

Rochester Cathedral 2006-2012 A Forward Plan



Nurturing the Radical Hope
of Human Flourishing
in Jesus Christ

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Executive Summary

Cathedrals are experiencing a mini-renaissance in recent years, and currently represent the fastest growing sector in the Church of England. Attendance at regular services of worship have increased by 21% since the year 2000, and despite the global impact of 9/11 on visitor numbers, they still attract between 9 and 12 million people each year. Books on cathedral ministry are in the news again, and independent reports are highlighting the economic and social significance of cathedrals. Post-modernity has restored a link between spirituality and ‘place’, offering new opportunities for cathedrals to engage with mission in contemporary society.

A new vision for Rochester Cathedral has to be viewed against this broader contextual background. Our significant and long-standing problems need not define our future. Problems can be turned into opportunities in these more optimistic days for cathedrals.

The problems are easy to identify: we are the poorest cathedral in the South East of England and we have a very weak financial base. We are responsible for a property portfolio that has become increasingly dilapidated. There are major building costs to meet. The cathedral is poorly interpreted. And relationships with the Diocese and the wider community have not been strong.

However, over the past few years a new mood of optimism has been in the air. Difficult nettles are being grasped, congregations are growing, relationships are improving, and a new confidence is emerging. The time is now right to step back and cast a fresh vision for the cathedral’s next steps.

Part of this vision is to do with a guiding metaphor, a grand narrative that will frame the detail of a forward plan. We propose a new mission statement for the cathedral: **Nurturing the radical hope of human flourishing in Jesus Christ**. This offers a thoroughly Christian, yet very holistic, approach to our mission, and sets it within the broader context of the contemporary quest for human flourishing.

We have identified a series of aims that flow from this mission statement:

1. Grow a thriving worshipping community.
It is by no means clear who represents the core community of a cathedral. Is it the Dean & Chapter? The Cathedral Foundation? The congregation? The staff and volunteers? Our contention is that the worshipping community is the spiritual heartbeat of the Cathedral, and needs to be built up in every way possible.
2. Support Episcopal mission and ministry
We get our name from the ‘cathedra’ or chair of the Bishop. This provides us with a clear mandate to support the Bishop’s ministry in the Diocese as teacher of the faith, leader in mission, and source of unity.
3. Liberate the building to mediate the Gospel
Cathedrals are the one remaining part of the Church of England where members of the general population continue to come to us in large numbers – in Rochester’s case, 150,000 each year. This offers us great opportunities to allow the building to tell the Christian story and to engage with visitors through the creative use of interpretation.

4. Extend educational opportunities for all ages
Nearly 18,000 young people make a structured school visit to Rochester Cathedral each year. Schools, colleges and universities come to us for services and graduation ceremonies. Opportunities to develop our educational work abound, but the supporting facilities require urgent attention to become fit for purpose.
5. Engage with our local and regional community
Rochester Cathedral sits in a wider community that is on the cusp of huge changes. The Thames Gateway development will affect the Diocese, Medway and Rochester in a major way for decades to come. As the only cathedral physically sited in the Gateway, we need to gear ourselves up to embrace the opportunities and responsibilities this provides.
6. Promote the Arts within mission
The dividing line between Art and Spirituality is wafer thin. Art has the ability to inform, nourish, engender and challenge faith, and resonates powerfully with the hope of human flourishing. The cathedral is in a unique position to use art to establish creative connections with people exploring the meaning of human existence.
7. Manage resources efficiently
Sound resource management is a vital component of any strategy for mission. The weight of resource constraints in cathedrals is a powerful inhibitor to becoming outward-looking and engaged with the needs of those 'on the outside'. Only by effectively tackling resource constraints can we release the energy of the cathedral in the right direction.

The document that follows is ambitious and aspirational. A Business Plan is being developed behind this document to demonstrate how it can be achieved. We offer it to all who have a stake in the development of Rochester Cathedral and long to see it thrive.

The Dean & Chapter

Very Revd Adrian Newman

Canon Ralph Godsall

Canon Philip Hesketh

Canon Jean Kerr

Venerable Peter Lock

Professor Vaughan Grylls

Ms Catherine Staziker

Introduction

At the start of the 21st century, a strange phenomenon is appearing on the Church of England radar. Cathedrals are experiencing a renaissance. After years of decline, banished to the far reaches of mainstream church culture, the tide has turned for the 42 UK cathedrals.

Attendance at regular services of worship has increased by 21% since the turn of the Millennium – making cathedrals the fastest growing sector in the Church of England. An average of 31,500 people worship regularly in cathedrals across the United Kingdom each week, and between nine and twelve million people visit them each year. 362,000 school children visit cathedrals each year, and there are 13,000 volunteers in cathedral life across the whole of the UK.

An ‘Ecotec’ study for English Heritage in 2004 demonstrated that Cathedrals inject over £150million into the UK economy each year through their impact on local economies, and all cathedrals report a significant increase in requests for special services and secular events. Books on cathedral ministry are being published for the 1st time in many years, as post-modernity restores the link between spirituality and ‘place’, and people rediscover a role in mission for sacred space.

Since the introduction of the new Cathedrals Measure in 1999/2000, cathedrals are far more transparent and accountable than they have ever been. Despite the tendency to introspection produced by the weight of vast and seemingly intractable resource issues, there appears to be a resurgent spirit abroad among the UK cathedrals, and a recognition of the increasingly important role they can play in the life of Church and society, at the cutting edge of mission in a post-modern world.

