

Spiritual Capital

The Present and Future
of English Cathedrals



Theos[✦]

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We work with leaders and organisations from every sector of society. The Cathedrals Research Project was a response to working as organisational consultants with deans and chapters. The experience revealed the complexity of the organisational demands and expectations on deans and the rich network of connections with every aspect of civil life – local, regional and national. The project was designed to test the significance of cathedrals in their communities and dioceses, and the implications for those who lead them.

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Theos ✨

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Findings of a Research Project
Carried out by Theos and The Grubb Institute

Commissioned by
The Foundation for Church Leadership
The Association of English Cathedrals

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Acknowledgements

This report presents the key findings of a research project on cathedrals carried out between September 2011 and October 2012. The project was a collaboration between Theos and The Grubb Institute who brought together experience in quantitative survey research and qualitative studies of organisations within their communities.

The two organisations would like to express their thanks to the Foundation for Church Leadership and the Association of English Cathedrals who brought the partnership together, commissioned the project and, together with the All Churches Trust and contributions from the participating cathedrals, funded the research. Our particular thanks are due to Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield Cathedral, who was the link between the sponsors and the researchers, to Sarah King, at the Association of English Cathedrals for her administrative support, and to other members of the Steering Group who have commented helpfully on previous drafts and on the project overall.

The work on the national and local surveys was carried out by Nick Spencer and Paul Bickley of Theos, working with the polling agency ComRes in the design and implementation of the national survey, and with many people at the six case study cathedrals for the local survey. Our particular thanks are due to those individuals who worked so hard to ensure these local surveys were so widely and professionally deployed.

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Theos and The Grubb Institute

September 2012

Foreword

This report is offered as a stimulus to the Church and to decision-makers in public life to consider the roles cathedrals have taken and developed alongside the subtlety and range of some of the tasks they fulfil. Cathedrals are places of huge creativity, and their potential both within the Church and within society needs to be considered and carefully evaluated. This report, based on scrupulous research and extensive conversations with a representative sample of cathedrals up and down England, provides evidence both of the impact of cathedrals in their regions, and about the place they hold in people's affection and esteem. It is an attempt to give critical insight into the experiences cathedrals are handling and how they are serving an emergent culture and spirituality whilst remaining rooted in their history and the riches of Christian thought and tradition.

It is the hope of those who commissioned the report that it will help cathedrals map and plan for the future; that it will assist the training and formation of cathedral chapters and also be of service to all in authority in the Church, so that policies affecting the mission, ministry and communion of the whole Church will reckon on the contribution and potential of cathedrals. It is also hoped that the report will provide partners in local and national government with the evidence to see cathedrals as significant elements in the nation's cultural and social life, and which, reliably, bring their spiritual and social capital to the aid of local communities, and the strengthening of a regional and national sense of place and belonging.

Cathedrals have also been the subject of a flurry of recent academic research, and this report makes its own contribution to a growing literature and knowledge base that is proving to be interesting and important. This report, like cathedrals themselves, has a contribution to make at many levels and it aims to be a positive ingredient in any debate or conversation about their future.

The bodies who commissioned the report – the Foundation for Church Leadership and the Association of English Cathedrals – also had the support of the Deans' Conference, and on their behalf I thank the research teams from The Grubb Institute and Theos for a splendid piece of collaboration and a fascinating study. Read on!

Adrian Dorber

Dean of Lichfield Cathedral

Trustee, Foundation for Church Leadership

September 2012

Introduction

- 1 Church of England cathedrals have a unique and widely admired position within English society. Praised for their architectural magnificence, aesthetic appeal and historical significance, this report shows that their impact on and significance for English life extends far beyond their role as tourist destinations.
- 2 The objective of this project was **“to enable cathedrals and those who run and work in them to understand better the function they fulfil in society, thereby equipping them to identify and respond faithfully and fruitfully to mission opportunities”**. The key findings are given in this report, although it is important to note that there are a number of separate research and case study reports, offering a more detailed picture of the findings.
- 3 That people visit cathedrals – in their millions – is not in doubt. New research for this project found that 27 per cent of the resident adult population of England (i.e. excluding overseas tourists) visited a Church of England cathedral at least once in the last 12 months. This equates to roughly **11 million adults**.
 - 3.1 Figures for the total number of overseas visitors are much harder to establish, and vary considerably from one cathedral to another, but there is good reason to believe they would add significantly to this total.
- 4 Cathedral visitors are not confined to any one particular demographic group. For example, around a fifth of 18–34 year olds have visited in the last 12 months, as has a fifth of people in lower socio-economic groups.
 - 4.1 Taking account of the frequency of visit, younger adults (18–24) were more likely to have visited a cathedral than any other age group except over-65s in the last 12 months. **Cathedrals have an appeal across the demographic and social spectrum.**
- 5 **Cathedral visitors also come from across the religious and non-religious spectrum.** Not surprisingly, people who say they belong to the Church of England are more likely to visit a cathedral (35% did in the last 12 months). But Anglicans do not have the monopoly on visiting. A quarter of people belonging to non-Christian religions made a visit in the same period, as did nearly a fifth (18%) of people who say they belong to no religion.
- 6 Cathedrals have a particular reach into ‘peripheral’ groups, meaning those that are a long way from, and even hostile to, religion. A sixth of people (15%) who never attend a religious service as a worshipper (i.e. not even “less than once a year”) visited a cathedral in the last 12 months, as did the same proportion of confirmed atheists, and a quarter of those who once believed in God but no longer do so.
 - 6.1 This means that somewhere between 1.5 and 3 million people who might be called ‘spiritually unreceptive’ visit a cathedral each year.¹
- 7 All this could be taken merely as confirmation that cathedrals are successful tourist destinations were it not for the fact that, while people are open about visiting cathedrals as tourist attractions, they are also clear that the appeal lies beyond that.
 - 7.1 Less than a quarter of people (23%) said they would “go to a cathedral but only for a cultural event”.
 - 7.2 Nearly half (48%) felt that “cathedrals reach out to the general public, not just those who are part of the Church of England”.
- 8 Cathedrals’ ability to connect people to the sacred extends beyond believers. A third of people agree that “cathedrals are an easy place to get in touch with the spiritual”. However, a quarter of people who never attend church feel the same way.
 - 8.1 **Cathedrals are not just tourist destinations but places that can convey a sense of the spiritual and sacred even to those who are on the margins of Christian faith, or who stand some way beyond.** In an age of amorphous, ‘emergent’ spiritualities, this presents cathedrals with enormous potential.
- 9 The data above come from a national survey of 1,700 adults commissioned for this project. Two other new research elements were also conducted which root these abstract public opinions of cathedral in concrete specificities.
 - 9.1 The first was a local survey of 1,933 adults, who were asked their opinions of one of six Church of England cathedrals (Canterbury, Durham, Lichfield, Leicester, Manchester and Wells) with which they were familiar.² This familiarity ranged from regularly attending ‘friends’ and ‘patrons’ who had known of the cathedral for many years, to tourists, cultural visitors and those whose contact was recent, casual or occasional. The objective was to get a wide range of informed opinion on the *ground*.
 - 9.2 The second was a series of six detailed case studies of the aforementioned cathedrals in which a total of 257 in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted among a wide range of people who work in and with the

- cathedrals. This research examined the life of the cathedral, looking at the relationships between bishop, dean, chapter and other cathedral staff; and between cathedral and local civic, voluntary, business and other bodies; and also assessed recent activities and initiatives undertaken by the cathedral.
- 10 These research elements confirmed and filled out three of the key findings from the national survey.
 - 11 Firstly, cathedrals have a particular capacity to connect spiritually with those who are on or beyond the Christian 'periphery'. For example:
 - 11.1 Well over a half (59%) of church non-attenders within the local survey sample agreed that, "the cathedral gives me a greater sense of the sacred than I get elsewhere".
 - 12 Secondly, cathedrals have a seminal role as a source of what is known as 'bridging' social capital, establishing and fostering the relationships between disparate and different groups within a community.
 - 12.1 The vast majority of people agreed that "**this cathedral reaches out beyond the Church of England**", or that it was "**a 'hub' to engage the life of the wider community**".
 - 12.2 Crucially, even spiritually 'peripheral' groups agreed with this. The majority of church non-attenders, for example, **disagreed** that the **cathedral contributed little to the community** (74%) and **disagreed** that it was **irrelevant to their daily life** (62%).
 - 12.3 Just as cathedrals are well placed to make links with the sacred for a 'spiritual but not religious' population, they are equally well placed to make the links between different individuals, organisations and institutions within a community.
 - 13 Thirdly, cathedrals are recognised for the manner in which they convey the history and tradition both of Christianity and of the area that they inhabit and sometimes embody.
 - 13.1 People overwhelmingly see cathedrals as symbols of local identity (87%) and even more (89%) claim they feel connected with history and tradition when they visit.
 - 13.2 Peripheral groups feel this connection, if anything, more intensely than Christian ones. Over 90% of the 'non religious' group (generally the most hostile) said they felt connected with history and tradition in the cathedral.
 - 14 Although all cathedrals are different, as are the communities they serve, what this research demonstrated was that Church of England cathedrals have a unique and universally-recognised position in English society, a position that is dependent on much more than their role as tourist destinations.
 - 15 Their capacity a) to connect with the nation's emergent spirituality; b) to establish and foster the relationships between people and organisations that lie at the heart of healthy civil society; and c) to sustain, articulate and even consecrate local and national tradition and identity is enormous. It is hoped that this report will help that capacity to be more widely recognised and realised in the 21st century.

Introduction References

1. This range is calculated by combining the 2011 Census population for England (53 million) with the estimated proportion aged over 18 (79%) and then the proportion of self-identified non-religious/ church never-attenders/ confirmed atheists/ people who used to believe in God (33, 47, 23 and 16 per cent respectively), with the proportion of each group who said they had visited a Church of England cathedral at some point in the last twelve months (18, 15, 16 and 25 per cent respectively).
2. Specifically, the research comprised two surveys: a pilot at Lichfield cathedral (of 494 respondents) and a slightly, modified survey encompassing the other five cathedral case studies (of 1,439 respondents). The research was completed on paper and on-line between 22 November 2011 (for the pilot) and 7 February 2012 (for the remaining five cathedrals), and 14 June 2012 (all six cathedrals).

Tourist Destinations or Places of Pilgrimage?

Introduction

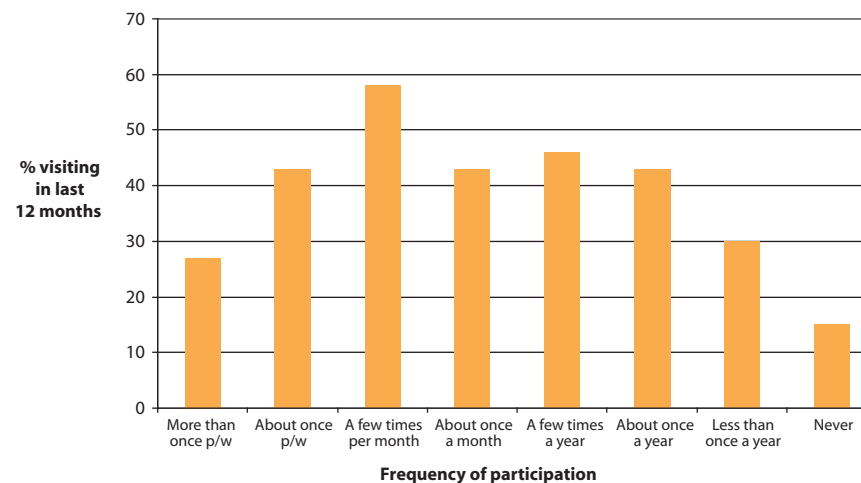
- 16 **Over a quarter** – (27%) – of England’s adult population say that they **have been to a Church of England cathedral in the last 12 months**. A rough estimate, based on census population figures, suggests that this equates to **11.3 million visitors in the last 12 months**, excluding visitors from overseas.¹ (This is higher than the 2004 estimate of 8.8 million in the research conducted by ECOTEC for English Heritage and the Association of English Cathedrals.) Conversely, only around 19% of the population (roughly 7.9 million) say that they have never been to a Church of England cathedral.
- 17 Cathedrals, therefore, take their place alongside other major national tourist destinations. According to Visit England’s 2011 figures, Westminster Abbey is the eighth most popular destination nationally, St Paul’s the tenth and Canterbury Cathedral the 21st – all attracting well in excess of a million visits every year.² This demonstrates the significant reach of cathedrals and shows that beyond their core function of maintaining a pattern of sacramental worship, they are increasingly significant tourist ‘destinations’.
- 18 In academic literature and popular perception this use of cathedrals is often assumed to be in tension with their purpose as places of Christian worship and community. In our research, we have looked to shed more light on the relationship between the two.
- 19 The data, both from the national survey and from the local survey of the case study cathedrals, suggests that the distinction between tourists and pilgrims is ‘fuzzy’. Those that appear to be secular tourists nevertheless understand that cathedrals hold **‘spiritual capital’**, and even look to tap into it for themselves.

Who Visits Cathedrals and Who Doesn’t

- 20 The one in four English adults who say that they have visited a Church of England cathedral within the last 12 months includes those visiting cathedrals primarily for leisure purposes and those who come as pilgrims or worshippers.

