number, as did the Legal Service at the beginning of the year, which for the first time had a Lord Justice of Appeal in attendance. The annual Marie Curie service was combined successfully with Evensong, and was well received. A small amount of publicity was given to the role of the Cathedral in baptisms, weddings and funerals, but this had a negligible effect on numbers (there were three weddings, the same as in 2006): a more assertive marketing policy might have had a greater response. Support was given during the year to the start-up of Street Angels in Bradford in December, and a few Cathedral staff are involved in this project alongside other Christians in the city. The Healing Group has continued to offer prayer regularly, although this has focused on congregational members rather than outside bodies and individuals.

During the year there was a particular focus on fair trade and ecological issues, with groups involved in education and action alongside the congregation. A regular fair trade stall was been established, and work towards being an eco-cathedral raised awareness of ecology among congregational members. No single local issue was taken up by the Cathedral in 2007, though local work with asylum seekers came up on the agenda for 2008.

3. The Cathedral should be a hospitable community

New welcomers were recruited during 2007, and it is intended to have welcomers on Saturdays for the first time in 2008. Numbers visiting the Cathedral continue to be low, with the Cathedral still cut off from the city, but began to rise slightly towards the end of the year. Child protection procedures and CRB checks were overhauled. The rate of retention of newcomers to services was not high, and there are plans to do something about this in 2008. Welcome for people with disabilities was assessed informally, and as well as gluten-free wafers, plans were laid to install handrails in the grounds which should be in position during 2008. The Cathedral continued to be used for private prayer, although the Holy Spirit Chapel refurbishment was delayed till 2008 owing to the delay in the CVA and the postponement of finding funds. Numerous casual callers were assisted with information or a light meal, including one homeless couple who received fairly regular support through the year; better information was made available to welcomers and staff, although there is no centrally resourced support base to which people can be directed. As noted above, staff were involved in interfaith work, but the Cathedral itself was not used much as a venue for this. A particular point of welcome for people of all faiths and none was the International Women's Day in March, where the Cathedral was used, largely respectfully, for the first time as a successful venue: the event will return in 2008. Two other very significant events were the visit of Jesse Jackson to Bradford in August, hosted at the Cathedral, which brought in many people who weren't familiar with the Cathedral, as well as being a good point of co-operation with community groups and the City Council; and the annual national Boys' Brigade conference at the beginning of September, which brought up to 350 delegates into the Cathedral and city and resulted in both positive responses to the Cathedral and a general appreciation of Bradford: particular thanks are due to the local Boys' Brigade members for helping to host this event.

4. The Cathedral should be a resourceful community

Following the death of our previous Administrator in October 2006 and a temporary appointment, a permanent replacement was appointed in April and proved himself a committed and able administrator, coming from a local authority background with experience of historic building management. In September a Publicity and Projects Officer was appointed to raise the Cathedral's profile in the media and push forward events and projects, including disseminating information about the Cathedral to outside bodies. The staff team functioned well during the year, with staff willing to work as required across a wide range of disciplines: the Cathedral is very fortunate to have such a committed and able group working for it. Appraisals were largely up to date during the year, and resulted in some additional staff training, including nearly all staff taking Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificates.

In April 2007 a new Treasurer was appointed who worked very hard during the year to get on top of the accounting system and its historical peculiarities, in order to set up a streamlined system for 2008. Following the resignation of our auditors in 2006, the Finance Committee, and especially the Chair of the DBF, worked hard to produce accounts back to 2003, and a draft set was used in August in the appointment of new auditors: Saffery Champness were appointed, and initial work was done on auditing before the end of the year. Full audited accounts for 2003-7 should be produced in 2008.

There was a stewardship campaign during November which included teaching on giving, and this resulted in over 40 people offering additional time and talents for the Cathedral, which will be followed up in 2008. Some £9000 was given for specific projects, and it is estimated that regular giving should increase by about £10,000 a year, an increase of about 18%. A legacy given a few years ago for the fabric of the Cathedral building was incorporated as a separate trust, and this can now be drawn on after the ending of the CVA; the resources of this will not go all that far in the light of the needs identified by the Quinquennial, but will enable urgent and specific works to be undertaken if used carefully. An application for English Heritage grant for the roof and conservation plan was submitted in the autumn, and further work has continued to identify other sources of funding, though resource constraints do not make fundraising easy.

The Cathedral Architect concluded the Quinquennial Inspection, identifying a programme of works which was costed out by a quantity surveyor at something like £5 million over 10 years. The Chapter set up a buildings group to oversee priorities and set up work, and some small items were done: again, the CVA meant that work was delayed until after its conclusion. The building was in basically sound condition, but there were leaks through the roof in wind and rain, not helped by a succession of lead thefts in October/November; the police arrested a few people for this, but it was recovering the lead and disturbing the youths concerned that seemed to discourage the activity. A full Fire Risk assessment was undertaken and all the recommendations complied with, making the Cathedral a safer place to visit than previously.

The Community Committee organised a range of social events, which supported fellowship in the congregation; personal support was more patchy – a number of people received support during the year, but it was not openly available for all, and this aspect of pastoral care is under review. The Chapter worked hard during the year, including having an away day. Together with the Council and the College they reviewed and revised the Constitution and Statutes to allow for a more streamlined system of governance and more lay canons and some ecumenical canons. Three groups were set up to work on reviewing the strategic plan through the year, which made a discernable impact on the detail of Cathedral work; at the end of the year these were suspended while the plan was to be reassessed.

The relaunch of the Cathedral was postponed from 2007 owing to the delay in concluding the CVA, and work needs to be done to identify priorities for development and develop a strategy for raising money to meet the needs the cathedral faces. St Peter's House was finally sold to Kala Sangam in July, and the Certificate of Completion of the Company Voluntary Arrangement was received on 29 November, meaning that the Cathedral was discharged from its debts and could function under normal financial conditions, albeit with no financial reserves.

The Very Revd David Ison
27th February 2008