This resurgence is reflected at Rochester. Despite the need to address significant, long-standing problems - major building costs, dilapidated property, a weak financial base, unsustainable music costs, and poor interpretation - there is a new optimism in the air. Difficult nettles are being grasped, relationships with the wider community and the diocese are starting to flourish, congregations are healthy, the cathedral diary is bursting at the seams, the schools' work is thriving, and new initiatives abound.

The Archbishop of Canterbury recently said that mission is “*seeing what God is doing, and joining in*”. This is the idea of ‘missio dei’, the notion that God is ahead of us, actively involved in the world he made and loves, and our task is to join in with what he is already doing.

The renaissance of cathedral life demonstrates that we are well placed to do this. The time is right for Rochester to reflect on God’s calling, to discern what God is doing in and around us, and to seize the opportunity to join in. So this paper is the Chapter’s attempt to articulate a fresh vision and strategy for the next period in our history. We offer it to all who long, like us, to see Rochester Cathedral radically engaged in mission and making a telling contribution to the lives of people in our neck of the woods.

A Mission Statement

Every vision needs a guiding metaphor, a grand narrative that will frame the detail of a forward plan – ideally captured in a mission statement that is simple, clear and commands allegiance.

The Cathedral's current mission statement is this:

"To witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ in its art and architecture, its liturgy and music, its welcoming openness to pilgrims, visitors and its local communities and, in particular, to serve the Bishop and Diocese of Rochester".

It is an adequate description of the Cathedral's role but it does not exactly set the pulse racing, nor capture much of the passion at the heart of the Christian vision for a renewed humanity. Hans Kung once said: *"Why should one become a Christian? In order to be truly human"*. This is a neglected theological dynamic but it opens up some interesting possibilities in the context of the Cathedral's mission.

Cathedrals offer what Richard Rogers has described as open-minded space. That is to say they are places which can foster a shared public life and enhance community. Their open-minded space welcomes people who may be at very different stages on the journey of faith but who are equally working on the human project and want to foster, in the words of a lovely phrase, the wild hope of human flourishing.

This is a rich theological seam to mine in the context of a cathedral. It has its origins in the words of Jesus when he said that he had come to bring life in all its fullness. It is a notion perhaps most beautifully expressed by Irenaeus when he said that the glory of God is a human being fully alive.

Wherever you dig within scripture the same idea emerges. Shalom (wholeness), fullness, maturity. A vision for the Cathedral that connects with this idea of human flourishing would allow for open-minded space without losing the distinctiveness of Christian faith. It would create a practical framework within which to enter into partnership with those around us who long - from whatever perspective - for a renewed humanity.

It offers a framework for an integrated and holistic approach to the multi-faceted life of a cathedral. It draws together the radical, social-justice dimension of Christianity, with the contemporary search for spirituality. It integrates the corporate and individual aspects of faith. It is to do with grace and works, worship and work. It links externals with internals. It connects with internal pastoral life and with the external missionary task.

So we propose a new mission statement for Rochester Cathedral as a Christ-centred, outward-facing community, fully-engaged with the real concerns of contemporary life:

Nurturing the radical hope of human flourishing in Jesus Christ

This sort of vision will interest many who stand a little apart. Those who find the church boring, corrupt, silly or stifling. Those who may feel rather embarrassed by religion, yet care deeply about the questions it engages with.

Summary of Aims

The mission statement offers a thoroughly Christian, yet very holistic approach to our mission, setting it within the broader context of the contemporary quest for human flourishing. But like all one-liners, it needs to be understood, explained, owned and developed as it expands into a series of aims. These aims can grow, adapt and change over the course of time.

The Cathedral would nurture the radical hope of human flourishing in Jesus Christ by

1. Growing a thriving worshipping community
2. Supporting Episcopal mission and ministry in the diocese.
3. Liberating the building to better mediate the Gospel.
4. Extending educational opportunities for children and adults.
5. Engaging with our local and regional community.
6. Promoting the Arts within mission
7. The efficient management of resources.

Each of these aims is explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

Aim 1 - Grow a thriving worshipping community

Ancient cathedrals can function as sacred places without the presence of a worshipping community. The significance of glorious ruins such as Tintern Abbey or Fountains Abbey is testimony to this, but the mysterious sacrament of the building is made infinitely more powerful when it is reinforced by the heartbeat of a worshipping people.

It is all too easy for a cathedral's mission and ministry to become strangely disconnected from its worshipping congregation. Deans and Chapters can easily collude with the idea that Sunday congregations exist to provide some background scenery for worship and a valuable source of voluntary help for the more menial or mundane tasks of cathedral life, while the real ministry happens from Monday to Saturday.

Historically, there has been little provision for the involvement of lay people in the life of a cathedral, outside of the music. Even under the new Statutes, lay people are largely observers of a cathedral's ministry. While this has some attractions for those who value the anonymity the cathedral affords, it continues to make it difficult to answer the question: What does it mean to belong to a Cathedral?

Equally, it is by no means clear who represents the core community within a cathedral. Is it the Dean & Chapter? Is it the Bishop's 'familia'? Is it the Cathedral Foundation? Is it the congregation(s)? Is it the staff and volunteers? This question is important because the core community will be those who help to shape, define and agree the values that underpin the life of the cathedral and by which the community want to live and be known.