- 20.1 Men (31%), retired people (44%) and those from more affluent social grades (38%) are more likely to have visited a cathedral in the last year compared to the national average of 27%.
- 20.2 Among visitors from the last year, 13% say they have visited just once, 7% have visited twice and a further 7% have visited three times or more.

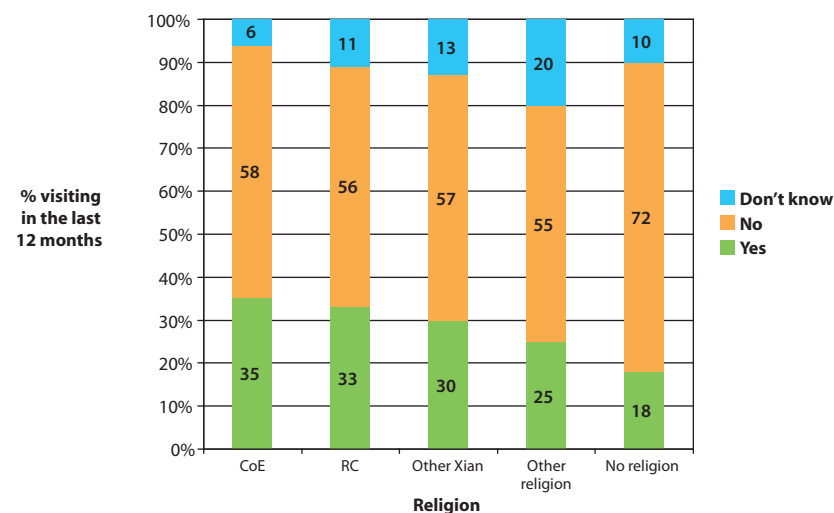
Figure 1: Cathedral visiting by frequency of religious participation



Source: National Cathedral Survey (ComRes), 1,749 respondents

- 21 We found a clear correlation between levels of religious belief and practice and the likelihood of having visited a cathedral.
- 21.1 The group most likely to have visited a cathedral comprises frequently practising members of the Church of England (those that worship once a month or more). Of this group, 72% have visited in the last 12 months.
- 21.2 Of those who participate in religious services once a month or more, 41% said they have visited a cathedral in the last year.
- 21.3 Of infrequent worshippers (those that attend services as worshippers only a few times a year or less), nearly half have visited in the last 12 months. By comparison, 15% of those who never attend church at all had visited in the last 12 months.
- 21.4 Around 20% of those who describe themselves as atheists/agnostics have visited in the last year.

Figure 2: Cathedral visiting by religion



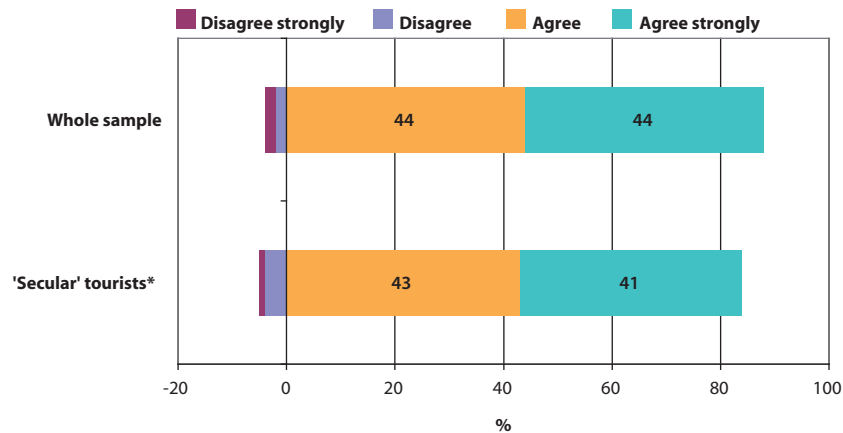
Source: National Cathedral Survey (ComRes), 1,749 respondents

- 22 This correlation between religiosity (measured in different ways) and visiting cathedrals does not mean that 'peripheral' groups do not visit cathedrals, but rather that they do so in smaller proportions or less frequently. For example:
- 22.1 As many as one in five of those who have visited within the last 12 months are people of no religion.
 - 22.2 A quarter of cathedral visitors over the last 12 months never attend a religious service at all.
 - 22.3 Spiritually peripheral groups, therefore, make up a large proportion of visitors. **Cathedrals have a broad reach appealing to the religious and the non-religious, and to everyone in between.**
- 23 It is also worth briefly exploring which groups tend **not** to visit cathedrals. Of the total sample, 62% of respondents had not visited a cathedral within the last year (The remaining 11% comprised "Don't knows").
- 23.1 The figure was particularly high for those in late middle age (72% of 55–64 year olds), for those of social grades C2, D and E (71% for D/Es) and those seeking work (77%).³
 - 23.2 Alongside obvious indicators such as a lack of religious belief, there are hints that people on low incomes may struggle to connect with or access what cathedrals have to offer. This may be a factor of greater 'time poverty' or the affordability of leisure and tourism more generally.

What Motivates a Visit?

- 24 Existing research indicates that comparatively few visitors come to the cathedral for intentionally religious reasons. For example, a 1994 survey of 483 cathedral visitors found that only 23% stated that they were motivated to come by religious reasons.⁴
- 25 Ostensibly, our survey lent some support to this finding. For example, people agreed to the proposition that when they visit an English city they **"usually go to a cathedral"**. Nationally, this was a factor for 64% of those who have visited within the last 12 months, and for 31% overall. This suggests that it is often the city that is the 'destination' rather than the cathedral itself. Though well disposed towards cathedrals (they do choose to go in!) they are, in a sense, **incidental visitors**.
- 26 Again, previous research has argued that there are different worlds of experience and expectation among religious and secular visitors, and that pilgrims (i.e. visitors who participate frequently in a religious service) and secular tourists (those who do not) respond differently to the cathedral. This has become the basis for a strong differentiation in cathedrals' approach to those who visit 'religiously' and those who do not. Though this research is careful to point out that the cathedral is far from silent in its call to secular tourists, it concludes by suggesting that cathedrals may understand the position and aspiration of the secular tourist less adequately than it understands the pilgrim.
- 27 Our research suggests the distinction between being a tourist and being a pilgrim may be overstated and that those who superficially appear to be 'secular' are aware of the spiritual and religious role of cathedrals.
- 28 The data from our local survey of those who had some contact with one of the case study cathedrals⁵ revealed that:
- 28.1 Two thirds (65%) of people agreed or strongly agreed that cathedrals are **a place of interest for tourists**. Of those, virtually all (89%) **also** agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that **a cathedral is a beacon of the Christian faith**.
 - 28.2 Similarly, 61% of people thought that their cathedral was a **place of primarily historical importance**, of whom 92% also agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that the local cathedral is a **space where people can get in touch with the spiritual and the sacred**.
 - 28.3 Seeing a cathedral as a tourist destination does not preclude an appreciation of its spiritual role.

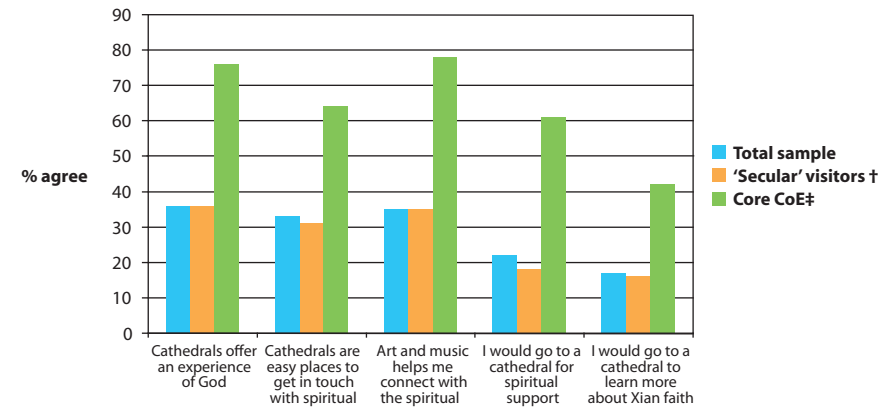
Figure 3: I get a sense of the sacred from the cathedral building



Source: Local Cathedral Survey, 1,433 respondents, from five cathedrals. *'Secular' tourists defined in this chart as those that agree or strongly agree with the statement "I come here to appreciate the history and architecture of the cathedral, not for any religious experience".

- 29 The survey allowed us to explore this further by asking people about the impact on them of their local cathedral.
 - 29.1 Of those who saw cathedrals as having **primarily historical importance**, 63% agreed that it gives them a **greater sense of the sacred than they get elsewhere**.
 - 29.2 30% of people agreed with the statement, **"I come here to appreciate the history and architecture of the cathedral, not for any religious/sacred experience"**. In other words, these are people who seem to be identifying themselves as secular tourists. Nevertheless, 84% of this group still agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that they **got a sense of the sacred from the cathedral building**; 79% that they **got a sense of the sacred from the cathedral music**; and 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they **experienced God through the calm and the quiet of the cathedral space**.
- 30 The national survey data provides similar evidence, although, because people here were responding to cathedrals in the abstract rather than to a local cathedral that they have had contact with, the level of agreement with the statements was lower.
 - 30.1 Nationally, 53% of people agreed or strongly agreed that cathedrals are more of historical importance than spiritual importance, including a surprising proportion of those who identified themselves as Christian (47%), worship frequently (42%) or could be considered firm believers (39%).

Figure 4: Spiritual and religious experience



Source: National Cathedral Survey (ComRes), 1,749 respondents.
 †Here, 'secular' tourists are those that agreed or agreed strongly with the statement, "cathedrals are more of historical importance than spiritual importance".
 ‡Core CoE respondents are those that identify as belonging to the Church of England and worship once a month or more.

- 30.2 In spite of this, however, 36% also said that, **"cathedrals could offer an experience of God to those who don't believe"** (with 29% disagreeing), and 31% that, **"cathedrals are an easy place to get in touch with the spiritual"** (25% disagreed).
- 31 The quantitative data we gathered, locally and nationally, shows that of the approximately 11 million who do visit in a given year, some clearly see themselves as 'tourists', thinking of and treating the cathedral like any other secular destination. However, this group does not solidly reject or deny the spiritual purposes of cathedrals, and small but significant numbers of these people experience and benefit from this themselves.

The Impact on Cathedrals

- 32 The most ancient of English cathedrals have lived with pilgrimage for a very long time. The origins of both Lichfield and Durham Cathedrals are linked to pilgrimage to the shrines of two Saxon saints, St Chad and St Cuthbert respectively. Something in their stories touched people's hearts, inspiring them to undertake long and difficult journeys to express gratitude, pay penance, seek forgiveness or invite spiritual transformation. But, as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* suggests, the motives and experience of the journey were never purely 'spiritual'.

- 33 How have cathedrals used this experience to respond to the present-day mass tourism, when the most difficult part of the journey may have been finding a parking place?
- 34 The case studies provided some indicators of the impact of visitors on the working life of six cathedrals. We will comment briefly on three aspects of this:
- The need to manage the impact
 - Tourism as a source of income
 - Unfolding the meaning of the cathedral.
- 35 **Managing the impact** You cannot receive 100,000s of casual visitors a year without taking active steps to handle what happens, in terms of managing the flow through the space, providing information for the curious, minimising the disruption to worship, meeting health and safety requirements and those of the insurers, keeping cathedral treasures safe, and minimising the wearing away of the stones themselves because of people kneeling at the shrine of a saint or archbishop.
- 35.1 It is clear that cathedrals have become more professional in handling visitors over the last 10–20 years, with this increasingly being managed by experienced leisure and tourist professionals.
- 35.2 As other attractions have become more imaginative in the way they present their treasures, cathedrals have followed suit. This reflects both a real pride in what they have to share, and anxiety that they will look second-rate alongside secular tourist destinations.
- 35.3 There has been a rediscovery of the tradition of pilgrimage which cathedrals have encouraged. For example, Canterbury is the start/end point for the Via Francigena, linking it to Rome.
- 35.4 Cathedrals have been active in the development of local tourism. For example, Canterbury was the first partner to respond to the county council's invitation in setting up Visit Kent.
- 35.5 Cathedrals have been investing in upgrading facilities for visitors. Wells Cathedral completed a major development scheme in 2008 which included creating better shop and restaurant facilities and a new visitor entrance to make it easier to welcome visitors and provide a less abrupt entry into the cathedral's main space.
- 36 The fact that both Canterbury and Durham Cathedrals are listed World Heritage Sites is a testimony to the quality of what they offer as tourist destinations.
- 37 **Tourism as income generation** The costs of managing tourists is considerable:

- it is justified by the potential for income generation it creates, whether through inviting donations, charging or the income from a cathedral café or shop.
- 37.1 This has also always been the case. Partly as a result of people offering gifts and legacies of money and land, the monks who tended St Cuthbert's original shrine in Durham had considerable wealth and political influence at the time of the Norman Conquest. This was a factor in the building of the present cathedral which at the same time both honoured the saint (although not necessarily in a way he would have wished) and made a powerful statement about who held the political power.
- 38 Yet the issue of tourist income mobilises strong and mixed feelings within cathedral communities.
- 38.1 Of the six case study cathedrals, only Canterbury charges – although technically this is for entry to the precincts not the cathedral itself. The other cathedrals invite donations, with variations in how prominent the invitation is and whether there is a suggested amount. There is a concern that suggested amounts are actually experienced as a charge.
- 38.2 Several of the deans and chapters feel strongly that they should not charge for entry to the house of God. It does not feel in tune with a tradition of Benedictine hospitality and openness. It also potentially undermines the wish for the cathedral to be 'our cathedral' for the community. (Canterbury Cathedral attempts to address this by making entry passes freely available for those who live or work within four miles of the Cathedral, members of the Cathedral Friends and members of any denomination of church throughout the diocese.)
- 38.3 But there was also recognition that, where there are diminishing resources as historical endowments are expended, there may be no choice other than to charge.
- 38.4 People also expressed concern to us that if there is a charge, you are (re)defining the relationship with the visitor away from concepts of hospitality, pilgrimage and the sacred and towards an implicit contract with a visitor or tourist that is rooted in secular concepts of profit, consumption and visitor experience. Once charged, people have a right to expect value for money and make comparisons with tourist destinations which are purely commercial enterprises.
- 39 These ambivalent feelings also reflect the way in which for the visitor it is not clear whether they are tourists or pilgrims. The following incident from one of the cathedrals catches the dilemma of knowing which is which.

