

## **MISSION-SHAPED CATHEDRAL**

An historical, biblical and present day enquiry into  
the missionary activity and potential of cathedrals

**Mark Rylands 2005**

This dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted  
previously in support of any other qualification or course.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is an attempt to examine the missionary activity and potential of cathedrals in the light of the recently published Mission-Shaped Church report (MSC). It attempts to discuss to what extent, and in what ways, mission shapes the life of Anglican cathedrals in the United Kingdom.

The reasons for the project are outlined in the Introduction. The chapter on research methodology discusses the different research methods used. Context of today's post-modern culture and the MSC report are reviewed in the following chapter. These three chapters form the first part of the text.

Chapters four to six constitute the main body of the research. Chapter four offers a biblical perspective of the cathedral through the picture of Temple and Tabernacle. Chapter five continues with historical research into the different missionary ethos and shape of the cathedral through the centuries. Chapter six, subdivided into sections, is an examination of the different activities that make up the mission shape of cathedrals today. Within each chapter there is space given for theological and missional reflection.

The final chapter discusses the perceived weaknesses of the research methodology and summarises the main conclusions of the dissertation.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The research enquiry is born out of a puzzle created by my present work as a diocesan missionary and residentiary canon of a cathedral. These are roles that I find both challenging and enjoyable. One of the greatest challenges is the need to be aware of and adapt to the vastly differing missionary contexts across the diocese. Perhaps the greatest gulf, however, is between the missionary context of the cathedral and the rest of the diocese.

Much of my work in local churches involves engendering a strong sense of community amongst the congregation, enthusing and imparting an understanding of God's Mission and care for the wider community and encouraging an overall outward focus of the Church. Whilst many churches are growing numerically there are more that are declining in numbers and becoming more elderly in constitution. In the cathedral where I serve there has been little emphasis on nurturing a sense of belonging through small groups and not much outward focus on mission. Apart from a part-time Visitors' Officer and Education Officer, the bulk of the cathedral's resources and the main focus is on maintaining the offering of beautiful worship through a professional choir and musicians and the upkeep of the glorious building. Anecdotal evidence from other cathedrals seemed to indicate this may be an accurate general picture. The congregations of cathedrals in England (though largely elderly in constitution) however, are growing numerically<sup>1</sup>, and cathedrals have been heralded as 'the success story of the Church of England in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from the Research and Statistics Department, Archbishops Council, March 2005.

<sup>2</sup> E-mail correspondence with John Inge, Bishop of Huntingdon and former Vice Dean of Ely Cathedral 4/10/05.

Recently the Church of England has produced a report<sup>3</sup> that advocates the importance of a church being shaped by its mission, adapting to its cultural context and adopting a ‘go to them’, rather than a ‘come to us’ approach to its life and witness. Superficially, in the light of this report and of current missional thinking, the cathedral is an enigma. It seems to pay little attention to its cultural context, appears to be shaped more by its worship and building rather than its mission, and yet thrives on a traditional ‘come to us’ approach. Why? This question is at the heart of the research enquiry.

In my more cynical moments I wonder whether cathedral success is founded on a consumer model of church: it offers a high quality product with its liturgical and musical excellence, set in awe-inspiring architectural magnificence and it costs the congregation less than local church congregations as the ministry is subsidised by the Church Commissioners, English Heritage and various trusts. Growth in cathedral congregations in this light could be attributed to offering a haven for traditional church refugees and not to making new disciples of Christ.

With a more optimistic and hopeful attitude, however, I can see that cathedrals might offer an easy entry point for spiritual searchers without the anxiety of being cajoled into belonging to the Christian community before they are ready. Maybe cathedrals have the potential to be a fresh expression of church for a generation who feel disconnected with the church organisation and are more content ‘to believe without belonging’. With the huge drop in the number of children attending church and the steady decline in adult attendance in the last century, it may also be that cathedrals through their ministry to schools and visitors offer a way of retelling the Christian story and of helping keep the gospel message alive in the nation.

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<sup>3</sup> Cray G and Lings G, *Mission-Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

The enquiry, therefore, is to explore the missionary activity and potential of cathedrals in the light of the MSC report. In a biblical review the cathedral's mission is viewed from the perspective of God's mission through Tabernacle and Temple. Through an historical research, I look at how the shape and direction of the cathedral's mission changes through the centuries. Here, the past may assist us in making sense of the present and help us to find direction for the future. Finally, the enquiry focusses on the variety of ministries that shape the mission of cathedrals today.

### **Relevance**

Some key issues underline this research. One is the question of *identity*. In a changing context, it is inevitable that the Church is asking questions about its reason for being. The MSC and contemporary missiologists see *mission* as the central way in which 'church' will increasingly define itself: 'Christians find their true identity when they are involved in mission ... A missionary community is one that understands itself as being both different from and committed to its environment.'<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the urgent need for the *evangelisation* of the West is increasingly forcing itself on the hearts and minds of Christians today and there is a gathering momentum in the churches towards missionary endeavour. That this momentum may be being driven more by a sudden awakening to the harsh reality of the decline of the church<sup>5</sup> rather than compassion for 'the lost' does not detract from the fact of a reawakening to mission. This enquiry is concerned with the part that cathedrals play in God's Mission.

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<sup>4</sup> Bosch D, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991), p.83

<sup>5</sup> '... the Church of England is in decline, and may die if it fails to acknowledge and address the seriousness of the situation' Jackson B, *Hope for the Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), p.xi.

## Definitions of Terms

Three terms have particular importance in the research process. Perhaps pre-eminently (simply from its name) the *cathedral* is the Bishop's Church. It stands at the centre of the diocese, is the mother church and is, in theory, the centre of the bishop's ministry of teaching and mission. The Bishop sits in his seat (cathedra), not to rule his diocese, but gathering the people around him and flanked on either side by his advisers (who traditionally would have been the Dean and Chapter).<sup>6</sup> As the seat of the Bishop, a cathedral remains a sign of the universal Church. Though often understood solely in terms of a building, *cathedral* thus also refers to a community of different layers ranging from the bishop, dean and chapter, to the cathedral congregation and staff, to the body of Christ represented in the wider Christian family of the diocese.

For *mission* it is proposed to work with that offered by Mike Booker in 'Evangelism – Which Way Now?' – namely as 'God's work of reconciling the whole of creation to himself, in which we are called to participate'.<sup>7</sup> The advantage of this particular definition is that it encapsulates the missionary initiative as being from God and as being something dynamic and responsive – it implies a relational model.

A third important term is that of *evangelism* and for this Mike Booker's concept of evangelism as 'the process by which people become disciples of Jesus Christ'<sup>8</sup> will serve us well. It recognises that evangelism embraces not only a call to commitment but also the establishing of an individual as a follower of Jesus Christ. Proclamation and nurture of the new believer are combined and together reflect all that has been learnt through the Decade of Evangelism about conversion being much more of a journey to faith rather than simply an on-the-spot event of crisis.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Platten S, E-mail correspondence 27/9/05

<sup>7</sup> Booker M and Ireland M, 'Evangelism – Which Way Now?' (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p.2

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>9</sup> Finney J, *Finding Faith Today* (Swindon: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992)



## **Chapter 2**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

It was decided to adopt a multi-faceted approach to the research, in the belief that this would provide a more detailed picture. Help was enlisted from two publications<sup>1</sup> and the following methods were used:

#### **Action Research**

A significant part of the action research was in participating in two missional activities at Exeter Cathedral – The Life on the Beach outreach on the Cathedral Green in the summer of 2004 and 2005 and prayer station projects in March, April and December 2004. The researcher, although involved in the organisation of these events, was also there as a participant and as an observer-reflector. Some of the experiences, impressions and reflections are recorded in Appendix C.