So an initial piece of work may need to consider the nature of the core community, and to explore the values that will lie at the heart of delivering the vision embodied in this document. But it remains our contention that a vibrant worshipping community is central to whatever emerges at Rochester Cathedral for the future.

Objective 1.1 - Build up the body of Christ

We are determined to develop spiritually healthy and dynamic congregations. Just as the cathedral building engages with the post-modern desire for particularity (the significance of place), so this is reflected, almost symbolised, by the reality of a worshipping community which can root people in a past, make sense of their present and sustain them in hope for the future. The building satisfies a desire for rootedness. The community satisfies a desire for belonging.

Building up the cathedral community as the body of Christ, therefore, becomes a task of great importance. This will involve the creative use of liturgy and music (see further below), ensuring that preaching is earthed and relevant, encouraging the development of vocations for lay ministry and training, providing appropriate structures of pastoral care, affirming the place of children and young people within the Eucharistic family, and developing wide ranging opportunities for Christian discipleship and learning.

Objective 1.2 - Develop creative and appropriate expressions of liturgy and music

The creative use of liturgy and music lies at the heart of building up a worshipping community, but the cathedral is expected to offer liturgy and music that is appropriate to an enormous range of different settings - from grand Civic occasions to small community events, from major diocesan services to visiting pilgrimages, from a regular Sunday Eucharist to a recorded Evensong for television or radio. And much more besides.

Within this extraordinary range of responsibilities and opportunities it is not possible to have a "one size fits all" approach. However, given the aspiration to grow a thriving worshipping community at the heart of cathedral's life, one of the primary considerations for liturgy and music must be the main Sunday eucharist.

This will involve far more than developing a house-style for eucharistic worship. It will also take account of contemporary trends and the need for the cathedral community to be accessible to outsiders who, increasingly, have no church background to inform their understanding of liturgy and faith.

The Chapter has recently commissioned Ralph Godsall to conduct a review of liturgy and music in order to consider appropriate, imaginative and affordable developments. Recommendations from this review will inform future plans.

Beyond the primary consideration of the Eucharistic community, cathedrals have embraced patterns and rhythms of daily prayer from the earliest of times. These were distinctively different from monastic traditions in that they:

- a reflected the rhythm of a working person's day (Daybreak and Dusk)
- b were of a public, rather than a private, nature.

The daily pattern of Matins and Evensong in cathedral life continues to reflect these twin emphases, offering prayer that is specifically open, accessible and responsive to the concerns of public life. Sung Evensong no longer sits easily with an understanding of worship which is based largely on a participative, gathered model. For the most part, even among the ministers themselves, it is an act of passive participation.

However, the aspiration of the Daily Offices in cathedral life is to root prayer as much in a sacred place as among a holy people – a shift in emphasis which has an increasingly contemporary feel to it. Our task may not therefore be to try to invoke a more contemporary and participative expression of sung Evensong, but to reconnect it to public life.

Aim 2 - Support Episcopal Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

Cathedrals are not simply large churches. They are the "Cathedra" or chair of the bishop within a diocese. This gives them a particular meaning and a series of distinct purposes, clustering around the role of the bishop as teacher of the faith, leader in mission, and source of unity.

In 2002 the Bishop of Rochester conducted a Visitation of the Cathedral and produced a set of 'directions' to inform the future development of the cathedral. In summary, these were:

- To ensure that the cathedral was accessible, welcoming and friendly to outsiders
- To develop a focus for mission
- To develop community engagement and social responsibility
- To attend to the pastoral and spiritual development of the congregation
- To develop liturgically
- To sustain traditional music while developing contemporary forms at the same time
- To maintain and expand the schools programme
- To become a theological resource to the Diocese and appoint a Canon Theologian
- To develop links with the World Church
- To strengthen management structures
- To manage the property portfolio effectively
- To develop sound financial and human resource systems

Over the past few years the Dean & Chapter have made great strides towards meeting the aspirations of the Bishop's directions, in order to fulfil the Bishop's desire for the cathedral to live up to the vision in the Cathedrals Measure that we should be 'a centre for worship and mission'.

In order to spearhead worship, mission and unity within the Diocese as part of our 'cathedra' role, we can set a number of specific objectives.

Objective 2.1 - Prioritise major diocesan celebrations, services and events in the Cathedral diary.

This almost goes without saying. As relationships improve between the Cathedral and the Diocese we find ourselves receiving an increasing number of requests for events or services that highlight particular aspects of diocesan life. It will remain important to respond positively to as many of these as we can because the cathedral provides an important focus of unity at such times.

Objective 2.2 - Release Cathedral Clergy to facilitate work among parishes, deaneries, clergy and diocesan committees

The support given by the Cathedral clergy to the life of the diocese is extensive, and a vital aspect of the Cathedra dimension to cathedral life:

- Through preaching and speaking engagements
- By leading workshops and seminars
- As chairs or members of diocesan committees and boards
- By providing spiritual direction and mentoring to individual clergy
- Through offering work consultancy to clergy or parishes
- By leading services and covering clergy absences
- Through leading Retreats, Quiet Days and Parish Weekends
- By taking significant responsibility within Diocesan Conferences
- By contributing to policy formation at Bishop's Staff and the Bishop's Council
- Alongside this we assume a range of national responsibilities in the wider church
- Recently, we have begun to explore the potential for inviting parish or deanery groups in for a led Cathedral Pilgrimage.