On a winter afternoon, as the cathedral was about to close, a young girl approached two volunteers and asked whether she and her grandmother could come in for a few minutes. They had been to visit her grandfather's grave and her grandmother was upset. The volunteers made the two of them welcome and left them to sit in a side chapel and light a candle.

After a little time the visitors left, saying thank you to the volunteers. Shortly afterwards the young girl came back and tried to give the volunteers a folded up £20 note. Their immediate instinct was to refuse it "because we don't charge", although they eventually accepted it.

It seems to us that the uncertainty for the volunteers was what 'frame' they were operating in at the moment the money was offered. Was the money payment for being allowed in at closing time? Was it an expression of gratitude to God for the experience of grieving and recovering the capacity to go on? Or was it both at the same time?

- 40 **Unfolding meaning** None of the cathedrals we visited could manage the numbers of visitors they attract without the support of large numbers of volunteers who are the human interface between visitor and cathedral. Time and again we were impressed by the volunteers' passion for the cathedral and their sensitivity in responding to visitors.
- 40.1 In Durham, Canterbury, Lichfield and Wells several hundred volunteers are involved.
- 40.2 They come from the cathedral's congregation, from the city and county and from parishes within the diocese and beyond. They include active Christians and those who have no particular faith.
- 40.3 Their motivation was not necessarily religious, at least initially. It might be the history, the architecture or some other aspect of the cathedral like bell ringing. In the process they discover the wonders of the cathedral and its stories, which they are keen to share.
- 40.4 For example, at Lichfield Cathedral it was necessary to recruit a great many additional volunteers for the three month period when the Staffordshire Hoard was on display at the cathedral. Many of these have continued to volunteer because they love the cathedral.
- 41 These volunteers, whether as 'welcomers', 'stewards' or 'guides' were clear that people come as tourists, but were seeking to open up the deeper meanings of the cathedral:

"None of our tours are exactly history or architecture: it's up to us to make people think."

"It is so varied and so human, all of the corners have got stories to tell ... it is a very human building."

"Different things grab your imagination and you start talking – it may be that pillar there, the window, someone in history or whatever. It is amazing how the cathedral can be brought to life for people."

"I want people to be comforted, either by the building or what it represents ... they wouldn't define it to themselves necessarily."

"I saw a man walking through the church, with his dog with him. He sat down in a chair and began to cry. I went over and sat beside him. He claimed he was the last surviving member of his boat – I think it was the Falklands War. So he had come on a pilgrimage to Canterbury and wanted to say a prayer for his long lost companions. As I spoke to him it opened up a well of things for him."

Reflection

- 42 Medieval pilgrimages were inspired by the expectation that the place you were travelling to had a special spiritual significance, one which would have a desired powerful effect on you. In practice, what was learnt and transformed was probably as much from the experiences of the journey (cf. Pilgrim's Progress) as from what you discovered when you arrived.
- 43 In today's world the travel is part of the holiday and people know what to expect because it's in the guidebook. The unexpected experience is to find that actually this place does have a special spiritual significance for you, which speaks to a spiritual sensitivity and yearning within you. You discover that this cathedral is a place of pilgrimage for you, as well as being a tourist destination.
- 44 If the cathedrals are able to work with this **duality of being both tourist destinations and places of pilgrimage**, it opens up the possibility of encouraging a **deepening of spiritual awareness and development**.

Chapter 1 References

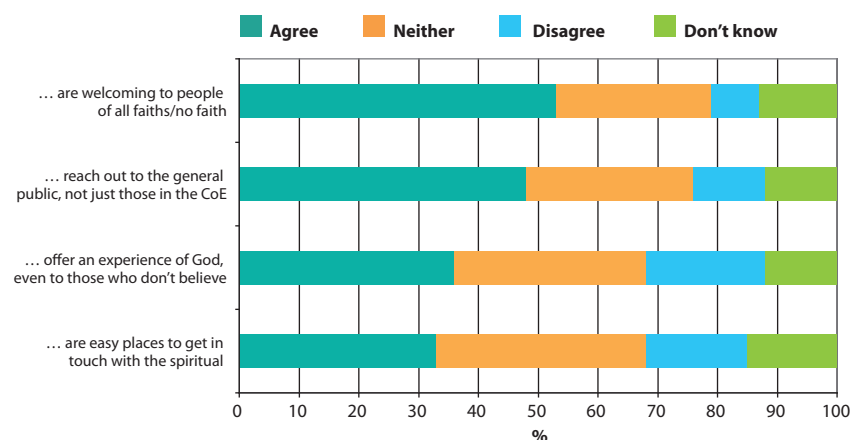
1. The ECOTEC document notes that the proportion of visitors from overseas would vary greatly from cathedral to cathedral. For example, as many as 72% of visitors to St Paul's Cathedral in 2003 might have originated from overseas but analysis of visitor origins in Lichfield suggest the 'huge majority' come from the West Midlands.
2. Visit England, Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions. Data available from http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/major-tourism-surveys/attractions/Annual_Survey/index.aspx
3. Social grades C2, D and E are defined as living in a household in which the chief income earner's occupation is, respectively; skilled manual worker; semi and unskilled manual worker; or casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the welfare state for their income.
4. Jackson and Hudman (1994), cited in Francis et al., 'Visitor experiences of St David's Cathedral: the two worlds of pilgrims and secular tourists', *Rural Theology* 5(2), pp. 111-123, 2007.
5. This covers only five cathedrals, as we revised some questions within the survey after piloting it at Lichfield Cathedral.

Emergent Spiritualities

Cathedrals as Sacred Spaces

- 45 How are cathedrals responding to and developing people's openness to the spiritual?
- 46 The national survey indicated that a third of people see cathedrals (in general) as **"easy places to get in touch with the spiritual"**, whereas only a sixth (17%) did not. When asked whether they personally find cathedrals particularly spiritual places, 37% said they did, but 24% said that cathedrals were **not particularly spiritual** spaces for them.

Figure 5: Perceptions of cathedrals



Source: National Cathedral Survey (ComRes), 1,749 respondents

- 46.1 Not surprisingly, 47% of those who see themselves as Christians said they found cathedrals spiritual places. More surprising is that 25% of those who were agnostics or atheists also agreed. In all this, it is important to recognise this was a generic response, rather than one necessarily rooted in experience of a particular cathedral.

- 47 In contrast, a remarkable 95% of those responding in the local survey felt that their Cathedral provided **"a space where people can get in touch with the spiritual and the sacred"**. What is more surprising is that 72% of those who were non-religious also felt that this was true.

47.1 This sense of their cathedral was reflected in the 88% who also saw it as "a place of sanctuary irrespective of what you believe".

- 48 It was also clear that these responses were not just in terms of a diffuse spirituality, but recognised that cathedrals are Christian. In the national survey, **36%** thought cathedrals **"offer an experience of God even to those who don't believe"**. This view was shared by 19% of the non-religious and 46% of those who saw themselves as Christians. In the local survey, the agreement rose to 88%, with 73% of church non-attenders¹ agreeing that this was the case.

- 49 There was evidence that people did not see cathedrals as exclusive to those who worshipped there or were Christian. Nearly **half of people nationally (48%) agreed that cathedrals "reach out to the general public, not just to those who are part of the Church of England"**, with this rising to three quarters in the local survey.

- 50 In the national survey, **53% agreed that "cathedrals are welcoming to people of all faiths and those who have no faith"**. Of those who were from other faith groups, 42% felt that this was the case. This was very much borne out by the case study of Leicester Cathedral, situated as it is in a city with a high proportion of citizens from ethnic minorities. Key faith leaders had come to feel that the cathedral was very much 'our cathedral'.

- 51 What is striking is that cathedrals are seen locally and nationally as:

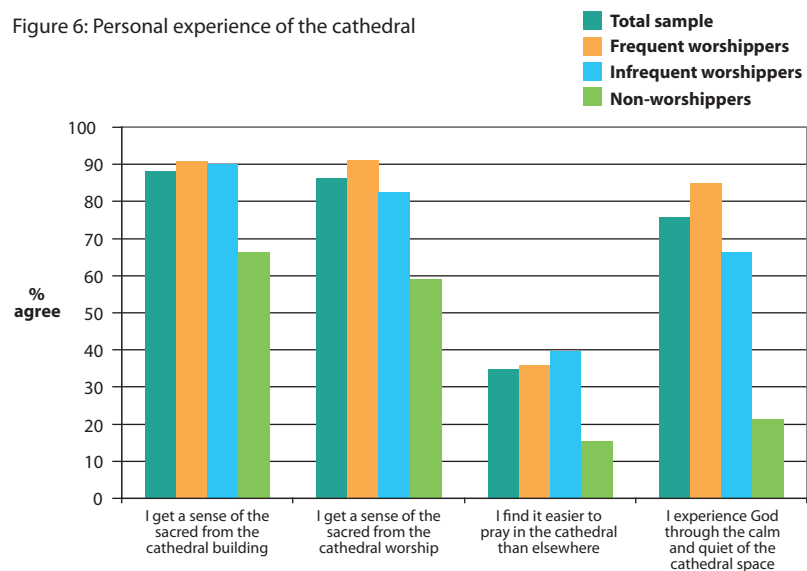
Both:

sacred places which offer God, even to those who don't believe (one third nationally and two thirds locally)

and

as **reaching out** to the general public (nearly half nationally and three quarters locally) and **welcoming** to those of all faiths and none.

Figure 6: Personal experience of the cathedral



Source: Local Cathedral Survey, 1,433 respondents, from five cathedrals.
Frequent worshippers worship once a month or more.

The Experience of the Cathedral

52 These figures about the sense of welcome came alive in our interviews in the six case study cathedrals, whether with those who were deeply committed, those who attended civic or organisational events there because of their role or those who paused whilst walking through the cathedral en route to their next meeting.

53 Many of those we interviewed talked either about personal experience of using the cathedral as **a place for personal reflection and prayer**, or of being aware of others doing so:

"Most people come to pray, have a quiet moment, light a candle." (Verger)

"It's a haven." (Businessman)

"There's a sense of peace and tranquillity, of belonging and being at home." (Muslim)

"A lady aged around 25 came over this morning and sat in the side chapel. She checked her mobile and prayed on her own." (Cathedral clergy)

"When I sit in the cathedral and see all that has been lavished by mankind in their worship of God down the centuries, the weight of history – it is a very spiritual moment." (Diocesan lay staff member)

54 Something of the meaning of these experiences was captured in a reflection by a property developer, who did not see himself as religious.

"What is important is the ability the cathedral has to make people slow down for a minute and ponder ... It allows you to think about others, to think about yourself, about things like guilt and the welfare of others – all of which come back to having faith in something ... It's about faith, not religion – it doesn't force you to believe in God or believe in the Bible ... It instils faith in people – allowing people to make up their own minds." (Local businessman)

55 These individual comments are backed up by the evidence that 76% in contact with a local cathedral reported, **"experiencing God through the calm and quiet of the cathedral space"**. Half (49%) of those who were church non-attenders, 33% of non-believers and 19% of self-designated non-religious agreed with this statement.

56 Each of the six cathedrals works hard to maintain the space for individual prayer. The many volunteer stewards are encouraged to avoid being intrusive, whilst also staying alert to anyone who is clearly in distress. Votive candles and/or opportunities to make requests for prayer are made available. More than one person at Wells Cathedral commented, with some surprise, that they had sold over 50,000 votive candles in the previous year.

57 Others talked to us about the experience of worship in the cathedrals, whether as regular or occasional worshippers or as those attending civic or organisational services.