#### **Observation**

The research included visiting nine cathedrals.<sup>2</sup> Observation included participation in a tour of the cathedral as an unknown visitor, listening, watching, asking questions.

#### **Questionnaire**

Two questionnaires were used – one for leaders in cathedrals and another for education officers.<sup>3</sup> These provoked dialogue and further reflection from some of the participants which led to much e-mail correspondence from particular individuals. This

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<sup>1</sup> Bell J, *Doing Your Research Project* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), Jackson R, *A Personal Research Guide* (Cliff College, 2003)

<sup>2</sup> Bath and Wells, Chester, Exeter, Peterborough, Ripon, Birmingham, Blackburn, Lichfield and Bradford

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A.

correspondence by e-mail produced a substantial raft of material which informed the largest section of the dissertation – Chapter 6, the mission shapes of cathedrals today.

### **Interviews**

Nine formal interviews were conducted.<sup>4</sup> Seven of these were used to check up on information that had arisen from the e-mail correspondence that was stimulated by the questionnaires. These interviews formed part of the process as a whole and could not have stood up to scrutiny as a method of collecting information on their own. They were unstructured in that they did not follow a set form of questions. They generally provided some valuable insights and background details. The data was recorded by the taking of notes. The other two interviews were with the same person (Professor Nicholas Orme) and formed a very helpful part of the historical research into the missionary activity of cathedrals. They were particularly useful in helping the researcher review and check the reliability of the historical literature.

### **Historical and Biblical Research**

This formed nearly half of the dissertation's research time. Much of the research was therefore undertaken in imaginary dialogue with church historians and biblical writers and commentators.

This researcher is aware of the inadequacy of much of the above and, therefore, further reflection on the research method is included in the final chapter.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B

## **Chapter 3**

### **POSTMODERNITY AND THE MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH REPORT**

#### **Change and Decay**

Fundamental to engaging in effective mission is an understanding of the present culture we live in. It seems that humanity is passing through a massive paradigm shift in its mental, spiritual and physical frameworks. Many commentators<sup>1</sup> observe that, in the West, this huge cultural shift is being felt as we move from a modern to postmodern society. Loren Mead perceives that ‘twice before the Church has faced such a complete upsetting of the old paradigm that life was disrupted and structures were reordered to form a new one.’<sup>2</sup> He highlights that the particular problem today is that the cultural shift is still occurring – the Christendom paradigm has disintegrated but the new post-Christendom paradigm has not yet appeared. This poses, therefore, a huge challenge for the Church as to how to embody and communicate the gospel with which she is entrusted in the new environment. It can lead to confusion and a defensive, siege mentality.

#### **A Story for our Time**

In 1998, the City Council of Exeter wrote to the Chapter of Exeter Cathedral with regard to developing the use of the Cathedral Green for the public. Members of the Council saw the Green as ‘a beach’, where people came to meet friends, relax, sit in the sun and share a picnic – a natural meeting place for calm recreation. They enquired of the Chapter as to whether they would consider their partnership to further develop this idea. The Cathedral Chapter replied saying that they viewed the Green as ‘a cemetery, an

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<sup>1</sup> Drane J, Riddell M, Atkins M, Moynagh M.

<sup>2</sup> Mead L, *The Once and Future Church* (The Alban Institute, 1991), p.9

ancient burial ground' (in fact, that is what it is) and that it should be treated as such.<sup>3</sup> There may have been good reasons why the Cathedral wanted to maintain complete control of the Green. Reading the Minutes some years later, however, it seemed that a mission opportunity, to engage with the City authorities and the people, had been missed. In effect, the Cathedral Chapter appeared to be fencing in its territory and saying 'keep out!' Ironically, it is the secular organisation that seems to open up an invitation to consider people and their quality of life in the city, whilst the Christian organisation (whose concern is 'the fullness of life for all people', John 10:10) declines the invitation and appears more concerned about its possessions and the dead. The scenario portrays a picture of the Church as either defensive – lacking the confidence to engage with the new culture and therefore fearfully clinging ghetto-like onto the last vestiges of its worldly power and authority; or deluded – unaware of the huge cultural shift that is taking place and hence, acting as though this is still Christendom and she is in control and determining the shape of society.

### **Change and Dialogue**

For two thousand years the Church has struggled with her image of herself and her image of the world outside. Mead describes how the Church experienced a special pressure emerging from her belief that she had been given a double-edged commandment – to engage with the world and yet to be distinctive from it, a 'peculiar' people (1 Peter 2). We are called to love, serve and convert the world and yet to be apart from it – to be 'in' it, but not 'of' it.<sup>4</sup>

Effective Christian Mission has always been dynamic and never a static, 'one size fits all'. It presupposes a dialogue with the culture of the day for, in order to communicate

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<sup>3</sup> Exeter Cathedral Chapter Minutes, 1998

<sup>4</sup> Mead L, p.9

the gospel, it is necessary to understand first the mindset and worldview of the one with whom we are communicating. A dialogue with the postmodern world view is therefore a prerequisite to the way the Church goes about her missionary calling. This, however, is not an isolated event – it has been part of the missionary enterprise that has gone on since 33 CE and continues today. By engaging in this continual evangelistic endeavour across countless cultural borders, the Church – when healthiest – has always been prepared to consider radical change, with the result that Christianity is dynamically pluriform in nature: ‘Christianity morphs to fit the culture of the day – to communicate with it and challenge it’.<sup>5</sup>

### **Change and Adaptation**

As Andrew Walls<sup>6</sup> has shown imaginatively and clearly, the Jewish Christians in first century Jerusalem have, in cultural form, little in common with the Christians present at the Council of Nicea in 325 CE, who in turn are quite different from the monks venturing forth from Ireland some 300 years later. It should come as no surprise therefore if it transpires that Christianity, through its dialogue with postmodernity, undergoes yet another metamorphic change.

Walls also affirms Mead’s understanding of the Church’s twin commission to engage with the world and yet be distinctive from it, when he states that the whole of Christian history can be seen in terms of a constant tension between two gospel principles; the ‘indigenising principle’ that seeks to make the gospel relevant to the particulars of a culture;<sup>7</sup> and the ‘pilgrim principle’, which seeks the gospel’s critique and

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<sup>5</sup> Phillips P, *Mission in the New Testament* (Cliff College Lecture, Sept 2003)

<sup>6</sup> Walls A, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, New York: T and T Clarke, 1996) p.3–15

<sup>7</sup> Walls A, *The Missionary Movement* p.9

transformation of that culture.<sup>8</sup> These are based on two core theological understandings of the Christian faith: that God accepts people as they are and yet also desires to transform humans into the likeness of Christ.

### **Postmodernity – the new terrain**

So what are the characteristics of the new culture which we are called to comprehend and with which we are called to engage? Opinions differ as to whether post-modernity truly exists and the term itself almost eludes definition. Postmodernity is ‘slippery’<sup>9</sup> and ‘exults in fluidity, not fixedness, relativity not regulation, diversity not definition’.<sup>10</sup>

Postmodernity is often presented as a reaction to modernity which exalted human reason and virtually came to worship the scientific method. Whereas modernity was confident that science would continually improve everything in our world, postmodernity is sceptical – and with good reason. Following a twentieth century littered with more wars than ever before, mass genocide in several countries, an inability to eradicate world poverty, the AIDS pandemic and increasing terrorism all brought to Western homes (ironically) via an ever improving and sophisticated technology, postmodernity is dismissive of modern idealism.