Objective 2.3 - Improve communication between the Cathedral and the parishes in the diocese

Given the position of the Cathedral on the geographical edge of the diocese, it is vital to work hard at establishing good lines of communication with the parishes. Some of this is done through the work outlined in Objectives 2.1 and 2.2, but it also requires identifying those who can exercise an ambassadorial function in representing the Cathedral to the parishes and vice versa.

The College of Canons has an important role in this respect but they are, necessarily, limited to particular parishes. There is, therefore, a need to reactivate the notion of cathedral proctors, individuals nominated by their parishes as a direct two-way link between a parish and the Cathedral. It may also be worth considering the potential for a quarterly Cathedral Newsletter to be distributed around the diocese.

Objective 2.4 - Support the bishop and diocese in prayer

Every day the Cathedral prays for the bishop and for a specific parish or diocesan group as set out in the Diocesan Intercession List. We always invite individual parishes to Evensong on the day we pray for them or ask them to send us prayer requests if they cannot be there in person. It remains fundamentally important for the Cathedral to place prayer for the diocese at the centre of our daily worship, but we could make this a two-way process by issuing a Cathedral prayer card to parishes from time to time. There is an opportunity to involve a committed lay person to act as a sort of Prayer Secretary to foster a 2-way exchange of information for prayer.

Aim 3 - Liberate the Cathedral building to better mediate the Gospel

Angela Tilby has written *"It is not surprising that even today cathedrals speak to our sense of the wholeness of things. The unity of creation and the place of emerging consciousness within nature. Their sheer scale relativises our individual lives and achievements. The depths of time displayed within them reminds us of our cosmic history. The cathedral viewed as a temple is not a roof and walls that simply enable people to worship, it is itself a place of revelation, the visit is the worship and though it requires staff to administer it and clergy to serve it, it is the building itself which actually mediates presence, strength, reconciliation and conservation"*. (*Flagships of the Spirit* p162).

Rochester Cathedral is a wonderful building, an icon for Medway, but it is severely hampered in its ability to mediate the values that underpin it. The limitations are obvious, even on a cursory visit.

- It is very poorly interpreted, from the quality of its external signage to its internal interpretation. Welcome and information facilities, explanatory materials, notice boards, interpretation panels - all are inadequate and detract from the experience of visiting the Cathedral. A great strength in this area is the quality and enthusiasm of the Cathedral guides, but they are not well supported by the limitations of the physical interpretation.
- disabled access does not comply with current regulations and urgently needs addressing.
- Extensive repair, conservation and maintenance work is necessary throughout the building totalling over £2million in value.
- It is a relatively small building as far as medieval cathedrals go, which means that there is often intensive competition for space when the building is busy. Careful and creative improvements are, therefore, necessary to preserve a sense of calm and yet support a programme that includes worship, education, performance, exhibition, pilgrimage, visits and retail.

Objective 3.1 - Interpret the Cathedral creatively.

If the renaissance discovered space, and modernity was preoccupied with time, then it seems to be true that post-modernity is drawing us back to a medieval emphasis on place.

This shift, like all cultural changes, has happened almost imperceptibly. It has taken some time for us to recognise that the de-coupling of science and spirituality has left us bereft, able to take things apart to understand them like never before, but desperately unable to know how to put them back together again in a way that conveys meaning and purpose.

It is no surprise therefore, that alienation and rootlessness are the dehumanising inheritance of the scientific age, and that people today are seeking fresh expressions of rootedness and belonging.

Post-modernity's spiritual search for our lost humanity moves us beyond our preoccupation with virtual reality and networks towards a recovery of a sense of place. This shift takes many forms. It would have been unthinkable twenty years ago but today you find the phrase "a sense of place" cropping up repeatedly in secular documents attempting to define flourishing communities. We are all familiar with the importance now being attached to community shrines - books of remembrance, roadside flowers, Princess Diana, the Queen Mother, and so on. Heritage has become the stuff of prime time TV. Home and garden DIY is the new growth industry.

Seamus Heaney, the Irish poet, likes to describe poetry as "*a momentary stay against confusion*". That is to say, a moment within a complex and confusing world which conveys a sense of order, pattern and meaning. A point at which, if you like, the clouds of confusion roll back and everything, if but for a fleeting moment, becomes clear.

Cathedrals can play a similar role in a post-modern world. They have an important contribution to make in offering a sacred place within their ancient and godly spaces where people can find clarity, meaning and purpose.

Susan Hill, quoting TS Elliott writes: "*Where else in the heart of a city is such a place where the sense of all past and present is distilled into the eternal moment 'at the still point of the turning world'*" (*Flagships of the Spirit*, page 13).

The point is this: cathedral buildings can be hugely significant in offering people a moment and a place of blinding clarity and revelation within their ordinary lives. This may well be unexpected and unsought, but it argues for us to pay serious and perhaps costly attention to the ways in which we interpret our cathedrals. We need to allow 'God's story' to come across in the 'history' of the building so that visitors might discover God crossing the path of their human pilgrimage as they walk round the building.

Creative interpretation not only imparts information, it engages the visitors with the reality of God and his presence in the world, in order that they might experience "*a movement from a mundane centre to a sacred periphery which suddenly, transiently becomes central for the individual*". (E & V Turner - *Images and Pilgrimage*, 1979).