"Being in the cathedral is a very positive experience. I love this space and sit in the side chapel. It sends shivers through me when I see the cathedral full." (Lay chapter member)

"What's special is the quality of the music – and the preaching (mostly). There's a warmth and simplicity. There is nothing like choral evensong in November when it's dark and you feel you are in the holy of holies!" (Cathedral worshipper)

"I am a parish priest who deals with the day to day – and that is about prayer. You can walk into that [cathedral] building and you just feel it; not just feeling it now, but feeling the prayers over the centuries." (Diocesan clergy)

"I feel it's a huge privilege to be here, because this is a really special historic place. You feel humbled when you're put in the front row because you are a civic leader. But it is also the fact that it's prayerful, the beautiful music, that it's a place of God. There's a sense of reverence and sacredness." (Civic leader)

"It is the intangible which makes the cathedral into a magnet. For me it has to do with the prayer and the liturgy which goes on within it. Because it is a ceaseless round of prayer, every day, at least four per day, and often more, and because that is the focus of the cathedral it goes on whether there is a congregation or not. Glorious sung evensong happens in winter with perhaps four people, but it is because it is for God and the whole place is humming all the time – like a power station." (Cathedral worshipper)

58 In the case study conversations we met a small number of people for whom coming into contact with the cathedral had had a profound and unexpected impact on their life.

58.1 A professional woman, who had had nothing to do with the church all her life, having had the intention of going into work one Sunday afternoon to catch up with a backlog, instead found herself in the city and in the cathedral:

"because nowhere else was open and it was a cold wet afternoon. There was a service going on and it happened to be the annual service of Marie Curie Cancer Care, and it was not very long after my mother had died of cancer ... And it hit me – a very odd sensation of coming home, incredibly powerful and very frightening. I did lots of rationalizing about coincidence, which didn't explain it. You hear people talking about the cathedral as 'a very thin place' and I think it is. I didn't come in here with anything in mind, I just came in. I had to keep coming back, I didn't feel I had a choice and it seemed a stupid and destructive thing not to come back."

So she continued to visit the cathedral, taking a great deal of care to be anonymous and not talk to anyone. Eventually, she began to talk with the dean and, less than a year after the initial visit, was confirmed. She continues to be actively involved in the life and worship of the cathedral as she explores and seeks to deepen her relationship with God.

58.2 A man, who had been raised as a boy to go to church, had ceased to be a churchgoer and was "following a very different spiritual path". At a crucial point a friend challenged him to look into his own spiritual tradition. In response he took a job in a cathedral city on the basis that "if anywhere holds a living memory of the Christian faith, it ought to be here". So over several years he attended choral evensong anonymously, appreciating the anonymity because he "was finding his way back into the faith, testing Christian faith against my own experience", and not wanting to be committed. What helped that exploration was hearing scripture read and the extraordinary power of the choral music. He has chosen to stop being anonymous and to become an active part of the congregation, although he would still describe himself as agnostic.

58.3 Another worshipper had a Christian family background, but had become a Marxist at university and then followed a guru. She had become a yoga teacher. Her daughter suddenly expressed an interest in singing, and on a whim, auditioned for the cathedral choir. After her daughter had been accepted for the choir, she went to hear her sing. She had a profound experience. She said that because it was someone she loved, she was more open to listening to the liturgy with a full heart and heard the words of the liturgy as if for the first time. It was a realisation that God was also here in the cathedral, so her relationship with God, she feels, has been deepened in a fresh context. She is now involved in the life of the Cathedral.

58.4 A committed Christian couple from overseas came to the cathedral as a stopping off point in a long "trip of a lifetime" to Europe. They went to a Maundy Thursday service at the cathedral. Afterwards they found that both had had the same sensation – that "God was saying to us, this is where your home is going to be". Over the next two to three years they tested this discernment, before moving lock, stock and barrel to live near the cathedral. More than ten years later, they both feel "it's the best move we ever made".

59 Each of these experiences is a unique story, but it is worth noting some points about them taken together.

59.1 The impact of the cathedral on them came at very different moments in their journeys of faith.

59.2 In each case the cathedral, its staff and congregation apparently did very little – except to be there, to be open and to follow its normal pattern of worship (but see below).

Creating Sacred Space

60 Both in the surveys and the case studies, we explored what it was that created the space and atmosphere which facilitated the experiences people identified above. Four factors, all fairly obvious, emerged.

- Architecture and sense of continuity
- The music and choirs
- The welcome
- The pattern of worship.

61 **The cathedral as building** Of the local sample, **88% said that "I get a sense of the sacred from the cathedral building"**. This was very much echoed by those we interviewed individually.

- 61.1 Each cathedral reflects the evolving visions over centuries of how, in this time and place, to enable people to experience and worship God.
- 61.2 Those involved in each cathedral are passionate advocates of its particularities – whether the human scale of the space, the quality of the light, the colour of its stone or the width of its nave.
- 61.3 In the national survey, only 15% of people found cathedrals “dark and gloomy places”.
- 61.4 One person described the experience of taking an atheist friend from Germany to the cathedral during his visit at Christmas. At the end of the week his friend told him “I don’t believe in God, but I now believe there could be one”. The interviewee commented, “it is the power of the building we must not underestimate”.
- 62 In our interviews, the beauty of the building and the space it created was often linked to the history and the sense of **continuity**. Thus **89%** of the local sample felt **“connected with history and tradition when I come here”**. This figure was equally high for those who saw themselves as non-believers or non-religious. But this was more than the connection with secular history. In all, 84% of the sample agreed that their local cathedral had been **successful in helping me meet with God or given me a sense of the spiritual through its sense of history**.
- 62.1 This was also the case for 75% of non-believers and 70% of the non-religious, although for these people they were clear that their primary reason for visiting the cathedral was **to appreciate the history and architecture ... not for any religious/spiritual experience**.
- 63 It is important to note that in each of the six cathedrals we studied, the maintenance of the fabric loomed large in organisational life, whether maintaining a Grade 1 listed building of World Heritage significance, creating worship spaces that work in the 21st century or facilitating how visitors experience the cathedral. So, for example, Manchester Cathedral is raising funds to replace its heating and organ, whilst Canterbury Cathedral employs its own teams of specialist stonemasons and stained glass experts to enable it to maintain its fabric. There is a strong sense of responsibility to ensure that the cathedral is there for future generations.
- 64 **The beauty of the music** Choral Music is one of the glories of the English spiritual tradition and held, above all, in the cathedrals. It continues to attract boys and now girls to be choristers and in the case study interviews we found ourselves time and again talking to someone who it turned out had been a chorister or was the parent of a chorister. People commented to us that hearing organists or choristers practise often provided a musical accompaniment for cathedral visitors, volunteers and staff even when there was no service.

- 65 It was clear that alongside a cathedral’s aesthetic qualities, the music was also a key component contributing to the spiritual experience. Nationally, 35% agreed that the **beautiful art and music in the cathedral helps me connect with the spiritual**. For those who had contact with one of the local cathedrals, 86% got a sense of the sacred from the cathedral music.
- 65.1 One of the worshippers in a group we interviewed commented that “the music affects you quite physically”.
- 66 Our interviews revealed some mixed feelings about English cathedral music, both among worshippers and those from the wider diocese.
- 66.1 There were those who felt it was part of the essence of the cathedral and were concerned about how younger people would be introduced to it.
- 66.2 Others had real questions about the relevance of English cathedral music to future generations and wished for a greater variety of musical styles reflecting the diversity of the music in worship of the surrounding churches.
- 66.3 Those responsible for the music were not necessarily opposed to this, but several commented that the acoustics in their cathedral did not lend themselves to some modern music and instruments.
- 67 There had been experiments in each of the case study cathedrals, which had aroused strong feelings, both positive and negative. For example:
- 67.1 The Sunderland Premier League football club’s Carols of Light Service in Durham Cathedral in December 2011 involved not only the Durham choristers but musicians as varied as Alan Price, Kathryn Tickell and Clare Teal.
- 67.2 In March 2007 at Wells Cathedral, Jools Holland, his band and the Choristers performed a new Mass setting he had composed in Bath Cathedral, commissioned by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.
- 68 Again we note that in each of the cathedrals we studied, it takes a considerable financial investment to maintain the music, in terms of the cost of the organ and organists, the ‘lay clerks’ or ‘vicars choral’, and to develop successive generations of choristers. The latter in particular is an important feature of cathedral life which not only underpins the choral tradition but contributes to the spiritual development of a new generation. The cathedrals achieve this in different ways. It may be done directly (as at Leicester); through independent schools with varying degrees of association with the cathedral (such as The Chorister School, Durham, the Wells and Lichfield Cathedral Schools and St Edmund’s School, Canterbury); or through sponsoring students at more free standing music schools (such as Chetham’s Music School in Manchester).

- 69 **Welcome** In each of the case studies those we interviewed talked about their sense that people were welcomed and invited in to experience the cathedral. Whilst this clearly was focused on those who came as 'tourists', there was an awareness that the cathedral often triggered unexpected spiritual experiences.
- 69.1 Each cathedral has mobilised a considerable number of volunteers to provide a human welcome, whether as guides (who can provide information about the architecture, history and meaning of the building) or as 'welcomers' or 'stewards'.
- 69.2 From the volunteers we spoke to it was clear that there was recognition of the need for sensitivity in knowing when to leave visitors space, when to offer information and how to respond when it was clear that visitors were distressed or wanted to talk to someone.
- 69.3 The six cathedrals had well developed structures for recruiting, training and supporting these volunteers. Canterbury Cathedral in particular had developed a sophisticated training process, with the volunteers first spending time as Assistants, before becoming Guides.
- 69.4 We were told a handful of stories about visitors being made to feel unwelcome. But they were very much the exception and the strong feelings they evoked in the people who reported them indicated that they were seen as something which should not have happened.
- 70 **The pattern of worship** Each of the six case study cathedrals maintains a regular pattern of daily worship throughout the week. Typically this consists of Morning Prayer/Matins and/or Holy Communion at the beginning of the day, a midday Eucharist and choral evensong and/or evening prayer at the end of the day.
- 71 The deans and chapters see this pattern of worship as an essential part of the pattern of cathedral life which sustains the whole life and work of the cathedral. To quote from three of their websites:
- "At the heart of Wells Cathedral is the daily pattern of prayer and worship, the rhythm of which forms the framework of all that we do."* (Wells)
- "Daily worship lies at the heart of Cathedral life and every day starts with Morning Prayer and finishes with Evening Prayer."* (Canterbury)
- "Worship continues to be a focus of our time and resources, for we are all called to give of our very best in worship."* (Manchester)
- 72 It was clear from the interviews with the deans that their understanding of the pattern of worship and its significance in life has been very much

shaped by the **Benedictine tradition**, whether or not their cathedral was a Benedictine foundation.

- 72.1 Canterbury and Durham had Benedictine monastic communities associated with them until these were dissolved in 1539 and 1540 respectively. In both cathedrals the pattern of worship and the spirituality of hospitality continue that Benedictine tradition. Other cathedrals do not have the same monastic tradition, but the Benedictine pattern of prayer, work and study is often reflected in their working life.
- 72.2 Key Benedictine values are 'love, service and hospitality,' which cathedrals see expressed in how visitors are welcomed.
- 73 This pattern of worship is only able to be maintained because of the role of the residentiary canons, who between them share the major responsibility for the leadership of this day-by-day pattern of services. In each cathedral, whatever their other responsibilities, they will be 'in residence' for a period (varying between cathedrals) and taking services with some support from honorary canons.

A Focus for Emergent Spiritualities

- 74 How important are these findings in the current context of religious beliefs and spiritualities in England today?
- 74.1 Some markers of belief have declined over recent decades, although not as precipitously as attendance figures. For example, the national survey found that 59% said they believed in God or a Higher Power, compared to the 2008 British Social Attitudes survey figures of 63%, and in comparison with 76% in 1991.
- 74.2 Of the various surveys that have measured the importance of God in people's lives (on a scale of 1: Not at all, to 10: Very), the average score in the early '80s was between 5 and 6, which is where it was a quarter of a century later.²
- 75 It is also important to recognise that alongside the change in specifically Christian beliefs there are other trends in terms of the understanding of the spiritual nature of humanity.
- 75.1 The proportion of people who believe in the existence of the human soul was 60% in our survey, very similar to the level in 1981 of 58%.³
- 75.2 By comparison, 40% of people believe in "God as a universal life force" and belief in reincarnation has risen from 22% in 1973 to 26% today, an increase that cannot simply be put down to immigration.⁴

- 75.3 Young people consistently demonstrate a spirituality that is more engaged, and sometimes more certain, than older ones. For example, in our national survey 25% of 18–34s said that they knew God exists and had no doubts about it (compared with 17% of over 55s). Similarly, 18–34s were more likely to believe in life after death, angels, reincarnation, God as a universal life force, and the existence of a human soul than were older age groups.⁵
- 76 We have found it useful to think about this openness to the spiritual in terms of **emergent spiritualities**. They are ‘emergent’ both for individuals in their spiritual journeys and also in the sense that these new spiritualities are still taking shape. They are being framed not only within Christian thinking and practice, but also within and beyond other faiths and humanistic movements.
- 77 A common feature is a new appreciation of the connectedness of all things, of all human beings, of all living creatures and plants and of the planet itself. This is expressed in ways which draw on the teachings of the mystics, new understandings of human consciousness and different expressions of the transcendent, both Christian and non-Christian. Something of the flavour is caught in the following descriptions of human beings as, “pilgrims of the earth glimpsing the oneness of the sacred whole and in glimpsing the oneness we come to know Gaia⁶ and grace”⁷
- 77.1 In Christian thinking this sense of the wholeness and connectedness of all things is linked to the understanding of God as Creator. It is perhaps most explicitly expressed in the understanding of the cosmic Christ being the one “in whom all things hold together”, in Colossians (1:17). It is also explored in the new understanding of creation spirituality as written about by authors like Matthew Fox.⁸
- 78 There is a challenge to the Church as a whole as to how the Christian understanding of creation and grace contributes to these emergent spiritualities. Cathedrals are well placed in responding to this challenge given that our evidence suggests that:
- 78.1 There is openness to the experience of the spiritual within the cathedrals – shaped by the nature of the space (created by both the architecture and the freedom to be in it), music and the quality of worship.
- 78.2 The combined effect of these factors is experienced by a wide range of people, whether in terms of people taking and experiencing a moment of quiet in their busy everyday lives or having the unexpected profound experiences which can affect both those with or without faith.