It is apparent, though, that no major cultural transition is clear-cut so we live in a period of overlap where a modern world is waning and a postmodern one is becoming stronger.<sup>11</sup> For many people ‘both modernity and postmodernity are elements coexisting in their ways of understanding the world’.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, we appreciate utterly modernist technology in areas such as the work place, transport and computers that are

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<sup>8</sup> Walls A, *The Missionary Movement* p.10

<sup>9</sup> Riddell M, *Threshold of the Future* (London: SPCK, 1998), p.101

<sup>10</sup> Atkins, M, *Preaching in a Cultural Context* (Peterborough: Foundery Press, 2001), p.26

<sup>11</sup> Cray G, *From Here to Where? – The Culture of the Nineties* (London: Board of Mission of the Church of England, 1992), p.5,19

<sup>12</sup> Newbiggin L, Foreword to Hilborn, *Picking Up The Pieces* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997)

consistent, reliable and predictable. Yet on the other hand, we become thoroughly postmodern consumers desiring freedom to differ, unlimited options to choose and tolerance over personal convictions above all.<sup>13</sup> What has become apparent, though, is that modernism is over ... such a defined world, such word-based, head centred processing and optimism over humanity is no longer the mental address most people live at. Doubt, feeling and mess have come to the table.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mission-shaped Church Report**

In February 2004, a report entitled 'Mission-Shaped Church' was presented to the General Synod of the Church of England by a working group from the department responsible for Mission. Although it does not mention postmodernity by name it recognises 'that the Church needs to respond to the changes in our culture'<sup>15</sup> and that the England which she exists to reach and serve has significantly changed. The report considers that the Church's task is better seen today as *cross-cultural mission* because the cultural changes to society are so widespread and far-reaching.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Missionary Context**

Certain key factors about society that the Church needs to consider and address are highlighted as:

#### **1. The fragmented nature of Society**

The report identifies contributing factors such as trends in employment, increased mobility, changes to family life patterns and so more single households. It sees

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<sup>13</sup> Moynagh M, *Changing World, Changing Church* (London: Monarch Books, 2001), pp.59–62

<sup>14</sup> Lings G and Hopkins B, 'Mission-Shaped Church: Inside and Outside View' *Encounters on the Edge* Vol. 22 p.9

<sup>15</sup> Cray G and Lings G, *Mission-shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p.1

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.90

that the predominance of entertainment and leisure also accentuates personalised culture.

These and other factors affect what people do at weekends and squeeze out time for Sunday church.

## 2. **A network society**

The report highlights how our sense of community is now more disconnected from where we live. Instead we have an array of networks and people meet through work, school, clubs and not just in their neighbourhoods.

Friend and colleagues matter more than neighbours. We face a change from ministry centred on *where* people sleep, to mission to *how* they live. The report suggests that incarnational ministry will be more interested in the latter than the former.<sup>17</sup> Michael Moynagh adds his support to this view and advocates the desirability of ‘liquid church’, which he sees will exist as much in the networks between individuals as in the gatherings of people;<sup>18</sup> and ‘workplace church’ where a growing number may say they belong to two churches – one at the weekend where they live and one for midweek activities at work.<sup>19</sup>

All this challenges the way people feel they belong and do things together and it challenges traditional church attendance.

## 3. **Consumerist Society**

A third strand of change identified is from an emphasis on production to consumption. In effect, ‘I am what I buy’, or as one wit put it with deference to Descartes: ‘Tesco ergo sum’. The core value of society has moved from ‘progress’

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid p.12

<sup>18</sup> Cray G and Lings G, p.8

<sup>19</sup> Moynagh M, *Emerging Church Intro* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2004), p.81



to 'choice'. Everything becomes a consumer choice. Central to the future is the idea of 'personalized scale' – 'it must fit me exactly'.<sup>20</sup> Religion, therefore, is less likely to be a matter of culture and more one of choice.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the report highlights how consumerism affects the ways in which people evaluate truth claims. Here the report touches on the pervading nature of relativism in society and one of the key themes of postmodernity – 'an incredulity towards metanarratives.'<sup>22</sup>

This presents a huge challenge for today's Church as a natural corollary of relativist thinking is the rejection of established sources of authority. Traditional institutions, including the Church, are no longer able to command a hearing in the public arena if they merely rely on inherited status. Respect needs to be earned.

#### 4. **Post-Christendom**

The demise of Christendom and arrival of post-Christendom means Christian identity is no longer conferred on the population by the culture and its values are no longer normative.<sup>23</sup> Thus, most young people no longer know the Christian story. Now, Church monopoly on truth, let alone attendance, is seen as being incredible. All these factors mean that our long-lived and much loved 'Come to us, we are available and accessible' strategy is no longer valid amongst the under-35s. '... mainstream culture no longer brings people to the church door'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Moynagh M, *Changing World, Changing Church* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2001), p.32

<sup>21</sup> Carey G, *Planting New Churches* (London: Eagle Publishing 1991), p.24

<sup>22</sup> Lyotard J, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.xxiv

<sup>23</sup> Lings G and Hopkins B, p.8

<sup>24</sup> Cray G and Lings G, p.11

There have been many significant sociological changes in the West during the last century. Most relevant is the decline in Church attendance and influence in society<sup>25</sup> – a trend that will continue unless we search for new expressions of what Church should be. Indeed the freefall in church attendance is a ‘wake-up call’ to destroy complacent thinking. Table (1) paints a depressing picture for the 1980s and 1990s.

**Table (1)**

Year	% population attending on an average Sunday (%)
1979	11.7
1989	9.9
1998	7.5

Source: Peter Brierley, *The Tide is Running Out* (Eltham: Christian Research, 2000) p.27

By 2005, there was a small glimmer of hope, in that attendance was recorded at 7%,<sup>26</sup> and therefore not plummeting as fast as was predicted in 2000, but still the decline in church attendance is well advanced.

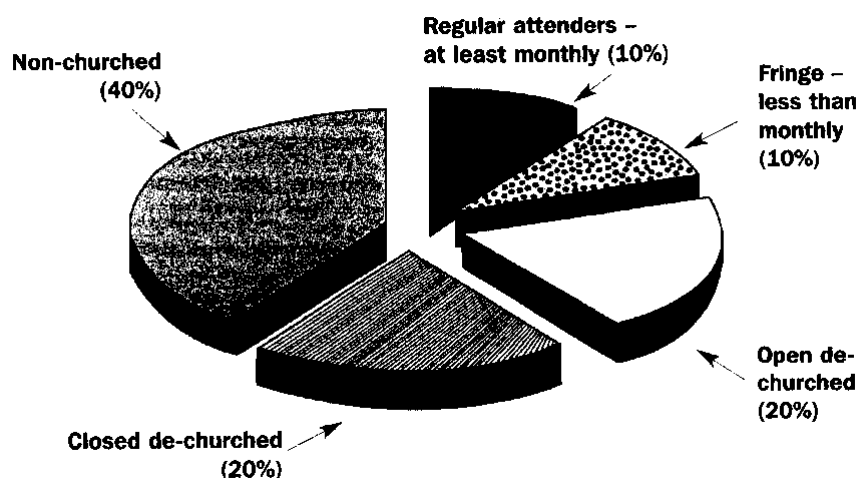
Chapter 3, pages 36–41, particularly the pie chart on page 37 depicting current (or previous) Church attendance, highlights the nature and extent of the mission field in this country:

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<sup>25</sup> ‘In 1960, 46% of the world’s Christians were in Europe, with 7% in each of Asia and Africa. By 2010 it is estimated that these figures will be 22%, 18% and 17% respectively.’ Brierley P, *Future Church: A global analysis of the Christian Community to the year 2010* (London: Monarch Books, 1998), p.37

<sup>26</sup> Brierley P, Church of England Newspaper article, Sept. 2005

*Table (II)*



(Based on Philip Richter and Leslie Francis, *Gone but not Forgotten*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998.)