This capacity for cathedral buildings to spark an unexpected revelation of the presence of God in a person's life needs to inform ideas about interpretation within the life of the Cathedral.

We currently attract 150,000 visitors each year, which represents an enormous opportunity to engage people with divine encounter. But this will require a careful and considered interpretation plan if it is to be achieved, along with an increase in the number of welcomers, guides and chaplains to underpin it.

Objective 3.2 - Improve Access to the Cathedral

Issues of accessibility to the Cathedral are not simply matters of practical expediency. They are to do with the kingdom value of "inclusion". Equality of opportunity is a profoundly Christian concept. If the building is to mediate the Gospel it needs to be accessible to people regardless of differences in physical, mental and emotional ability. Currently this is not the case.

As with most medieval buildings it is notoriously difficult and extremely expensive to adapt the Cathedral to allow disabled access to all areas, but we must do so as fully as we can. It will be important to include access to the Cathedral grounds, especially the Garth, as part of this.

Objective 3.3 - Address Quinquennial Repair and Conservation Work on the Cathedral.

Medieval cathedral buildings are voracious. They suck in vast amounts of time, energy and money. As the recent launch of English Heritage's 'Inspired' Campaign points out, the Church of England is expected, by default, to maintain over half of the listed buildings in the UK's Heritage Portfolio with almost no State support whatsoever.

The UK cathedrals are expected to find £18million each year simply for their general maintenance, with only £2million in grants currently made available.

This responsibility can hamstring a cathedral's ability to look beyond the confines of its own small world. It is, therefore, vital to find a way to address the long-standing work necessary on these amazing buildings in order to liberate the energy of a cathedral to fulfil its core missionary activity.

In Rochester's case, the latest Quinquennial Report completed in 2003 identified over £2million of necessary work. This is beyond the capacity of the Cathedral to address without a serious fund-raising campaign, but the aim should be to set the building in good order for the next twenty five years.

Objective 3.4 - Improve the Cathedral to be fit for purpose

In order to allow the Cathedral building to make a full contribution to human flourishing and mediate the Gospel, all manner of physical aspects need to be addressed:

- Adequate toilet provision
- Seating
- Lighting
- Sound reinforcement
- Best use of space for worship and liturgy
- Flexibility for performance
- Exhibitions, education and interpretation
- Storage
- Health and safety
- Welcome and information

These issues are to do with building capacity in order to meet higher aspirations, but they are also necessary to improve the flexibility of the building to cope with the demands of intensive usage, whilst still retaining the inherent power of the building itself to move people.

Aim 4 - Extend our Educational commitment to children and adults

Objective 4.1 - Maintain and develop work with visiting schools

The Cathedral's programme for visiting school children is one of its strengths. Nearly 18,000 young people come here each year to participate in a series of lessons and workshops run through the Cathedral's Education Department. Integrated with the various subjects in the National Curriculum, the educational work forms a discrete aspect of the interpretation of the cathedral and follows similar principles to those outlined in the interpretation section of this document – connecting the historic building with a living faith and community.

It is unlikely that a cathedral the size of Rochester has the physical capacity to increase the number of school children visiting each year, but there are other challenges to address:

- Maintaining numbers at a time of falling school roles
- Attracting a greater proportion of schools from Medway
- Increasing the number of trained volunteers involved with the work
- Developing and improving the material to keep up with changes in the curriculum
- Integrating the schools work more fully with other aspects of cathedral life

Objective 4.2 - Relocate the Education Department within a purpose-built facility

The current Education and Visits building does not do justice to the quality of the department's work and is not fit for purpose. It does not comply with regulations on disability access and has neither the size nor the flexibility necessary to deliver the education programme.

Appropriate space is needed for arrival and orientation, storage of bags and coats, lessons and workshops, lunch facilities, as well as for staff and volunteers. The present building could not be easily adapted, so we will need to explore the options of relocation, or new build.

The recently formed Rochester Heritage Interpretation Partnership – comprising the major historic asset holders within Rochester and chaired by the Cathedral – has commissioned a study for the location and initial design treatment of an interpretation centre. This centre may well offer the right sort of facility for the continuation of the Cathedral's educational work.

Objective 4.3 - Explore greater integration with the Diocesan Board for Education

The Diocesan Board for Education (DBE) has a far wider remit than the Cathedral's Education Department but there are substantial areas of overlap that could be creatively explored.

The Cathedral already hosts and helps to resource a number of diocesan events, and this partnership could be developed further. Obvious links exist with the Diocesan Youth Officer and Diocesan Children's Officer. Philip Hesketh's recent appointment to the DBE potentially strengthens the relationship between the two bodies.

Given the DBE's relocation out of Deanery Gate and into the newly refurbished Diocesan Offices, the opportunity for co-location of the Cathedral's Education Department and the DBE has been lost, but there may still be spatial needs that could be explored together.

Objective 4.4 - Enhance the creative partnership with King's School, Rochester

Links between the Cathedral and King's School Rochester extend back into antiquity. All Cathedral Residentiaries are governors at the School and the Dean is ex-officio Chair of governors. The School uses the Cathedral as its chapel and all the boy choristers and many of the girls are pupils at King's. The current Headmaster is a Lay Canon of the Cathedral, and the school chaplains are members of the Cathedral Foundation.