- 79 In responding to this, cathedrals draw on a reserve of **spiritual capital** – in terms of the nature of the space, skill in developing creative liturgies and the sheer continuity of a thousand years of prayer which has soaked into the very stones of the cathedral.

Chapter 2 References

1. Defined as attending church “a few times a year” or less.
2. See *British Religion In Numbers* (www.brin.ac.uk) Figure 7.24.
3. See *British Religion In Numbers* (www.brin.ac.uk) Figures 7.1 and 7.47.
4. See *British Religion In Numbers* (www.brin.ac.uk) Figure 7.44.
5. This is in line with current thinking about the stages of faith development. See E James Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, Harper & Row 1981 and John Westerhoff III, *Will our Children have Faith?*, 3rd Revised Ed, Morehouse 2012.
6. A reference to the ‘gaia hypothesis’, formulated by the chemist, James Lovelock, that all organisms and their inorganic surroundings on Earth are integrated to form a single and self-regulating complex system, maintaining the conditions for life on the planet. See James Lovelock, *GAIA – a new look at life on earth*, Oxford University Press, 1989.
7. Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age*, Harper, San Francisco, 1993.
8. See, for example, Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*, Bear & Company, Santa Fe, 1983.

Significance in the Community

- 80 Irrespective of what one thinks of the **'Big Society'** as a political idea, the Prime Minister's flagship policy has dragged many ideas, formerly confined to academic literature, into the public light. Concepts such as **'civil society'** and **'social capital'** – the networks and relationships that create trust and engagement which, like financial capital, can help the realisation of shared goals – are more familiar now than they were even five years ago, and there is recognition across the political spectrum that a society must have a strong voluntary and community sector if it is to flourish. Good relationships make a good society.
- 81 There is important small print here, however, which is sometimes overlooked. Having good relationships with people that are like you, or already part of an institution to which you belong, is comparatively easy. Sociologists call this **'bonding'** social capital and, while it is important for the health of society, it is not the most important factor.
- 82 More significant, but more difficult, are those relationships with other people and organisations: not necessarily those that are antagonistic to you, but rather, simply, different from you. As society becomes increasingly diverse and plural, more and more individuals and organisations share physical and social infrastructure without otherwise meeting or knowing one another. These relationships, which reach beyond the wall of an institution or community, are often known as **'bridging'** social capital. They are particularly important for a cohesive society.
- 83 A parliamentary debate on the future of English cathedrals held in the House of Lords in June 2012 cited a wide range of cathedral activity within their communities beyond their 'ordinary' and special liturgy and worship services. These included cathedrals as instigators of, and major venues for, significant community meetings and initiatives, concerts, exhibitions, graduation ceremonies, educational activity (especially but not limited to choir schools), Street Pastors, support for asylum seekers and refugees, homeless charities, public debates and lectures, and 'Chatham House rule' discussions.¹
- 84 What is perhaps not so widely appreciated is the strength and extent of those 'bridging' relationships. A key focus of this research project was the nature of the interaction between cathedrals and the communities in which they are located;

what the cathedral is seen and understood to contribute to the community. In this section we shall focus mainly on the case studies and local surveys because our assumption is that what is happening in each cathedral can only be properly understood in its particular context.

Are Cathedrals Relevant?

- 85 There are many people who might make the assumption that cathedrals are irrelevant to the life and work of the cities and counties around them. So we specifically asked people in the local survey whether or not they agreed that **"this [local] cathedral is irrelevant to my daily life"**.
- 85.1 Only 10% agreed the cathedral was irrelevant, whilst 76% disagreed or disagreed strongly. In other words **three quarters of people surveyed in the local sample felt their cathedral was relevant to their daily lives.**
- 85.2 This view was shared by 62% of the church non-attenders and 58% of non-believers.
- 86 We also tested whether or not people felt that **"this cathedral contributes little to our community"**. In all 79% rejected this statement and only 9% agreed with it. The sense that **"cathedrals were contributing"** was shared by those who were church non-attenders (74%) and those who did not believe in God (74%).
- 87 The national survey asked people whether they felt **"cathedrals are unimportant for cities in England today"**. Only 14% agreed with this statement, whilst 54% rejected it. This sense that **cathedrals are important** was broadly shared across the sample, whether one was a core cathedral user or totally peripheral to the Christian life.
- 88 So, although the surveys went out of their way to invite people to state negative views about the relevance, importance and contribution of cathedrals to their communities, there is a **broad level of agreement that they are important and relevant.**

The Pattern of Interaction with the Community

- 89 From the case studies we identified six different ways in which the six cathedrals were interacting that went beyond offering the regular pattern of worship.
- Providing a **venue** for civic, cultural and academic events.
 - Contributing to the **local economy and prosperity.**

- Engaging in **social action**, especially in response to social justice issues within their communities.
 - Offering leadership around **inter-faith issues**.
 - **Enabling the community to address community tensions and distress.**
 - Being a **symbol of community identity**.
- 90 **Cathedrals as venues** The size of most cathedrals and their seating capacity make them important venues for a variety of activities. These range from cultural and civic events, through fundraising (for the cathedral or charities), to being a film set. To give some examples from the case study cathedrals:
- Lichfield Cathedral provides an important venue for the events in the Lichfield Festival of music, dance, drama, arts and literature.
 - Durham and Canterbury Cathedrals are used for university graduation ceremonies (and matriculation ceremonies at Durham).
 - Manchester Cathedral was the venue chosen by the rock band 'elbow' when they visited their home city in October 2011.
 - Wells Cathedral was one of the locations for the filming of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*.
 - Leicester is one of the venues for the Leicester Comedy Festival and in 2006 hosted a debate about *Jerry Springer the Opera*.
- The extent to which each cathedral is used as a venue is affected by both its architecture and the availability of alternatives. Thus in Manchester and Leicester there are good alternative venues and in Somerset, Bath Abbey provides a similar venue to Wells Cathedral for the north of the county.
- 91 In addition, each of the cathedrals has a programme of educational work, usually linked to the work of the diocese. These include providing the venue for Leavers' Day services (particularly, but not exclusively for Church of England primary schools) and a variety of educational visits, designed in relation to curriculum requirements.
- 92 As was clear from our interviews with vergers and volunteers, these activities (and the set up/derigging time) make a demand on resources. They require considerable venue and event management skills, if these events and activities are not to undermine the sense of the spirituality and rhythm of worship. We were aware in one cathedral of increasing conflicts about availability as its use as a venue developed. It was also clear that, in the past, some had been seen as 'a cathedral that likes to say NO'. The current leadership of these cathedrals was

working hard to become 'a cathedral that likes to say YES'. This was important in relation to those chapter members who saw the Benedictine tradition of hospitality as key to the work of their cathedral.

- 93 Being a venue can be a source of income for the cathedral. Yet, for many, a more important payoff is that a very wide range of people visit the cathedral and may discover both its welcome and something of an ambience which transcends the immediate experience of a particular event. Thus it enables a crossing of the threshold which may lead to future visits with more of a spiritual motivation.
- 94 **Economic significance** As we have indicated in the chapter on tourism and pilgrimage, cathedrals can make a significant contribution to local economies.
- 94.1 The existence of the cathedral draws in a significant number of visitors, sustaining a range of businesses which would not otherwise survive. This is particularly the case in Lichfield, Wells and Canterbury. Indeed, the early development of Lichfield was in part driven by the need to provide overnight accommodation for pilgrims to St Chad's shrine.
- 94.2 This is recognised by local authorities and their tourist services who are keen to boost the visitor economy (despite the inevitable parking problems this brings). There is interest in linking cathedrals to other attractions so as to increase the amount of time and money that visitors spend. For example, in Lichfield the District Council is keen to promote the cathedral alongside the city's links with Samuel Johnson and Erasmus Darwin, and with the nearby National Memorial Arboretum.
- 94.3 In both Leicester and Manchester, the cathedrals are much less visible and not the dominant tourist attraction. In both cases, the cathedrals are working with the local authority to develop the immediate surroundings to increase their visibility. In Leicester, there are plans to regenerate the precincts to create the Cathedral Gardens, and in Manchester, the cathedral will become a key part in the proposed 'Medieval Quarter'.
- 95 As significant factors in local economies, cathedrals have an opportunity to contribute to the development and **regeneration** of their cities. So, for example, Leicester Cathedral hosts a *Cathedral AM* breakfast meeting bi-monthly to bring together those who have a general concern for the city's wellbeing. In Manchester, the aftermath of the IRA bomb, which damaged 1,200 buildings, including the cathedral, has provided an opportunity for Manchester Cathedral to be involved in the regeneration of the city. The cathedral agreed to an exchange of land to facilitate the rebuilding of the Arndale Centre. It has actively pursued the links with the City Council and business community as a result and is recognised and respected as a key partner in the regeneration of central Manchester. There is recognition and acceptance by them that the cathedral has its own agenda

(in terms of visibility and fundraising), but they value its contribution. What the cathedral brings to the table is a Christian understanding of human and spiritual values to set alongside the commercial imperatives of its partners.

- 96 **Engaging in social action** There were examples of cathedrals responding to important social issues in their communities, often sharing in initiating them with the diocese, other denominations and other partners. This is particularly likely to be the case for the more urban cathedrals, as is evident from the following examples.
- 96.1 The Urban Canon at Leicester Cathedral was involved in initiating a Street Pastors Scheme to respond to the needs of young people late at night in the city centre club scene.
- 96.2 Manchester Cathedral has provided accommodation for the Booth Centre, which works with the homeless. It is itself developing a project as part of the government's Job Centre Plus scheme designed to help people into work. Its Cathedral Café is run by Create Foundation, a social enterprise with the aim of helping people back into work.
- 96.3 Canterbury Cathedral was involved in initiating a Canterbury Night Shelter scheme in 2011, providing overnight accommodation between December and January in a number of city churches. The scheme will continue this year.
- 96.4 Manchester Cathedral initiated and hosts a Challenging Hate Forum, bringing together city centre places of worship and statutory agencies to address domestic violence.
- 97 We note that these and other examples were usually modest and a response to those issues that were not being picked up by other parts of the community. They were also often co-created with other partners, leading to some confusion about who could take the credit for what. Nevertheless, it was clear that people firmly rooted in the local business life and statutory authorities saw the importance of what the cathedral had done and were pleased to support it.
- "The challenge was thinking what is this (cathedral) project trying to do for the city really, and how to align its corporate social responsibility with its spiritual role. It's about helping people who need a bit of a leg up at the moment ... That's what attracted me – being able to help make a difference."* (Businessman on board of a cathedral project)
- "The cathedral adds value to what the city is and what the city has to offer. It has a place in the life of the city ... In terms of the activities going on in the cathedral now, it adds a lot of life of different sorts."* (Council leader)

- 98 **The inter-faith dimension** Nearly two thirds of the local sample (64%) saw their cathedral as *a place for interfaith and ecumenical dialogue*. This was a widely shared viewpoint across age groups, little affected by the level of church attendance, although it did fall to 40% for those who were non-religious. In Leicester, 83% of the sample saw the cathedral as a focus for inter-faith dialogue.
- 99 In Leicester and Manchester, the population has significant numbers from ethnic minorities and non-Christian faith backgrounds and in both cities the cathedral has been active in multi-faith organisations alongside their respective bishops. In Leicester, the cathedral has provided a focus for community cohesion when there have been attempts to exploit potential divisions between different ethnic groups.
- 99.1 The City of Leicester has a high ethnic minority population with the 2001 census classifying 61% as 'white British'. Several of those interviewed expected Leicester to be the first English city with a majority of people from ethnic minorities, in other words England's first 'plural city'.
- 99.2 In 2010 (and again in 2012), the English Defence League organised a rally in Leicester, despite local opposition. The bishop and the dean organised a multi-faith vigil in the cathedral on the night before the rally, both to express their opposition to the EDL's action and to pray for a peaceful outcome.
- 99.3 Leaders of the different faith groups have come to see the cathedral as "our cathedral", feeling at home within it. One made a clear link between this sense of it being 'our cathedral' and the sense of belonging and being part of Leicester as 'our city'.
- 100 **Punctuating civic life** Cathedrals host a wide range of celebration and worship services for community organisations and all levels of civic structures.
- 100.1 Annual or special anniversary services for a wide range of charities, voluntary organisations and associations.
- 100.2 Civic and mayoralty services for the city and county councils (although in some, such as Wells and Manchester, other Anglican parish churches are the civic churches).
- 100.3 Services which link to the wider establishment structures associated with the work of the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff and the judiciary. Cathedrals are also often one of the venues when Her Majesty or other members of the Royal family visit the county.
- 100.4 Remembrance Day services.
- 100.5 Services for police and fire services and for the armed forces. Some are

- associated with regiments past and present – Durham Cathedral, for example, has a chapel dedicated to the Durham Light Infantry.
- 100.6 Services for the more widely observed Christian festivals which attract significant numbers, with Shoppers' Carol Services being particularly popular.
- 101 These services provide a rhythm to community life in much the same way as the pattern of daily worship does for the cathedral itself. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that 93% of the local sample agreed that their cathedral was a **“venue for significant occasions in the life of the city and/or county”**. This was echoed in the national sample where 54% agreed that cathedrals are venues for significant events in the lives of cities and the country.
- 102 From the case studies it was also clear that some of the 'significant occasions' went beyond this cycle of celebration. In each cathedral we were told stories of it responding to moments of community distress and crisis.
- 102.1 A local man in Lichfield was mugged and kicked to death by two young men. This deeply disturbed people both because he was a widely known 'character' and because the people do not see Lichfield as the sort of city where things like this happen. In agreement with the family's parish church, a service was held at the cathedral with all sections of the community and statutory agencies being represented.
- 102.2 Immediately after the IRA bombing of the Arndale Centre, a service was organised in Manchester Cathedral.
- 102.3 The family of a widely loved local comedian, Dave Lee, asked for the funeral to be held in Canterbury Cathedral. The service was attended by hundreds of people and incorporated one of his 'pantomime routines', with the enthusiastic participation of the choristers. Even people who had not been present told us about how wonderful a service it had been.
- 102.4 Wells Cathedral was the venue for the funeral of Harry Patch in 2009, who had been the last soldier to serve in the World War One trenches and lived to be 111. Thousands of people lined the streets to honour him. (There is now a Harry Patch memorial stone opposite the cathedral.)
- 103 It is clear that on each of these (and many other occasions) the cathedral had been more than just a 'venue'. It had created a liturgical space in which people could be gathered and enabled to express and process the emotions of local and national crises. Time and time again people told us how wonderful and appropriate what had been said was. It had enabled them to find some sense and meaning as a basis for moving on.