- **Regular attenders**  
Across the denominational spectrum, roughly 10 per cent of the population attend perhaps 5–8 times in a two-month period.
- **Fringe attenders**  
Roughly 10 per cent of the population may attend church 1–3 times in a two-month period.
- **Open de-churched**  
Forty per cent of the population are ‘de-churched’. At some point in their life they attended church. Of these, 20 per cent are the ‘open de-churched’ – people who have left church at some point, but are open to return if suitably contacted and invited.
- **Closed de-churched**  
Twenty per cent of the population have attended church at some point in their life, but were damaged or disillusioned, and have no intention of returning.
- **Non-churched**  
Forty per cent of the population nationally have never been to church, except perhaps for the funeral or wedding of a friend or relation.

The research distinguishes between people who have left Church and those who have never been. It indicated that nationally each group is about 40% of the adult

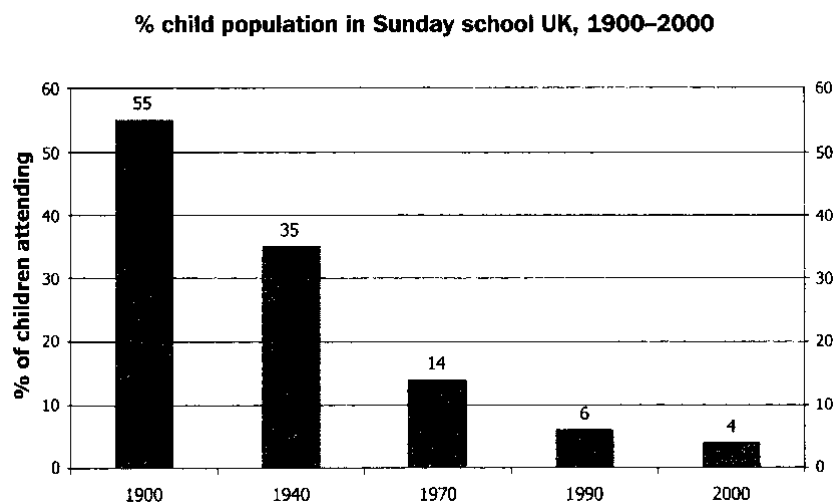
population. MSC then argues that the resources for, and approaches to, these two groups are different and that the second group – the non-churched – will become more and more dominant.

The signs are that inherited ways of being Church and traditional evangelism to the Church fringe from now on will only tend to help a reducing minority of people.

### **Returner Policy – no longer effective**

Added to this, the report speaks of a time-bomb ticking away.<sup>27</sup> Table (III) shows the full extent of the bleak scenario:

*Table (III)*



Source: UK Christian Handbook, Religious Trends No. 2, 2000/2001

Only a tiny proportion of children are now in the UK Church. The figure is down from 35% in 1940 to 14% in 1970 and just 4% in 2000. That means that 96% of young people are not in church on Sunday.

What Table (III) does not reveal, however, is the number of children who are involved in midweek Christian clubs at schools and churches. According to Margaret

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<sup>27</sup> Cray G and Lings G, p.40

Withers' research there is a considerably larger percentage of children receiving Christian nurture, teaching and activity in that way currently.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, Margaret's findings do not encourage complacency. There is a huge challenge here and a need for fresh missionary thinking about outreach to children. The Church of England has for generations relied on a 'returners' strategy – that young people will one day come back to church, perhaps when they are older and wiser, or when they have young families of their own. The report finds this optimistic approach seriously flawed as there are, as the years go by, less and less children who have any Christian foundation to which they may later 'return'.

### **Goodbye, Religious attendance! Hello, Spirituality!**

There is compelling evidence, therefore, that Western society is not only becoming increasingly postmodern but is also post-Christian. Yet, there are signs of spiritual life amidst the decay. Grace Davie, in her book 'Religion in Britain since 1945', uses the shorthand phrase 'believing without belonging' to describe the religious situation of Great Britain at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Her thesis presents a profound challenge to the Church. Increasingly, people do not 'belong' to organised religious groupings but this exodus from the Church is not, however, the result of mass atheism. The growing group of unchurched people 'believe' all sorts of things, little of which is orthodox Christian faith. Another sociologist of Religion, Steve Bruce, presents a more radical version of secularisation than Davie but one that confirms her research: religious attendance has plummeted yet some sort of persistent belief (albeit unorthodox) remains.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, one of the pervading themes of postmodernity is that people see themselves as spiritual beings.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Margaret Withers the National Officer for Evangelism Amongst Children (Project REACH) 5/7/05

<sup>29</sup> Davie G, *Believing Without Belonging: Religion in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

<sup>30</sup> Bruce S, *Religion in the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

The recent research and writings of Yvonne Richmond and others is yet further evidence that this seems to be a spiritual age that we live in.<sup>31</sup>

## Challenges

MSC not only outlines the challenges facing the Church but also offers points of action in the new landscape:

Firstly, MSC calls for the Church to repent for having lost contact with the majority of the population and its culture.<sup>32</sup> Bob Jackson is hopeful that if the decline of the Church is caused not by the irrelevance of the gospel, nor by the indifference of the community but by the Church's failure to respond fast enough to an evolving culture, to a changing spiritual climate and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, then that decline can be addressed by the repentance of the Church. This necessarily will mean turning around and living in a new way in the future.<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, MSC calls for the Church to grasp the opportunity this new culture presents by creating 'fresh expressions of Church' that will proclaim *afresh* the gospel in this generation.<sup>34</sup> This term, with its conscious reflection of the Declaration of Assent, helps to focus on mission which has always been at the heart of the Anglican Church's tradition. In a way, it also helps remind Anglicans that they are part of a much larger global church movement.<sup>35</sup> The report does tend to refer to the role of being *a* church for England and not *the* Church of England which shows some humility and a sign that Anglicans are becoming more realistic about their contribution.<sup>36</sup> The report lists varieties

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<sup>31</sup> Richmond Y, *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005)

<sup>32</sup> Cray G and Lings G, *Mission-Shaped Church*, p.13

<sup>33</sup> Jackson R, *Hope for the Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), p.32

<sup>34</sup> Declaration of Assent: preface in *Common Worship* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p.xi

<sup>35</sup> Bayes P, *Mission-Shaped Church: Values, Church Planting and Fresh Expressions* (Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, 2004), p.8

<sup>36</sup> Lings G and Hopkins B, *Inside and Outside View*, p.20 'The Baptist Church and the new churches have promised many fresh expressions in England; the Roman Catholic Base Ecclesial Communities, in the two-thirds world, continue to stimulate and inspire small-group churches; Roman Catholic new religious

of fresh expressions from café church to youth congregations. Interestingly, the common features of these ‘fresh expressions’ – valuing small groups as part of their life and being flexible about day of meeting – are not obvious attributes of cathedral life.