This natural and long-standing relationship offers many opportunities for creative engagement, from services and assemblies to Christian Union and class visits. The Cathedral also holds a special responsibility for the spiritual development of the boy and girl choristers, a significant group of young people who come under our pastoral care.

Objective 4.5 - Support neighbouring schools as governors

The Dean and Chapter are Foundation Governors at the Maths School, Rochester Grammar School, and Fort Pitt. Requests are often made for us to fill governorships at other schools but there is a limit to our capacity to respond. This is an area where Lay members of the Cathedral can make a significant contribution.

Objective 4.6 - Explore and report on the potential for developing adult learning

The Cathedral's internal engagement with formal adult learning is currently limited to preaching, occasional series of lectures and talks, one-off small group study sessions, guided tours of the Cathedral, and staff training. Outside the cathedral community Ralph Godsall is an Inspector of Theological Colleges and Courses, Jean Kerr's work involves a significant amount of adult education, and Phil Hesketh is involved in theological education in Rochester and Canterbury.

Given the commitment to improved interpretation, to growing a thriving Eucharistic community, to exploring a new Thames Gateway Observatory and the recent emergence of Cathedrals as Partners in Adult Learning (CPAL), much more attention needs to be focussed on the Cathedral's role in promoting the learning of adults.

Aim 5 - Engage Gospel values with our local and regional community

Objective 5.1 - Establish a Thames Gateway Observatory

"The greatest economic growth in the whole of Western Europe in the next 20 years will be in the Thames Gateway" (Dennis Turner, Chief Economist, HSBC Bank).

Between now and 2020, the eyes (and investment) of the world will be drawn to the Thames Gateway. This is perhaps the single most important contextual element we need to account for in planning the Cathedral's immediate future. There is only one cathedral physically located within the Gateway - Rochester. This fact alone suggests that a major part of our work over the next twenty years should be to engage with the challenges and opportunities of regeneration.

Work within the Thames Gateway will affect the lives of one and a half million people. The Rochester Diocese contains the largest swathe of planned new housing development in the Gateway. 22 of the 64 designated housing sites fall within the area covered by the Diocese. These developments, together with other planned private and public investment, are due to deliver approximately 50,000 new homes and 80,000 new jobs in North Kent over the next twenty years.

Already regeneration activity is underway at strategic sites including Dartford Town Centre and Northern Gateway, Gravesend Canal Basin, Ebbsfleet and Eastern Quarry, Northfleet Embankment, Rochester Riverside, Chattenden, Chatham, Strood, and Chatham Maritime.

It is increasingly recognised that the strategic gap within these massive regeneration plans is the need to engage local communities in the changes that affect them, and a growing belief on the part of secular delivery vehicles that faith groups can play a significant role in bridging this gap, acting as agents for delivering cohesive and sustainable communities.

In 2004 the South East England Faith Forum commissioned a report into the influence of faith-based regeneration activity in the South East. This report titled *"Beyond Belief?"* documents the substantial contribution being made by faith communities towards wider regeneration agendas and concludes that there is a need for:

1. More support for faith groups to provide the information, skills and resources necessary for effective social action.
2. A networking organisation for faith groups engaging with the regeneration agenda.
3. Enhanced engagement of faith groups with secular agencies and vice versa to improve mutual understanding and enable greater empowerment of local communities.

This research has been reinforced by a recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation *"Faith as Social Capital 2006"* which endorses and expands many of the findings of the SEEFF study. The Cathedral, therefore, has a unique opportunity to act as a catalyst for faith-based regeneration across the Gateway.

We are in a position to develop a dedicated Thames Gateway Observatory to act as an innovative resource centre for the practical study and development of sustainable communities - promoted to and accessible by leaders and supporters of all faith communities across the Gateway, particularly churches. This would be closely linked to the work of the Diocesan Thames Gateway Management Group. Funding has been awarded by SEEDA towards the initial development of the Observatory.

Objective 5.2 - Be a "critical friend" for Medway and Rochester.

The Unitary Authority of Medway is home to 250,000 people and covers the historic towns of Rochester, Strood, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham. It aspires to be a city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise (Medway Renaissance Regeneration Framework 2006-2016).

Medway is changing rapidly and stands on the cusp of some exciting regeneration opportunities. The community plan for 2004-2007 was first updated in 2005 and will be radically overhauled in 2006/7 - such is the pace of change and the speed with which new opportunities are appearing.

Inevitably this means that many primary aspects of the Council's framework for action are up for discussion at the moment - including agreeing an overall vision for Medway, identifying priorities, recasting the community plan and restructuring the local strategic partnership.

The regeneration agenda will drive much of Medway's development for the foreseeable future. Already there are twenty regeneration projects on the books at different stages of development, which will involve building 15,000 new homes and creating 25,000 new jobs between now and 2020.

Clearly the Council cannot engage with such a massive agenda without relying on some robust partnerships. Equally clearly, this presents an opportunity for the Cathedral, and indeed the wider church, to get involved as a significant partner in the development and delivery of aspirations for the future of Medway.