- 104 **Being a symbol of community identity** In the delivery of these different engagements, the cathedrals were seen as having developed good relationships with many different constituencies.
- 104.1 Between 85% and 90% of the local sample felt that their cathedral had good or very good relationships with people who came to special services; schools and children; regular visitors to artistic, heritage or cultural events; and to worshippers, whether regular or occasional.
- 104.2 In terms of the local community as a whole, 59% felt that their cathedral had good or very good relationships, with a similarly high level of opinion among those who were church non-attenders, non-believers and those who called themselves non-religious.
- 105 The extent of the interactions with different groups was also evident in the 62% of local people who saw the cathedral as, **“a ‘hub’ to engage in the life of the wider community”**. It clearly was fulfilling this function for many of the volunteers we interviewed, who were as likely to come (at least initially) because of an interest in history or bell ringing as an expression of Christian faith and service.
- 106 The engagement with the cathedral affected the way people felt about their community. In all, 56% of the local sample agreed that **“they got a sense of community through the way the cathedral provides space for local events and activities”**. This is an important response because it implies that the cathedrals are **not only being used to express a sense of community but are also contributing to nurturing and developing that sense of community**.
- 107 It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that 78% of the local people agreed that their cathedral was **“at the heart of the city”**. It is important to note that the case studies suggest that this is likely to be strongest in the immediate 'city' and more attenuated in the wider county.
- 108 From our initial research we knew that cathedrals can become symbols and icons of local identity.
- 108.1 Durham Cathedral dominates the landscape and is widely seen as an icon, not only of Durham but of the wider 'North East'.
- 108.2 Lichfield Cathedral's three spires form the basis for its logo – and appear widely in the logos of local businesses.
- 109 We tested this by asking both the local and national samples about whether the cathedral was a **“symbol of local identity”**. In the local sample, 87% agreed that it was. In the national sample, answering about whether cathedrals were “a symbol of identity in their community”, the level of agreement was 56%.

- 110 What was also striking was the sense of ownership of the cathedral which develops – it is **our cathedral**. Nationally, 59% agree that, “**cathedrals belong to the whole community, not just the Church of England**”. This rises to 83% for the local sample.
- 110.1 This can be seen particularly at Durham, with a strong sense that the cathedral is “*wor cathedral*”. The traditional Miners’ Gala continues to flourish although the mines have gone. In fact, communities which were never part of the industry are creating new banners as an expression of their sense of pride in being communities. The Gala ends with a service in Durham Cathedral, in effect celebrating and blessing what the banners represent.
- 111 In general the wider community’s sense of owning the cathedral was welcomed. There were a small number of comments from members of cathedral congregations, which suggested that at times they felt that ‘their cathedral’ was being appropriated by the community. But this sense of shared ownership is welcomed by the deans we interviewed and actively encouraged.

Cathedral-in-Community

- 112 The findings of this study demonstrate the important contribution to the life of their cities made by cathedrals. Over half of the general population recognise **cathedrals are symbols of local identity** and sense that they belong to the whole community.
- 113 We note the organisational impact of these findings, with deans, chapters and cathedral staff having to manage and balance a wide range of demands and expectations – in some cases with limited resources.
- 114 What has emerged is the significance of cathedrals in terms of **social capital**, in particular the much-in-demand **bridging social capital**. Few institutions today manage to combine a clear identity with a public profile that allows them to connect disparate sections of (an often diverse) community. Cathedrals are an exception. Almost universally recognised as **Christian institutions**, they are also successful in establishing and maintaining links both with and between ‘others’ within their communities, and beyond. This is part of an authentic Christian duty of hospitality, informed by the theological recognition of humans as irreducibly *relational* beings. In an age that celebrates – but is often vexed by – both individualism and diversity, and also contends that the public square should be neutral with regard to value and identity, this is clearly a highly significant role for cathedrals and has potential for further development.
- 115 That recognised, we also want to underline the extent to which cathedrals find themselves experiencing the same dilemmas as the communities in which they live and work. As the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote in November 2011,

“The Church of England is still used by British society as a stage on which to conduct by proxy the arguments that society itself does not know how to handle.”²

Although in this instance, the Archbishop specifically had in mind the displacement of the Occupy movement’s attempt to engage in dialogue with financial institutions onto the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral, we found evidence of this within the life of the case study cathedrals. So, Leicester Cathedral is engaged with the tensions of living in a highly multicultural environment, while Durham Cathedral seeks to respond both to the on-going deprivation of the ex-mining communities, the prosperity of a successful university and a fast-growing manufacturing economy.

- 116 The challenge is how do cathedrals respond to the tensions, ambiguities and arguments that they are part of in the community? The risk is in being captured by the dilemmas and either taking sides or becoming paralysed. It seems to us that the **cathedrals are able to hold the ambiguity of the dilemmas so that new meanings and hope can emerge**.
- 117 The challenge is nicely expressed in relation to the individual by Esther de Waal as a recurring theme in her book *Living with Contradiction: Benedictine Wisdom for Everyday Living*:
- “This polarity, this holding together of opposites, this living with contradictions, presents us not with a closed system but with a series of open doors ... We find that we have to make room for the divergent forces within us, and that there is not necessarily any resolution of the tension between them ... In holding on to this polarity I must not deny the truth of either, for the two poles are not mutually antagonistic. On the contrary each makes the other possible.”³*
- “This great cathedral is maintained, and has been maintained for centuries, through the interplay and interdependence of contradictory forces, the unremitting pull of opposites. The keystone is firm at the point of equilibrium; the boss is still at the heart of the tension.”⁴*
- This seems equally good advice to the leaders of English cathedrals.

Chapter 3 References

1. Hansard, 28 Jun 2012, Cols. 327-364
2. Archbishop Rowan Williams, ‘Time for us to challenge the idols of high finance’, *Financial Times*, 1 November 2011
3. Esther de Waal, *Living with Contraction: Benedictine wisdom for Everyday Living*, Canterbury Press 2003, pp 22-23
4. *Ibid*, p31

Creative Tension: Relations with the Diocese and Wider Church

Structural Relationships with the Diocese

- 118 The research project revealed a variety of ways in which people within the Church of England and beyond construe the relation of cathedral to diocese, some of them clearly based on misunderstandings.
- 119 The current relationship of cathedrals to the Church of England is in effect defined by The Cathedrals Measure 1999, which makes limited reference to the Diocese as an organisational entity (our emphases).
- 119.1 The key link is through the diocesan bishop, who shall “have the **principal seat and dignity** in the cathedral”. Hence the placing of the bishop’s seat (the **‘cathedra’**) in the cathedral.¹
- 119.2 Cathedral chapters are required to “consult the bishop on the **general direction and mission of the cathedral**”.
- 119.3 The bishop acts as ‘Visitor’ to the cathedral, particularly addressing any issues in relation to constitution and statutes.
- 119.4 During a ‘visitation’, the bishop may “give such **directions** to the Chapter, to any holder of any office in the Cathedral or to anyone employed by the cathedral which will, in the opinion of the bishop, better observe the due observance of the constitution and statutes.”²
- 119.5 “**After consultation** with the Chapter”, the bishop can “**officiate in the cathedral** and use it in his work of teaching and mission, for ordinations and synods and for other diocesan occasions and purposes.”
- 119.6 The measure provides also that the Church Commissioners should pay the stipends of the Dean and “two residentiary canons who are engaged exclusively in cathedral duties”.
- 120 In effect the bishop is the **‘diocese-in-the-cathedral’** with limited powers by right, unless he takes up the role of ‘Visitor’ in relation to infringements of the cathedral’s constitution and statutes.

- 121 Until 2007, the majority of deans were Crown appointments with a process parallel to that for bishops. This served to underline that deans are not diocesan appointments. Gordon Brown’s Green Paper, *The Governance of Britain*, set in hand a move to greater Church of England responsibility, increasing the involvement of diocesan bishops in the process. They can influence the appointment, and indeed veto a proposed candidate. But it is still clear that the diocesan bishop does not appoint the dean.
- 122 Deans are treated as members of the bishop’s senior staff team in the diocese. They, in effect, represent the **‘cathedral-in-the-diocese’**, but with no legally assigned responsibilities or powers by right.
- 123 In each of the six cathedrals we studied, there was at least one residentiary canon who was also an archdeacon in the diocese, with a variety of arrangements about how this post was funded between the cathedral and the diocese. (In Canterbury, the cathedral is able to fund two archdeacons.) There are also situations in which additional residentiary canons carry significant diocesan responsibilities, with a limited proportion of time being spent in the cathedral.
- 123.1 For example, one of the residentiary canons at Wells Cathedral serves as Director of Learning Communities in the Diocese of Bath and Wells for 80% of his time.
- 124 From our discussions with chapters and interviews with their members, it is clear that those who are archdeacons or have other diocesan roles provide a key bridge between cathedral and diocese. They are inevitably in touch with whether the mission strategies of diocese and cathedral are aligned or in tension, and the organisational stresses and preoccupations of both church systems. Being aware of them does not necessarily resolve them.
- 125 The case studies provided examples of flexible and imaginative use of the Cathedrals Measure framework to respond to issues in local communities and dioceses. But this very flexibility also has the potential for confusion of boundaries and responsibilities. These confusions are particularly likely to get played out in the relationship between dean and bishop, particularly when the public treat them as being on different sides in highly contentious community issues.

Cathedral as Mother Church?

- 126 One of the most frequently repeated phrases in our research conversations was that a cathedral is the **“mother church”** of the diocese and a venue for significant events in the life of the diocese. Amongst the people in the local sample who were Church of England, 91% agreed with the statement that their cathedral was

the mother church of the diocese (or the 'seat' [headquarters] of the bishop). But in the case study interviews the researchers had some sense that, on occasion, people were paying lip service rather than speaking about a lived experience.

- 127 The use of the cathedral for ordinations and other diocesan celebrations serves to punctuate the life of the diocese, just as it does for the community. But in some dioceses (e.g. Lichfield, Bath and Wells and Manchester) there had been a history of moving ordinations out of the cathedral to other churches in the diocese. This trend is now being reversed with bishops making greater use of the cathedrals to provide the experience for members of the diocese of being gathered together in one place.
- 128 It was evident that a key factor in how far the cathedral can function as mother church is the geography of the diocese.
- 128.1 Neither Lichfield Cathedral nor Wells Cathedral is particularly central within their respective dioceses and people from some parts of the diocese face an hour or longer drive to get to them.
- 128.2 Whilst Leicester and Manchester are reasonably central, people complain about the difficulty and cost of parking. Indeed, in the wider county/metropolitan area, the natural focus for all activities such as shopping was not the cathedral city but other major towns in the area.
- 128.3 Despite the best intentions of cathedrals and dioceses, these factors clearly affected the willingness to attend events in the cathedral and the frequency of doing so. (One of those we interviewed commented that "people say that they don't go to the cathedral because of parking difficulties; but I find myself asking then how do you manage to go to the rugby?")
- 129 The one cathedral where we encountered strong positive feelings around being a 'mother church' was in Canterbury. In this case, the feelings were round a sense of Canterbury Cathedral as the **mother church of the whole Anglican Communion**, not of its own diocese. Some of those from other countries now living in Canterbury had first come to visit the cathedral feeling that it was "our cathedral". It was also clear that the dean and chapter are very committed to welcoming all members of the Communion because it is their mother church. They have gone to some lengths to avoid being seen as associated with one faction or the other in whatever the current tensions are within the Anglican Communion.