Thirdly, the report calls for more of a ‘go to them’ approach rather than the ‘come to us’ strategy that has prevailed for so long in the Church. This is grounded in the theology and values of a missionary church. Rowan Williams affirmed MSC’s understanding of mission in terms of ‘Missio Dei’ when he said: ‘Mission is watching for what God is doing and joining in.’<sup>37</sup>

The values of MSC were not written in a vacuum but echo and sharpen the mission values of the five marks of mission.<sup>38</sup> The report builds on these by identifying five values for a missionary church which themselves are based on an understanding of the nature of God. Thus, the missionary church is to reflect the missionary God. And so we see that a missionary church is focussed on God the Trinity, incarnational, transformational, makes disciples and is relational.

At the heart of the report seems to be the concept of ‘dying to live’. The incarnation and the cross are viewed as the heart of a mission-shaped church. Just as ‘the word became flesh and dwelt (tented) among us’ (John 1:14), so the Church needs to be tented in the community and also close to God. In the same way that Christ was prepared to lay down his life for those he came to serve, so the Church needs to be prepared to lay down preferred ways of being church, for the sake of those she is sent to serve. Thus, the Church’s action stems and flows from God – ‘As the father sent me, so I send you’ (John

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communities such as Chemin Neuf and the Sion Community for Evangelisation are having an impact across Europe; the Methodist partners on the MSC working party contributed much experience to its deliberations and outcome. Almost all of these movements have an ecumenical dimension.’

<sup>37</sup> Williams R, Speech in support of Mission-Shaped Church Report (Proceedings of General Synod, February 2004), p.133

<sup>38</sup> Anglican Consultative Council 1990. 1. To proclaim the good news of the kingdom; 2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers; 3. To respond to human need by loving service; 4. To seek to transform the unjust structures of society; 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.

20:21). This interpretation correlates strongly with Wall's 'indigenising' and 'pilgrim' principles of the Church's task.

## **Summary**

The MSC report, therefore, challenges the Church to face up to its failure to engage comprehensively with today's society and gives it a theological base on which to do so. It outlines the Church's task as cross-cultural mission. It recognises that traditional ways of being church are not finished but can no longer, on their own, reach the nation with the gospel. Fresh expressions of church are necessary to relate to different contexts. Rowan Williams speaks of a 'mixed economy' Church where inherited and new ways of being church may work alongside one another to make a comprehensive impact.<sup>39</sup> MSC has arrived at some values that it thinks lie behind the formation of all authentic expressions of church. Its theology of church planting is based on the incarnational mission of God himself and it is the first denominational document to argue that Church reproduction is a part of Church doctrine.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the report emphasises, in its title and throughout, how mission shapes the Church not vice versa, thus it is not that the Church has a mission but that the Mission of God has a Church; and the Church is the fruit of God's Mission.

The intention of this enquiry is to explore the missionary shape of the cathedral through certain periods of history and then to see how, in the present day, cathedrals relate to postmodern society and look at their missionary activity and potential in the light of MSC. Firstly, though, we turn to a review of the shape of God's Mission through the biblical understanding of Temple and Tabernacle in the Old and New Testaments.

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<sup>39</sup> Williams R, Presidential Address to General Synod, York, July 2003

<sup>40</sup> Lings G and Hopkins B, *Inside and Outside View*, p.4



## Chapter 4

### A BIBLICAL REVIEW AND REFLECTION

#### Introduction

Cathedrals seem to be ‘the Christian equivalent of the great structures which people in all civilised societies have raised in honour of the majesty of God. The Temple of Jerusalem, built by Herod and destroyed by the Romans in CE70, itself offered the principal example, and one which the first Christians could remember’.<sup>1</sup>

‘Cathedral buildings are modelled on the Jerusalem Temple: The nave represents the Court of the Gentiles, the Quire stands for the Court of the Faithful and the high altar is the Holy of Holies’<sup>2</sup>

A variety of interpretations of a cathedral’s temple-like significance are offered today:

- ‘... to represent heaven on earth’  
(lay member of congregation at Lichfield Cathedral)
- ‘a place to offer the very best ... of art, of music ... of ourselves’  
(Canon Neil Collings, Exeter Cathedral)
- ‘a sacred space ... a place of the divine presence’  
(Bishop Stephen Platten, Wakefield)
- ‘to inspire awe and wonder and response to the living God in worship’  
(Dean Christopher Armstrong, Blackburn Cathedral)

All of the above quotations from people intimately connected with cathedrals give a wholesome, positive and nourishing picture of this institution as today’s Temple, what at its best it could and should be. Others, however, more easily see the compromised position of the cathedral in its prominent position and speak of its ambiguity.

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<sup>1</sup> Howe E, *Heritage and Renewal* (London; Church House Publishing, 1994) p.187

<sup>2</sup> McPhate, G. Inaugural Sermon on being installed as Dean of Chester Cathedral. 2002

‘The cathedrals point to a God of mercy, pity, peace and love, and yet often seem entangled in the values of a world opposed to God, as Jerusalem and Babylon mingle together.’<sup>3</sup>

Professor Christopher Rowland is not alone in his ambivalence towards cathedrals. Within cathedrals it is possible to glimpse a view of eternity through the magnificence of the building, its decorative art, stained glass windows, the beauty of stonework and enclosed space. Yet in their relationships with the City and County at large - often with the ‘great and the good’ – and their seeming cultivation of privilege in worship and life, cathedrals may seem to be at some distance from the values of the Carpenter from Nazareth.<sup>4</sup>

There is, therefore, a theological issue to be explored here about the nature and operation of cathedrals – indeed of all sacred spaces. If there is a biblical precedent for such buildings – what does Scripture say about them and how did they affect God’s Mission? Thus, we shall now look at relevant biblical visions and roots to assist us in our thinking about both buildings and mission.

### **A Pilgrim God: A Tent**

In the Pentateuch we are introduced not to a Temple God but to a Pilgrim God.<sup>5</sup> The God of Abraham is distinctive from the divinities found everywhere else in those days by this characteristic. All those other deities were linked to particular places – mountains, cities, rivers – whereas the god that speaks to Abraham is a god who is not tied down to one spot. The Pilgrim God bursts into the life of Abraham to invite him to set out on the road with him. Indeed God’s Mission is located in his family, in his people. Abraham is

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<sup>3</sup> Rowland C, Friends of Albion? In Platten S and Lewis C, *Flagships of the Spirit* (London; DLT, 1998) p.19

<sup>4</sup> Howe, E. *Heritage and Renewal*, p.190

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Genesis 18 where God appears as a traveller, a passing guest (or three of them).

promised a blessing, but it is not for himself alone. It is for all the families of the earth. As Lesslie Newbigin points out: ‘those who are chosen to be bearers of a blessing are chosen for the sake of all ... The promised blessing is, in the end, for all nations.’<sup>6</sup>

In the Torah, worship centres around the tent of meeting – the Tabernacle. God is seen on the move, dwelling in the midst of his people, leading them by a pillar of cloud during the day and by fire at night. The Pilgrim God leads those he has called and saved. (Exodus 13:21–22). The nature of Israel’s Mission is seen as witnessing to the loving purposes of God by experiencing them and then living according to them. Indeed, that seems to be the purpose of the Covenant:

‘Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exodus 19:3–6)

There is, here, the sense that Israel would be an effective instrument for fulfilling God’s Mission to humanity if she remained *authentic*. Israel’s primary task in God’s Mission, therefore, is to be the people of God, true to her Covenant relationship with the Lord and keeping his commandments. If she did this she would be blessed and act like a magnet, drawing all peoples to him.