The Cathedral can play many roles in these dramatic changes to the physical and social landscape of Medway, including the supportive role of a critical friend. We need to set aside time and energy to be a voice when policy is formed and strategies are made. There is a role for the Cathedral to act as "honest broker" in the development of social cohesion between new and established communities. We can speak up for those whose voice can be lost amidst the clamour of people rushing to build reputations or bank balances on the back of all the new opportunities. We can be the catalyst for joined-up approaches to intractable problems. We can help extend the reach of diocesan departments into the wider community. We can contribute to a number of the LSPs ten lead partnerships, utilising the experience and expertise of lay members. We can work alongside those who are seeking to build a flourishing, vibrant and fair local economy and community.

Objective 5.3 - Promote just and healthy civic relationships

There are many ingredients to human flourishing, and the Cathedral's open-minded space allows it to promote all manner of activities that contribute to a just and healthy Civic society.

As the Cathedral has become more open and engaged with the community we find ourselves responding to requests to host an increasing number of services and events for groups and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. These opportunities for partnership need to be grasped and built on, extending hospitality but also looking for creative ways of working together with people of good will, in the future.

The Cathedral will continue to have an important role in raising awareness of vital social issues and stimulating debate. It is a safe space in which to address major difficult or divisive issues and we should be developing exhibitions, workshops, lectures, services and conferences accordingly.

Clearly there is a potential tension in fostering an open, inclusive approach. At times the cathedral's role of critical friend, or its stance on issues of justice, may bring it into conflict with members or groups in the wider community. Part of our role will be to challenge, and occasionally to chide, as well as to support and encourage.

ECOTEC's 2004 report (*The Economic and Social Impact of Cathedrals*) highlighted the impact of UK cathedrals on their local economy, and Rochester is no different. Those who visit the Cathedral account for 80% of all visitors to Rochester. We, therefore, have a responsibility to be involved with those at the heart of our local economy, especially the businesses along the High Street with whom we need to foster a positive and symbiotic relationship.

The Gospel's concern with issues of justice and mercy will, naturally, move the Cathedral into areas addressed by the charitable sector. We can support the work of those who respond to human need through the development of Charity Evensongs, promoting education and awareness of different charities and dedicating financial support in the context of a service of worship. We can build on the work Peter Lock has been doing in addressing the scourge of homelessness, and the Cathedral's involvement in a project to establish an Emmaus community in Medway. And we can progress ideas and collaboration with the King's School to establish a "Foundation Fund" via North American financial backers aimed at supporting local initiatives to address social need.

Aim 6 - Promote the Arts within Mission

Objective 6.1 - Develop an Arts Project

The dividing line between Art and Spirituality is wafer thin. Art has the ability to inform, nourish, engender and challenge faith. In an age where churches are looking to establish creative connections with people exploring faith and the meaning of spiritual experience, art is an under-used medium. Yet it resonates powerfully with the hope of human flourishing which lies at the heart of the Cathedral's mission.

It is also clear that one of the four main pillars of Medway's immediate future is the aspiration to be a City of Culture (Medway Council Community Plan 2005; Medway Renaissance Regeneration Framework 2006).

A 2005 Cultural Needs Analysis established the need for a greater range of cultural facilities in Medway including performance, exhibition and gallery space. The Cathedral can clearly contribute to the region's desire for more artistic and cultural opportunities in this way.

Objective 6.2 - Integrate the Arts Project with other areas of Cathedral life

Art also has the ability to cross many different boundaries in cathedral life. It is integral to worship, liturgy and music. It is part of the curriculum in Education. It relates to the Interpretation Plan. It often lies at the heart of fresh and evangelistic expressions of Christian faith. It connects to the major festivals in Rochester. It informs prayer and spirituality.

Despite a faith founded on continual divine creativity, Christian churches in the West are remarkably slow to see the significance of the Arts to our mission and ministry. A cathedral should pioneer a bold and imaginative use of art across all spheres of its life.

Aim 7 - Manage Resources Efficiently

Without the efficient management of resources, none of the aspirations detailed in the foregoing aims will be achievable.

Objective 7.1 – Finance: Achieve a sound platform of financial stability.

Financial stability is the absolute priority. The Cathedral has made good progress towards this over the last few years, but much still remains to be done.

7.1.1 – Financial systems: Work already in progress needs to be completed – finalising a Procedures Manual, becoming SORP compliant, establishing greater transparency.

7.1.2 – The Fundraising Campaign: A successful completion of all aspects of the £10million fund-raising Campaign is vital to the future of the Cathedral. This campaign was initiated early in 2005 with three main aims:

1. To pay for the repair, conservation and improvements works necessary on the Cathedral building (£2.5m)
2. To fund the development of an Interpretation/Education Centre (2.5m)
3. To establish a £5million Music Endowment (thus removing the music costs from the general budget)

These aims continue to form a crucial part of the forward strategy. As the Campaign has evolved, it also appears likely that a fourth aim will emerge - to fund the development of a Thames Gateway Observatory.

If successful, the Campaign would be supporting the following elements of the forward plan:

Objective 3.1 - Cathedral Interpretation

Objective 3.1 and 4.2 - Interpretation and Education Centre

Objective 3.2 - Improving Access

Objective 3.3 - Cathedral Conservation and Repair

Objective 3.4 - Cathedral Improvements, including nave reordering

Objective 5.1 - Thames Gateway Observatory

Objective 6.1 - Seed Funding for Arts Development

Objective 7.2 - Music Endowment, releasing funding for the Cathedral Estate

7.1.3 - Improve the profitability of Rochester Cathedral Enterprises (RCE): RCE is a limited company with the Chapter as its directors. It embraces two main operational areas: the Tea Rooms and the Shop. In commercial terms the Tea Rooms make a small profit while the Shop breaks even. However, neither the Tea Rooms nor the Shop pay any rent for their use of "Cathedral" space so it is arguable that, on a purely commercial basis, they both cost the Cathedral money to run.