Relation to the Parishes

- 130 The question of whether people see the cathedral as mother church is also affected by the on-going pattern of relationships between the cathedral and the

parishes, their clergy and worshippers. How far are these two forms of church complementary or in competition?

- 131 The interviews identified three potential areas of tension between the cathedral and parishes.
- 131.1 We were frequently told that some people resented the cathedral because they thought that it was being funded through the diocese and their 'parish share'. Whilst this is not strictly true³, this reported misperception surfaced quite often in exploring what the cathedral contributed to the life and work of the parishes – but it was always about someone else's misunderstanding! We note that, in situations in which there is a lack of resources and pressure is on the 'parish share', cathedrals are potentially a convenient scapegoat.
- 131.2 People also often talked about parishes' envy of the number of clergy staff in the cathedral (and the cost) and couldn't understand what they were using their time doing. This seemed to be of less an issue where the dean and other cathedral canons were active in preaching within the diocese or leading diocesan activities. But we were aware in one diocese of considerable anger that two cathedral canons appeared to do nothing outside the cathedral.
- 131.3 Issues were also raised when cathedrals were in a position that they needed either to limit the number of services they hosted for the diocese, deaneries or parishes, or had to charge for the use of the cathedral.
- 132 Deans and chapters are well aware of these issues and several were making concerted efforts to change perceptions, particularly where there was a history of being 'a cathedral which says no'. They were finding different ways to get across the message: "this is your cathedral – we are here for you," and to practise hospitality. To give three examples:
- 132.1 When he was first appointed, the Dean of Manchester Cathedral made a point of visiting each deanery synod to get this message across, helped by the fact that he himself had previously been a parish priest in the diocese.
- 132.2 Canterbury Cathedral invites parishes to spend time visiting the cathedral on an afternoon and then entertains them.
- 132.3 A parish church in Canterbury Diocese had problems with its stained glass. One of the PCC members, who also volunteers at the cathedral, asked the cathedral for advice. The response was to give the specialist advice and to carry out the work in their own workshop, free of charge.
- 133 However, from experience with other organisations, we suspect that better communication by itself will not altogether eradicate the persistent

misunderstandings. They are sustained by other dynamics within the diocese and between cathedral and diocese.

- 134 **Choice and competition** One of the dynamics is around the choices individuals make about where they worship. We interviewed one group of worshippers who talked uneasily about being ‘refugees’. The interviewer’s sense was that this was a label which had been applied to them rather than their understanding of why they worshipped in the cathedral.
- 134.1 They acknowledged they were in one sense ‘refugees’ from what they had experienced in their parish churches as unsatisfactory worship and preaching, or stressful relationships with clergy or congregation.
- 134.2 They had found in the cathedral a style of worship and quality of preaching which sustained and developed their faith and their discipleship in everyday life.
- 134.3 They had also valued being *“anonymous”* and not feeling pressured to take up roles in the church.
- 134.4 Paradoxically, they had all subsequently volunteered and taken up time-consuming roles in the cathedral. The difference was that they had seen a need and wanted to help, rather than feeling pressured.
- 134.5 From their point of view, being part of the cathedral congregation was about freedom of choice much more than it was about flight from the parish.
- 135 This one group conversation encompasses several of the key issues about church growth and the future of Church of England parish churches. To comment further from the evidence in this study:
- 135.1 People become part of the cathedral’s congregation for a variety of reasons including:
- choosing to ‘transfer’ from a parish church because they find the quality of worship at the cathedral more ‘life-giving’;
 - an experience in the cathedral had enabled them to recover a ‘lost’ or ‘frozen’ faith;
 - an encounter with the cathedral has resulted in them coming to faith for the first time. (This is evident from the experiences we have recounted in the Emergent Spiritualities chapter.)
- 135.2 It is easy to be caught up in a discussion of these issues only in terms of worshippers as consumers choosing between competing suppliers of religious experience. The experience of the couple who found themselves

moving to an English cathedral town because “God wants us here” is a helpful reminder. There are also issues about discerning God’s call.

- 135.3 We note that these issues are by no means unique to cathedrals. They apply equally to many other large and growing congregations, where there is often suspicion that growth is as much about attracting people (both core and fringe) from other local churches as the result of particular outreach strategies.
- 136 Because of the importance of these issues, we did explore in the local survey how people viewed and related to parish churches as well as the cathedral. Looking at the 72% who reported that they were Church of England, the following emerged.
- 136.1 69% found that *“this cathedral gives me a greater sense of the sacred than I get elsewhere”*.
- 136.2 38% found it *“easier to pray in the cathedral than elsewhere”*.
- 136.3 Whereas **34%** say they go to the cathedral *instead of* their parish church, **50%** say they go to the cathedral *as well as* their parish church.
- 137 The figures suggest that what attracts people to cathedrals, and their engagement with both cathedrals and their local parish church, are complex: simplistic interpretations may be misleading.
- 138 We had some evidence that there can be particular issues for parish churches in the immediate vicinity of a cathedral. There are issues about whether they appeal to similar or different groups of people, whether they compete and whether they collaborate with each other in engaging with the social problems of ‘inner city’ communities. To give two examples:
- 138.1 We identified some evidence that those who were born and bred in Wells are most likely to attend one of the two parish churches in the city rather than Wells Cathedral. In contrast, the ‘incomers’, who had moved to Wells as ‘a good place to live’, worshipped in the cathedral. However, members of both groups were involved in supporting the cathedral as volunteers.
- 138.2 In Manchester, St Ann’s Church was founded in 1712, largely funded by Lady Ann Bland, who felt that the church which is now the cathedral was ‘too high’. As the parish church for central Manchester, there are people who still have a sense of it being an ‘alternative cathedral’.
- 139 It would be naive not to recognise the potential competition between cathedrals and the other great churches in the diocese, whether with other ancient churches (such as Bath Abbey in the Diocese of Bath and Wells), ‘minster churches’ (such as Stoke Minster in Lichfield Diocese) or the grand civic churches in the counties

(such as Bury, Bolton and Rochdale in Manchester Diocese). They potentially compete as venues for diocesan, civic and cultural events, for heritage funding and for the attention of the bishop(s). Where these churches and the cathedral work in partnership it has the potential of extending the reach of the Church of England.

Relations between Deans and Bishops

- 140 In carrying out the six organisational case studies, we were keen to explore the experience of *'cathedral-in-diocese'*. We interviewed a number of those representing the diocese, typically including other senior clergy, the diocesan secretary, other diocesan clergy and other diocesan officers (such as the Director of Education) who were involved in joint projects with the cathedral. We also interviewed the dean and diocesan bishop separately about how they saw the cathedral as contributing to the life and mission of the diocese and their experience of working together.
- 141 From our analysis of the evidence, we were able to identify a continuum between three different positions:
- 141.1 Relationships in which diocese and cathedral were 'overlaid' and 'intertwined' enabling them to be effective in responding together to the unresolved issues of the community, but also with the anxiety that something was lost by the cathedral not being 'more separate'.
- 141.2 Relationships in which the basic sense of the purpose of the diocese and of the cathedral were aligned without being identical. The approaches of the two church systems tended to complement each other and bishop and dean avoided duplication of effort.
- 141.3 Relationships in which the understanding of the mission of the diocese and cathedral do not align (indeed, may be divergent), either in terms of goal or the mission strategy which will achieve it.
- 142 Each of these positions makes particular demands on the dean and bishop and has its particular potential 'fault lines' where (as in all human organisations) there is a potential for misunderstanding, mutual irritations and difficult working relationships. In each cathedral we found a strong mutual desire to have good working relationships, and concern and sadness where tensions were emerging.
- 143 It is all too easy to treat such 'difficulties' as being all about personality conflicts. We wish to offer an alternative reading. We have already argued that part of the work of cathedrals, on behalf of the wider church, is to hold and transform society's unresolved conflicts. It is predictable that the unresolved contradictions 'leak' into

the working relationship of bishop and dean. If unrecognised, the relationship may become problematic. If understood, they can be used in creating a transformation. It is useful to consider an example from another sector.

- 143.1 Several years ago The Grubb Institute worked with a college of further education struggling to come to terms with the changing training needs of the industrial town in which it operated. On the face of it, the principal appeared to be on the side of the department heads (with entrenched fiefdoms and strong links to the older industries) who had little desire to change and a great deal of capacity to block it. The vice-principal seemed to be working subversively by supporting the enthusiasts amongst the staff in piloting new approaches, using his position to protect the experiments from the departmental heads. Despite appearances, the principal and vice-principal were in complete agreement about the need for change. Their perceived public positions enabled them to work with people with opposing views and create the space in which new approaches could demonstrate their value to students and employers. The risk was that if they themselves got caught up in the public perceptions, the college would become involved in internal conflict, losing sight of its purpose.
- 143.2 The parallels with the Church of England seeking to work out its calling in a 21st century context of changing attitudes to religion and spirituality are fairly obvious. Bishops and deans are also seeking to hold together both the enthusiasts for new ways of being church and those who passionately believe in the rightness of tradition. The difference is that they are doing so as leaders of two separate but linked organisational units of the Church of England – the diocese and the cathedral.
- 144 The implication is that not all organisational tensions are necessarily avoidable or a sign of human contrariness. The bishop-dean 'role pair' is potentially a mechanism for holding and processing the contradictions in the community. For example, it may be extremely helpful for the Church if one of the pair is seen as engaging the 'great and the good' whilst the other is identified with the 'disadvantaged and dispossessed'. It can be a *creative tension*, provided both understand why it is necessary. What were experienced as distractions can be recognised as indicators of the real 'work' that needs to be addressed.
- 145 There was some recognition of the importance of such differences in the comment by one bishop who valued the presence of the dean in his staff meeting, "because *he can offer me a voice which at times can be uncomfortable, but is necessary* because he is not involved in the day to day life of the diocese. This is a great gift". But he also noted that this depends on both the knowledge and wisdom of the dean and whether the bishop can bear the challenge.

- 146 The capacity to live with these contradictions can be affected by several factors. One bishop suggested in conversation that the extent to which the working relationship between bishop and dean is productive is likely to be increased by:
- 146.1 The degree of alignment around mission between cathedral and diocese (see above, 141.2).
- 146.2 The extent to which the bishop 'gets cathedrals' and what they are about, and feels comfortable in worshipping in the cathedral – as a worshipper not just in leading worship.
- 146.3 The cathedral understanding that part of its role is to support the bishop in his work. This is its gift to the diocese.
- 147 But even where these factors are absent, the challenge remains the same: how do the bishop and dean work together in this place and time to serve God? The early Church needed both Peter and Paul, despite their frequent disagreements.

Chapter 4 References

1. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches this is a symbol of the bishop's authority. This is much less clear in the modern Church of England.
2. This provision was to some extent designed to address and avoid the sort of difficulties which had arisen in Lincoln Cathedral in the 1990s and attracted adverse publicity.
3. We recognise that jointly funded roles could be interpreted this way, but the indications are that they are usually seen as mutually beneficial by both organisations, although demanding for the individuals concerned.

Appreciating Spiritual Capital

- 148 Cathedrals are large, complex, multifaceted institutions, each shaped by its unique history and context. To generalise too readily or to attempt to fit every one into a one-size-fits-all shape would be a mistake. Each cathedral is different and needs to be recognised and respected as such.
- 149 That recognised, a number of key themes recurred throughout the research project, each of which has the potential to enable cathedrals (and those who run and work in them), "to understand better the function they fulfil in society", and "equip them to identify and respond faithfully and fruitfully to mission opportunities".

Connecting People

- 150 These themes touch on diverse issues but cluster under the core idea of "**connecting people**", which encapsulates the current contribution and future potential for English cathedrals in contemporary society. This is unpacked below.
- 151 **Connecting people – with the sacred** Although fewer people know and believe the Christian story than once was the case, there has been no commensurate decline in spiritual interest, engagement or, in many cases, belief among the English population. People still tend to believe but not belong, to quote Grace Davie's famous formulation.¹ They exhibit what we have called 'emergent spiritualities'.
- 152 This presents the Church with obvious opportunities but also less obvious challenges. Because the Church, in particular the established Church, has long been (understood as) an institution with clear and confirmed views on spiritual issues, it does not naturally inhabit the more liminal spiritual space that ever more people are occupying.
- 153 While not necessarily unique in their position, cathedrals are an important exception to this – clearly and distinctly perceived as Christian, and as institutions, but at the same time understood as **open spaces of spiritual possibility** in which exploration and development of emergent spiritualities are made possible.