There is clear evidence of this ‘attractive’ mission and inclusion of others.<sup>7</sup> So God’s missionary people are to be missionary agents through obedient ethical distinctiveness in response to God’s revelation to them and election of them.

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<sup>6</sup> Newbigin L, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: W.D. Eerdmans, 1978)

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 12:37–38 tells how ‘a mixed crowd also went up with them’ out of Egypt. Anyone who attaches themselves to Yahweh is welcome, not just Israelites; the adoption of Rahab and her family (Joshua 6:25); special concern for the stranger or foreigner resident in Israel (Exodus 12:48, 22:21) exemplified in the way Ruth the Moabitess is welcomed in and, as the great-grandmother of King David, comes to have a vital role to play within God’s Mission (Ruth 4:13–22).

## **A Settled People: A Temple**

Coming into the land of Canaan presented danger for a people whose faith and worship had been fashioned on the move and in the desert. Ease and abundance will lead people to forget the Lord, to believe in their own self-sufficiency (Deut 8:17) and to sink into an immobile complacency. The challenge for the nation is to keep a ‘pilgrim heart’ in the midst of a life like everybody else - a challenge that it was going to fail.<sup>8</sup>

The role of the Temple is then viewed with a mixture of approval, unease and outright condemnation. When David initially conceives the idea of building a temple for God, as other nations do for their deities (2 Samuel 7:2) it is Nathan the prophet who speaks words of disapproval on God’s behalf.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these strong words of disapproval, Solomon undertakes the building of the great Temple of Jerusalem several years later and surprisingly, scriptural sources do not breathe a word about resistance from prophetic quarters. On the contrary, we hear that the Temple is built by God’s orders (1 Kings 9).

The original vision, described at the dedication of the Temple, speaks of its missionary purpose drawing in ‘foreigners ... towards this house’ that their prayers may be heard and answered so that they come to know and worship Yahweh (1 Kings 8:41–43). There is an expectation that the Temple, as God’s dwelling place, will act like a magnet drawing all people towards the living God. This universal Mission, with a centripetal movement, is echoed in the eschatological vision of Isaiah and Micah.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brother John, *The Pilgrim God* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1990), p.55

<sup>9</sup> ‘Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Whenever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of the rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’ (2 Samuel 7:5–7)

<sup>10</sup> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of mountains ... and all the nations shall flow to it and many peoples shall come and say: “Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” (Isaiah 2:2–3)

## **Corruption and Judgement: the Temple Destroyed**

From the high vision of 1 Kings 9, Solomon's departure from the worship of God is charted in 1 Kings 11.<sup>11</sup> The Temple, decorated and influenced as it was by Canaanite culture, rapidly became a shrine to Baal and not to Yahweh.

Thus, there grew up a gulf between the practice of the Temple and the demands of God. Some kept the pilgrim vision alive – of a people formed in the desert, who had fled slavery in Egypt and had not yet been corrupted by Canaanite life. This vision remembered the commandments recorded in Deuteronomy and followed a God who demanded care for the orphan, the widow and the stranger and whose presence was especially connected with the portable tabernacle rather than the permanent and glorious temple.<sup>12</sup> The Exodus vision, however, had almost disappeared in the Jerusalem of the monarchic period. King Josiah's reforms highlight how even the yearly celebration of the Passover had been forgotten (2 Kings 23:22). Prophets like Isaiah called for God's people to seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow, rather than offering 'the multitude of your sacrifices' (Isaiah 1:11,17).

The criticism of the prophets reaches its peak with Jeremiah. He is particularly critical of the rulers of the time.<sup>13</sup> By taking on the sacred institutions of the nation, the monarchy, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, Jeremiah showed that he did not think, as the popular mind did, that they were 'tokens' of the divine presence. Rather he saw

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<sup>11</sup> Temple worship becomes compromised with local cults and with the values of the settled society of the Canaanite cities. God, who is beyond all understanding (1 Kings 8:27), now comes to be closely identified with a place, a temple made with hands (Isaiah 66:1–2), a dynasty, a city and, perhaps inevitably with oppression and injustice. God's approval of the Temple (1 Kings 9:3–5) did not extend to the actions and content of it.

<sup>12</sup> Rowland C, 'Friends of Albion?' in Platten S and Lewis C, *Flagships of the Spirit* p.21

<sup>13</sup> He castigates the 'shepherds' who seek neither God nor the good of their flock, letting it get lost and scattered (Jer 2:8;10:21;23:1–2). Perceiving Solomon's Temple as a place of idolatry, the prophet expresses his conviction that public worship has no worth in the eyes of the Lord if it is not the outward expression of an existence according to God's will (Jeremiah 6:20) and again, most damningly, in his Temple sermon (Jeremiah 7:3–14 and 21–23).

them as simple instruments that God used in his sovereign will.<sup>14</sup> In the long run this was to be a help to Israel. By preaching that these institutions (Monarchy, Jerusalem, Temple) did not guarantee God's presence, Jeremiah was also telling them that their disappearance did not automatically imply God's absence either. This was to be a great comfort to the people during their exile in Babylon – also a great lesson: there is no security except in God alone.

### **Christianity and the Temple**

The first Christians seem to have had the same ambivalent relationship to the Temple as some of the prophets did during the time of the Second Temple period (e.g.: Isaiah 66:1–2). This is seen in Stephen's defence in the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:13); the accusations against Jesus at his trial (Mark 14:58) and Jesus' own remarks to the Samaritan women at Jacob's well (John 4:23). On one hand, we find them using the imagery of the Temple to describe their own community life, suggesting that this life replaces the holy life of the Temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand, some Christians continued to worship in the Temple.

### **Gospels**

The gospels give us a picture of Jesus who, in the last days of his life, prophesied the destruction of the Temple. In Mark's gospel, Jesus' death comes at the end of the account in which, from chapter 11 onwards, the Temple is the main theme. Jesus enters the Temple to drive out the buyers and sellers, overturn the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves which maintained the lucrative sacrificial system and made the Temple a wealthy institution. It is worth noting here an observation as to why

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<sup>14</sup> Brother John, *The Pilgrim God*, p.99

Jesus reacted so strongly. ‘It is not primarily because there was buying and selling going on in the holy place but because it was taking place in the outer court – the ‘Court of the Gentiles’. God’s Mission, through the Temple was that this was to be “a house of prayer for *all* the nations” – a beacon for the whole world – So what sort of witness to the living God was this?!’<sup>15</sup>

In Mark, the story of the cursing of the fig tree, which comes before and after the ‘cleansing of the Temple’, is a comment on the bankruptcy of the institution. Its fate will be that of the cursed fig tree. Jesus condemns the authorities for devouring widows’ houses and, before leaving the Temple for the last time, gets his companions to note the way in which the widow, out of her poverty, puts in everything she has to live on, while the rest contributed out of their abundance (Mark 12:41–44). The fact that an institution lets an impoverished widow give all that she has, sits uneasily with the demand in the Torah to care for the widow (Jeremiah 7:6; Deuteronomy 24:17).<sup>16</sup>

The death of Jesus, with the ripping of the veil in the Temple, strongly suggests the end of the Temple (1 Samuel 15:27). The veil that hides access to the ‘Holy of Holies’ is ripped in two from top to bottom and seems to signify that the gospel writer believes the Temple is no longer the centre of God’s power and presence. That is now to be found in the ‘temple of Jesus’ body’ (John 2:19–22).