There are, of course, non commercial benefits which attach to both operations and their contribution to the overall mission of the Cathedral needs to be measured in more ways than money. However, an improvement in the profitability of RCE remains a clear objective.

7.1.4 - Improve the return from other sources of the current income: Cathedral bookings for events and services are an important source of income. However, we have yet to analyse the Cathedral's core costs sufficiently to know how realistic our scale of charges is. Equally, we have not conducted a survey of our competitors' charges to see how we sit in comparison to the rest of the market place. Both pieces of work are necessary in order to set an appropriate charging scale but, alongside this, we must ensure that the nature of bookings will allow the Cathedral space to be used in a way that is consistent with other aspirations set out elsewhere in this plan.

Another vital source of recurrent income is the stewardship giving of the regular congregation. It is difficult to run a stewardship campaign in parallel with a £10million fund-raising campaign but within the next two years we might consider doing so.

Objective 7.2 – People: Motivate, train and effectively deploy the staff team.

Rochester Cathedral has 36 salaried staff and 400 unpaid volunteers. Together they represent a key resource, one that needs to be effectively managed and skilfully deployed. Following a review of administration in 2005 we have set some important building blocks in place for salaried staff:

- Updated job descriptions and revised contracts
- A bench-marked salary structure
- Clear line management systems

The upgraded post of Director of Operations should ensure that we grow in our ability to develop and manage the staff team as the Cathedral moves forward. We might consider developing Investors In People, or PQASSO (a voluntary sector quality assurance system), in order to become a learning organisation; we need to look at employee representation and engagement, policies and strategies on training and appraisal, and an overall communications strategy. We will need to re-configure Garth House to accommodate as many staff as possible on to a single site.

The issues around the management of volunteers are less clear cut but no less important. Volunteers have been recruited, engaged and utilised on a very informal basis in the past. Their contribution continues to be vital but we face particular issues as the demands on the Cathedral and, therefore, our reliance on volunteers increases:

- The average age of volunteers is rising (in line with national trends).
- It is harder to recruit new volunteers. Less people are volunteering than was the case a generation ago.
- As voluntary organisations are expected and required to operate in an increasingly professional way, the demands on volunteers increase.
- In an increasingly litigious society, the actions of volunteers come under greater scrutiny.

Given the large numbers of volunteers involved, it is a demanding piece of work but we need to consider a coherent strategy for the recruitment, retention, training, supervision and deployment of volunteers across the life of the Cathedral.

Objective 7.3 – Estates: Efficient management of the Cathedral estate

The Cathedral's property portfolio is extensive but as the 2004 Conservation Plan reveals, it is in a severe state of dilapidation. In the past, too high a proportion of the rental income was applied to finance the mission and ministry of the Cathedral, and too little has been reinvested in conservation and maintenance. We are now reaping the dis-benefits of this understandable, but regrettable, approach.

Property rental is by far the most significant element of recurrent funding for the Cathedral, so the lack of reinvestment in the Estate portfolio threatens any medium or long-term strategy, and as the condition of the property deteriorates, so the problem escalates.

It is crucial to the Cathedral's future to prioritise a plan for the efficient management of the property portfolio. The state of some of the buildings is too acute to wait for an overall development plan (Minor Canon Row and Chertsey's Gate for instance) and while these must be addressed as a matter of urgency, it will be important to engineer a Big-Picture solution within the next few years. In the short term a modest maintenance fund has been formed from the balance of money available from the King's Orchard Archdeaconry sale.

However, it is clear that in order to address the issues identified in the Conservation Plan, further significant capital and revenue sums are necessary. The Cathedral will not be able to draw on the property receipts at the current level and this will have significant implications on the affordability of other aspects of the Cathedral's ministry over the next few years.

Objective 7.4 – Processes: Establish efficient management processes

Given the relative complexity of the Cathedral's organisational structures, it is vital to have good systems and processes in place. These will include a Business Planning process, and well-developed strategies for IT, Risk Management, Health & Safety, etc.

Conclusion

“It is better to have something to remember than nothing to regret” (Frank Zappa, rock star)

There are reasons to be optimistic about the future for Rochester Cathedral. Clearly there is a resurgent spirit abroad in the wider cathedral fraternity, as post-modern culture resonates with many of the traditional strengths that cathedrals bring to the cultural party. Alongside this are the opportunities for us locally, afforded by the regeneration agenda for Medway and North Kent, as secular organisations look for robust partnerships in order to deliver massive changes.

If the cathedral can grasp things positively, there is a chance to transform some of our long-standing problems into opportunities. But this will require a clear determination to see the glass half-full rather than half-empty, and to adopt a ‘can-do’ approach to all that lies ahead of us. There may not be a better moment than now to address the resource issues that turn our focus inwards, to remove the inhibitors, and release energy and vision outwards.

The plans outlined in the document are bold and ambitious. They will demand much from those of us charged with the responsibility to implement them. We will need to commit ourselves to an achievable rhythm, to avoid burnout. But we are committed to move forward in hope, trusting that God is calling us into an unknown future. We invite you to share in this journey of faith and adventure.



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