- 154 Responding to this is made complex, however, by the intentionally anonymous and rootless nature of many of the spiritualities that come into the cathedral's orbit.
- 155 Many people feel as open and responsive as they do, both within and to cathedrals, precisely because they won't (and don't want to) be pinned down to a certain set of beliefs or commitments.
- 156 However, people do go to a cathedral with the expectation that it will speak to, inform and inspire their sense of the spiritual. They know that cathedrals are ancient places of prayer and worship and are looking for more than just empty, anonymous space.
- 157 This is one of the tensions that cathedrals hold. For a cathedral to try prematurely to impose a particular spirituality on many people who find themselves there, is at best, risky and, at worst, self-defeating, having the potential to undermine the very thing that attracts people in the first place.
- 158 This does not mean that serious, Christian engagement with visitors is not possible. On the contrary, this research identified numerous examples in which cathedrals and the people who work in them had successfully got alongside, supported and established meaningful relationships with people in various states of spiritual need.
- 159 What it does mean is that cathedrals should be sensitive to the fact that the Holy Spirit is at work, and that it is the role of Christians to attend, respect and respond to His work. Jesus told Nicodemus that "the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3.8) This seems particularly appropriate to the manner in which different people with different spiritualities are clearly touched and moved in different ways by different cathedrals.
- 160 The primary response to this opportunity is to ensure, as many cathedrals do, that staff, volunteers, guides and others who come into contact with the general public are as well trained and sensitive as possible when it comes to recognising and respecting the different spiritual needs and concerns of people whom they meet.
- 161 While we do recognise that this may need backing up by activities such as courses teaching Christian spiritual disciplines, or links with evangelistic programmes at particular parish churches, such structural responses are not a substitute for this particular missional calling, that of "finding out what God is doing and joining in".
- 162 **Connecting people – with tradition and history** The research for this project makes it clear that people in their millions instinctively understand the manner in which cathedrals embody and preserve local (and national) culture and history.

- 163 In our post-industrial society, in which traditional community identities based on particular industries have been lost, the 'heritage industry' has flourished and there has been an increasing interest in family history. It seems to us that this represents a desire for connectedness to roots and continuity for both communities and individuals as identities are reinvented and taken up. As buildings and organisations with long histories which have (in some cases) survived the Norman Conquest, the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries, and Oliver Cromwell, not to mention countless reorganisations of diocesan and political boundaries, it is hardly surprising that cathedrals have become significant tourist destinations. (They are also often significant repositories of family records.) They have taken the opportunity to welcome visitors, to offer hospitality and unfold the meaning of the history, and also to generate income.
- 164 There are opportunity costs in becoming tourist destinations, both in keeping such large and ancient buildings open most days of the year and ensuring that the Benedictine tradition of welcome finds its modern expression in the response to visitors. We have noted the dilemmas around charging visitors, which arouses strong feelings both within and between cathedrals. On the one hand, there is the economic logic of ensuring that visitors contribute to the cost of opening cathedrals, given their willingness to pay for visiting other heritage attractions. But on the other, there is a concern that where you charge, you risk mobilising a consumer frame of mind in the visitor, thereby prompting the individual to understand themselves as a tourist rather than a spiritual visitor.
- 165 There is no obvious or easy way in which anyone can resolve this dilemma. What is clear from the research, however, is that a significant proportion of people are open not only to the historic and aesthetic qualities of cathedrals, but also to their spiritual dimension. The challenge is to provide both a high-quality tourist experience and to optimise the potential for people discovering that it is also a place of spiritual pilgrimage.
- 166 **Connecting people – with each other** Cathedrals' ability to establish and preserve relationships between different groups within and beyond the community – what is called 'bridging social capital' – is particularly important to a society that both celebrates diversity and yet remains deeply concerned about social cohesion and the state of civil society.
- 167 Cathedrals' ability to function in this way is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that **they are clearly understood as Christian institutions**. Given one of the popular narratives of our society – that for a body successfully to serve the public good it must not have any 'narrow' or confessional identity that might alienate people – cathedrals' success is relevant and important. **Cathedrals show that it is perfectly possible to serve the common good from a particular, confessional position.**

- 168 This project has cited a number of examples in which cathedrals were valuable resources of 'bridging social capital'. Given the recent political emphasis on the Big Society, cathedrals are well placed to respond, not least as one of the few institutions that can host and facilitate such activity, as well as participate in it. In some instances, such as when the cathedral has served as a place of reconciliation for anti-racist and hate crimes, as was mentioned in a number of case studies, this places the cathedral at the sharp end of the problems of civil society. In others, most notably St Paul's Cathedral in 2011, this role has been played out in the glare of national publicity.
- 169 In addition to this, cathedrals have a unique ability to bring together members of the community in response to local distress, 'choreographing' such occasions (a number of which have been mentioned in this report) in such a way that adds dignity, gravity and meaning to an event that may otherwise threaten to destroy a community's self-understanding. Indeed, we found evidence that cathedrals can become important symbols of community identity, of wholeness amidst diversity, offering a form of 'bonding' as well as 'bridging' social capital!
- 170 That recognised, this role of connecting people with one another is not straightforward and demands careful attention. The gospel has its own understanding of the common good, of human failings and of the resulting imperatives for action among those who would be Christ's disciples. Cathedrals, like the wider Church, face dilemmas in:
- 170.1 Standing alongside "the poor, the crippled, the lame, [and] the blind" (Luke 14:13) whilst at the same time being invited to the banquet as part of the 'establishment' and seeking to influence it for the common good. Often the presence of the cathedral is noted (with approval or disapproval), but the work for the common good is not, because 'it is under the radar'.
- 170.2 Balancing the risks of being challenging with its interests in securing funds, promoting the cathedral and continuing to have a place 'at the table' where the decisions which will shape the community are being made.
- 170.3 Balancing the 'prophetic' role of challenging and disturbing those attitudes and structures that have become lazy or self-seeking, with the pastoral and priestly roles of enabling the community to rejoice and mourn, to find forgiveness and reconciliation and a renewed sense of wholeness.
- 170.4 Seeking to be receptive and hospitable to all, irrespective of their beliefs and commitments, whilst being true to Christian identity, faith and purpose, and of people's expectations of what this will be.
- 171 What has become apparent from the case studies is that cathedrals are often in touch with the unresolved issues and dilemmas within their communities.

- They have a potentially important role in **holding these ambiguities, living with the contradictions**, so that new ways forward can emerge. The Archbishop of Canterbury has commented on the tendency of society to use the Church in this way.² Because of their public prominence and symbolic significance, it seems to us that cathedrals have an important role in handling this for the Church as a whole.
- 172 **Connecting people– within the diocese** In this research we have explored the relation between cathedrals and their dioceses. The evidence suggests that cathedrals can function as the 'mother church', the gathering point for the people of the diocese, but that this cannot be taken for granted. There is a genuine desire from both cathedral and diocese to have good relationships, but it is also clear that this can prove difficult in practice. What happens can be affected by where the cathedral is in the diocese, by how far their mission strategies are aligned and whether they find themselves mirroring the ambiguities in city and county.
- 173 When you explore the nature of the points of friction between cathedral and diocese, it becomes apparent that they reflect some of the dilemmas of the Church as a whole.
- 173.1 The relative attractiveness of traditional styles of worship and of 'being church' over against more contemporary expressions.
- 173.2 Different approaches to mission and ecclesiology.
- 173.3 What are the desirable, and affordable, forms of ministry? What mix of ordained and lay, stipendiary and non-stipendiary will be both possible and fit for purpose? Whom is God calling – or not calling?
- 173.4 A question about the sustainability and future of parish churches and whether these will be complemented or superseded by 'minsters',³ or other forms of 'church'.
- 173.5 The general confusion about the current structural relation of cathedral and diocese.
- 174 All these tensions have a potential to become polarised between diocese and cathedral, between dean and bishop. To the extent that these tensions can be understood as systemic, as issues for the Church as a whole, there is the potential for a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship.

From Connecting People to Spiritual Capital

- 175 The idea of 'capital', originally referring to accumulated financial resources that can be invested, has long been deployed in fields beyond the financial. The example of 'social capital', both in its 'bonding' and 'bridging' kinds, has been cited throughout

this report. Our contention is that cathedrals' ability to connect people – to God, to one another, to their history and tradition – is a form of spiritual capital.

- 176 Cathedrals' ability to encourage, establish, nurture and protect the kind of connections discussed above, presents a crucial contribution to human wellbeing and the common good. By recognising and guiding emergent spiritualities; by bringing together different groups from across an area; by receiving and welcoming the whole community on special occasions; by choreographing and adding dignity and solemnity to moments of grief or celebration; by embodying the very identity and tradition of a city and locality – by doing all these things and more, cathedrals offer a unique resource for contemporary England.
- 177 It is vital to emphasise that these activities, not to mention the 'ordinary' patterns of worship, of spiritual discipline and the various support and pastoral networks that are organised and run by cathedrals, which between them comprise their 'spiritual capital', find their origin and purpose in the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than any contemporary political or social programme. They have their own logic (and often language), based on generosity and grace, hospitality and holiness, worship, love and sacrifice.
- 178 Maintaining this focus invariably creates tension and strains for cathedrals and their staff as they operate in a world which often has very different agendas. This, however, is merely a version of the tension that Christians and the Church have experienced down the ages, and does not alter the fact that cathedrals offer to society a 'spiritual capital' that is not only badly needed but also much appreciated.

The Leadership Challenges

- 179 Whilst other churches undoubtedly contribute to developing connectedness, what seems to be unique in cathedrals is that all these dimensions of connectedness are typically woven together. This is both the greatest opportunity for a cathedral's leadership team – and a potential source of stress.
- 180 Each dean, together with all the members of chapter, is faced with leading and managing a complex, multi-faceted organisation with diverse expectations and demands. It is all too easy for them to become caught up in the business of running a large historic building, a busy place of worship and tourist destination and the constant need to find funding, and to lose sight of opportunities to contribute to developing community wellbeing and supporting the mission of the diocese. Given the finite nature of the resources available, it is amazing that the cathedrals in this study achieve what they do.
- 181 But good management and administration will never be enough. This report raises the question of how deans and chapters can offer **leadership in building**

connections. Whilst the working out of this relationship will depend on the particulars of the cathedral, it is possible to suggest some general principles.


- 181.1 Continue the on-going work of reflecting together on the nature of this cathedral's **spiritual capital** and how it can be put to work.
- 181.2 Maintain alertness to the specific and changing zeitgeist of its community and in particular the **unresolved ambiguities.**
- We have argued that it is the capacity to understand how these are affecting the life and relationships of the cathedral and to live with the contradictions which is critical. This is what enables cathedrals' ability to help the community at points of tragedy and to know where social action and engagement is being called forth.
- 181.3 Explore how to make connections with those groups in the community that may be less familiar with the cathedral and less likely to come into its orbit.
- Cathedrals tend to do this well with regard to younger people. However, the research suggests that they may need to take a particular initiative in forging relationships with other groups, such as those at lower socio-economic grades or people working in local businesses, especially when there are no other city churches engaging with them.
- 181.4 Articulate clearly its understanding of its **distinctive role as a cathedral** and maintain dialogue with the diocese about how this contributes to and complements the diocese's understanding of its own mission.
- 181.5 Explore how the cathedral can best **resource and support the bishop** so that he is strengthened and spiritually upheld and nurtured in his ministry.
- 182 We are clear from the study that this ministry of holding the community's ambiguities and the internal contradictions they trigger is costly. It will only be sustained if it is deeply rooted in the cathedral community's rhythm of prayer and worship.

Conclusion: The Significance of Cathedrals

- 183 The present and future of English cathedrals lies particularly in their ability to enable and sustain a range of connections – between the tourist and the pilgrim; between people and the traditions from which modern life cuts them off; between the diverse organisations and communities that share the same social and physical space and infrastructure yet never meet; and between a people who may be less Christian than their parents but are no less spiritual, and the God who made, sustains, loves and hopes for them to join Him at His table.
- 184 The research conducted for this project suggests that this is precisely what cathedrals do. We believe that they are and will remain key institutions to deliver this 'spiritual capital', and it is our hope that this report will enable them to understand better this role and respond faithfully and fruitfully to the opportunities it presents them with.

Chapter 5 References

1. Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, John Wiley & Sons, 1994.
2. Archbishop Rowan Williams, 'Time for us to challenge the idols of high finance', *Financial Times*, 1 November 2011.
3. This research on cathedrals raises important questions for those setting up 'minsters'. For an exploration of the history and possibilities of this form of church see Nick Spencer, *Parochial Vision, The Future of the English Parish*, Paternoster, 2004.




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Spiritual Capital

The Present and Future of English Cathedrals

Church of England cathedrals have a unique and widely admired position within English society. Praised for their architectural magnificence, aesthetic appeal and historical significance, this report shows that their impact on and significance for English life extends far beyond their role as tourist destinations.

Based on an extensive and detailed research programme carried out by The Grubb Institute and Theos over 2011–12, *Spiritual Capital* looks at cathedrals in contemporary England, assessing the breadth, depth and nature of their activity and appeal, with the objective of helping those who run and work in them to understand and respond better to the challenges of the 21st century.

Visited and enjoyed by millions, research shows that cathedrals are also uniquely able to reach beyond boundaries, to communicate a sense of the sacred, and to enable and sustain a range of connections – between the tourist and the pilgrim;

between people and the traditions from which modern life cuts them off and between the diverse organisations and communities that share the same social and physical space and infrastructure yet rarely meet.

At the same time, cathedrals are recognised as *Christian* institutions. As such, they have their own distinct logic – of generosity and grace, of hospitality and holiness – on which they draw in order to serve their communities, and live out the message of Jesus Christ. Rather than alienate people who are not Christians, however, this authentic Christianity is widely respected and appreciated.

Spiritual Capital shows how cathedrals stand at the heart of contemporary English life – geographically, socially, civically and spiritually – and hopes to help those connected with them to identify and respond faithfully and fruitfully to the opportunities of a new century.