## **Acts**

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see how the first Christians continue to worship in the Temple, but the importance of the physical Temple decreases. Among the early Christians are some bold witnesses like Stephen whose implied criticism of the Temple provokes a hostile reaction which ends in his death. The Venerable Bede in his ‘De Templo’, sees

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<sup>15</sup> Koor G, Sermon at Bristol Cathedral on Mark 11:1–18 25/9/05

<sup>16</sup> Rowland C, Ibid, p.24

Stephen as a pioneer who explains to his hearers that ‘the Lord does not place a high value on dressed stone, but rather desires the splendour of heavenly souls.’<sup>17</sup>

The writers of the New Testament pay little attention to sacred buildings. Their prime concerns appear to be the reign of God, following God’s ways, the hope of heaven on earth and the community life of Christians. They seem to explore a different way of being God’s people where their priority is the temple of the Holy Spirit – human beings. The divine presence is to be found in the hungry, thirsty, the weak, imprisoned and the outsiders (Matthew 25:31–40). In Paul’s letters it is the Christian community that becomes the temple – the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) and attention is paid to keeping that holy (Romans 12:1–21). The hope in and commitment to the crucified Messiah, which are foolish to humans, are incarnated in people where God’s Spirit can dwell:

‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s spirit dwells in you? ... God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple’ (1 Corinthians 3:16–17)

At the same time there are warnings against complacency. The Christian community needs to recognise that God often comes to disturb and wake it up from outside the warmth of the fellowship (Revelation 3:20). Thus, the focus of the divine presence in the New Testament is not in any building made of stone but rather is in Jesus Christ, his community of followers and in unexpected persons.

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<sup>17</sup> Bede, ‘De Templo’, in *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1995)



## Chapter 5

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND REFLECTION

#### Introduction

Cathedrals: What is their purpose? It is a question that has perplexed some great minds for at least a hundred years. Even following the reforming years of the Victorian era there were doubts as to their ‘raison d’être’. Hensley Henson, as the new Bishop of Hereford in 1918, enquired of the Chapter as to the purpose of the Cathedral. In the end, he felt he discovered more information from his butler than the members of the Chapter: ‘The right use to be made of the Cathedral foundation has long perplexed the bishops and constitutes a problem which none has yet succeeded in solving.’<sup>1</sup>

It seems, however, that the original purpose of a cathedral was to be the place where the bishop maintained his household (his *familia*) and where there was, among other buildings, a church which contained his teaching-chair (*Cathedra*). In recent years, there has grown the common understanding that cathedrals exist also, and have always existed, ‘to be centres of worship and mission’.<sup>2,3,4</sup> It is my intention therefore, to trace through periods of history where cathedrals seem to have matched up to their calling as centres of mission. In doing so, I shall attempt to identify reasons for their effectiveness and any possible guiding principles for today. Three modes of mission seem to be prevalent: Apostolic Mission – the early centuries, Mission as Presence – the Middle Ages and Magnetic Mission – the Victorian era.

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<sup>1</sup> Howe E, *Heritage and Renewal* (London: Church House Publishing, 1994), p.187

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p.3

<sup>3</sup> Wright N T, *For All God’s Worth* (London: Triangle, 1997), p.3

<sup>4</sup> Inge J, *Many Mansions* (unpublished manuscript, 2005)

## **Apostolic Mission – the early Centuries**

In the pre-Viking period there is clear evidence that cathedrals were some of the earliest bases for apostolic missionary enterprise. In Northern England, in particular, there were successful Irish missions via the Island of Iona. Set up with a monastic structure where the abbot held overall authority, the bishop operated as an evangelist going out to proclaim the gospel and announce the Kingdom of God in a similar fashion to the original disciples. Indeed, the cathedral's mission in this period seems to have focussed largely on the bishop's apostolic ministry.

A notable example of such effective evangelistic ministry is seen in that of Aidan. He had been invited over from Iona by King Oswald to set up a monastery on the Island of Lindisfarne. Close to the king's main castle at Bamburgh and in the centre of the kingdom, this proved to be a strategic site. From here, he walked out into the lanes of Northumbria speaking to everyone he met and asking them where they stood with regard to the Christian faith. Any positive responses were followed up by Aidan sending his monks, in the following weeks, to the villages where they lived. Here, further Christian instruction was given and a catechumenate established.<sup>5</sup>

Similar missionary bishops, operating from the monastic mission centre of Lindisfarne, were Chad and Cuthbert.<sup>6</sup> Cuthbert, whose entry into religious life had been inspired by Aidan also, seems to have followed his missionary methods, making many journeys on which he preached the word to both individuals and small groups. Like Aidan, he rarely went alone, but with one or more companions – evangelism was seen to

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<sup>5</sup> Tristram K, Celtic Christianity Lecture (Cliff College, January 2001)

<sup>6</sup> A disciple of Aidan's, Chad had been consecrated bishop of the Northumbrians around 666 CE but soon resigned and was later sent to be bishop of the Mercians. Here, he set up his mission base at Lichfield and it is Chad who is responsible for building the first Cathedral there. Like Aidan, Chad evangelised by walking everywhere and he refused to ride a horse – a sign of wealth and aristocratic status. Mercia, however, was a huge diocese, and it is reported that Archbishop Theodore not only ordered him to use a horse but that he physically lifted him on with his own hands. Simpson R, *A Celtic Daily Light* (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2003), p.58

be a communal activity. In a sense, we perceive that the bishop's teaching ministry was going out from his cathedral like a travelling monastery.<sup>7</sup>

There is evidence that the Anglo-Saxon cathedrals had a similar centrifugal impetus and direction to their missionary work. The religious communities of the minsters were centres from which people went out to preach and establish Christian communities. During the years before 1066 there were a number of embryo bishoprics, each of which would have had a Saxon cathedral. Significantly, they were temporary, like the Irish cathedrals, built of wood, not stone.<sup>8</sup>

The missionary methods of the Anglo Saxons and Celts may have differed in form and style, however, the detailed picture is unclear.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, their physical impact on the Christian landscape of Britain diverged. In Northumbria the two traditions – Celtic and Anglo Saxon – met and went their separate ways. Out of their consolidation of monastic cultures only the latter model would endure. No Celtic cathedrals remain. Primarily this seems to be because the Celtic model was by nature less ecclesial. Bosch suggests that the major difference was that the itinerant Irish preachers developed more into missionaries,

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<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, 'Life of St. Cuthbert' in *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, ed. Bestram Colgrave (CUP, 1940), IV: 7

<sup>8</sup> Lehmborg S, *ibid*, p.5

Many of these were founded as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. In addition to Sherborne, Chester-le-Street, Crediton and Cornwall, such bishoprics included Dorchester (Oxfordshire), Donwiche, Elmham, Hexham, Leicester, Lindsey, Ramsbury, Ripon and Selsey. A number of these had been dissolved or transferred to other sites prior to the end of the Saxon era. Several others – Dorchester, Elmham, Ramsbury and Selsey – were still active in 1066.

<sup>9</sup> The Anglo Saxons may have had a more positive attitude than the Celtic to the existing beliefs and culture of the people to whom they preached thus stressing the 'indigenising principle'. Walls A, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, New York: T and T Clarke, 1996), p.8. Helen Julian argues that the Celts tended to see a more radical separation of Sacred and Secular, Pagan and Christian, and that, for them, conversion entailed a dramatic turning away from previous beliefs (thus emphasising the 'pilgrim principle'); Walls A, p.9; the Anglo-Saxon mind was perhaps more pragmatic, seeing the good already present in the society that they sought to convert. Ray Simpson, however, seems to disagree. He states that Celtic Christians were also happy to 'baptize' the pagan culture – 'they built their places of worship in the places where people had previously worshipped as pagans; they carried on customs such as circling farms and homes but now they did this in the name of the One True God. Simpson R, p.196.

while their Anglo-Saxon counterparts developed from missionaries into church organizers.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, there does appear to be a consensus that, in both the Anglo Saxon and Celtic Church, the cathedral within the monastery was the centre from which mission emerged and that the bishop was the focus of this missionary movement. Looking back so far in history to discern what happened is like trying to find footprints in the mist. There is a danger of overstating a case when the evidence is limited (from only one or two primary sources – Bede and Adomnan)<sup>11,12</sup> and where some of the writing is hagiographical in style. What is clear, however, is that, after the Celtic and Anglo Saxon era, Britain had been re-evangelised.<sup>13</sup> Their mission and ministry had been effective.

## Reflections

Some tentative reflections would therefore be that:

1. Bishops being at the heart and operating out of the cathedral community would seem to be central to the missionary task of the early centuries. Michael Sadgrove, the Dean of Durham Cathedral, recognises the importance of this for a renewed commitment to evangelism in our cathedrals today:

‘As a way of reenvisioning one of the tasks of spiritual leadership, it would be worth revisiting the Celtic model of the Cathedral and its relationship to the bishop ... a strong personal collaboration between bishop and dean in evangelistic activity in and around the Cathedral could be very strategic.’<sup>14</sup>

Just as parish clergy and local ministers are learning the skills of

‘episcopate’, in overseeing ministry teams as they cover larger and larger areas and

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<sup>10</sup> Bosch D, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p.235

<sup>11</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

<sup>12</sup> Adomnan, *Life of Columba* Anderson A D and Anderson M O (eds) (Oxford, 1991 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

<sup>13</sup> Tristram K, (Cliff College, 2001)

<sup>14</sup> Sadgrove M, e-mail interview concerning ‘deans as evangelists’ 22/9/05

numbers of churches, so here is an opportunity for bishops (and those who chair districts) to rediscover their ‘apostolic’ role as bishops in mission.

2. The spiritual rigour and humility of the bishops and their companion monks was compelling. They were missionaries first and the greatest impression they leave is their total commitment to the Lord. Prepared like Abram to go where they were sent, soaked in the Scriptures and rigorous in their prayers and devotions, these men were impressive.<sup>15</sup> The writings about them, even the hagiographical ones, are testimony to the impact they made. Douglas Dale comments with regard to Aidan and Cuthbert:

‘Sanctity was the first fruit of evangelism and in its turn gave evangelism new impetus and power. It occurred within a community as a result of prayer, and drew to itself the patronage and devotion of rich and poor alike.’<sup>16</sup>

This and other references from Bede and Adomnan make the important link between effective mission and prayerfulness – a point not to be lost in today’s Church.

3. The cathedrals built by the Anglo Saxons and Celts were of wood and did not survive. They were temporary dwelling places speaking more of Tabernacle than Temple. They testify to a belief in a Pilgrim God who is on the move reaching out to his lost people (Luke 15:3–7) rather than a God who has put down anchor and waits for his people to come to him. The temporary nature of the cathedral’s construction together with the monastic foundation of their life points to a mission based primarily on a community and not a building.

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<sup>15</sup> Tristram K, (Cliff College, 2001)

<sup>16</sup> Dale D, *Light to the Isles* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1997), p.112

## **Mission as Presence – the Middle Ages**

### *The Changing Role of the Bishop*

Although bishops themselves were directly involved in the operation of their cathedrals during the early centuries, they came to be more and more removed. As Christianity took root and became the state religion, territories were marked out and dioceses were formed. The role of the bishop demanded more oversight (episcopate) of an established Church rather than apostolic pioneering of new Christian communities:<sup>17</sup> An Apostolic paradigm gave way to a Christendom paradigm.<sup>18</sup>

By the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century there were 19 bishoprics and cathedrals in existence due to the determination of William the Conqueror and his archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc of Bec. One of Lanfranc's goals was the establishment of monastic communities at many of the cathedrals, continuing an effort that had begun earlier. Ten 'Monastic Cathedrals' were established.<sup>19</sup> Since the bishop theoretically took the place of an abbot, these establishments were ruled by a deputy known as a prior. They came to house large communities – seventy was often regarded as the ideal number of monks.

The remaining Cathedrals<sup>20</sup> were run by clergy who did not take monastic vows. Hence, these were known as 'Secular Cathedrals'. Here the dean was the head of the

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<sup>17</sup>All bishops gained their own residences, often grand enough to be called palaces and frequently at some distance from the Cathedral and they built private chapels in them. Lehmborg S, *English Cathedrals: A History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.xii. Many bishops, also, became important in politics, often serving as prominent ministers or chief advisers to medieval monarchs. In turn, the cathedrals came more and more to govern themselves. As a bishop's responsibilities grew in other spheres so the running of the cathedral fell to others – a dean who was assisted by clergy forming the cathedral chapter. Ordinary business affairs were left in the hands of the dean and chapter, with the bishop being involved only in important issues. Bishops came to visit their cathedrals rarely, perhaps preaching at Christmas and Easter, offering confirmation annually and conducting periodic episcopal visitations. In many cases bishops were not particularly welcome at their cathedrals as bad feeling and rivalries commonly emerged between bishops and deans.

<sup>18</sup> Mead L, *The Once and Future Church* (Bethesda: The Alban Institute, 2001), p.9–39

<sup>19</sup> Canterbury, Bath, Coventry, Durham City, Norwich, Rochester, Winchester and Worcester adhered to the Benedictine rule, while the brick Cathedral at Carlisle was a house of Augustinian Canons. (Interview with Nicholas Orme, 19/9/05)

<sup>20</sup> St. Paul's in London, York Minister, Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, Salisbury and Wells. (Interview with Nicholas Orme, 19/9/05)

cathedral establishment and was assisted by a chapter made up of canons or prebendaries. Again the numbers were large.<sup>21</sup>

Although different in style and custom, both types of cathedral practised a mission of 'presence'. The principles of worship, hospitality and education were practised. No longer were cathedrals seen as mission bases from which the bishop and a team went out to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom and evangelise, as in the Anglo Saxon and Celtic period. Rather the cathedral now acted as a centre of Christian presence – the emphasis moved to the cathedral being 'salt in the meal' and 'light on the hill' – maintaining the Christian nature of society.

Hence the main focus was on the 'Opus Dei' – the full round of monastic offices was said or sung and in the Secular Cathedrals solemn liturgies were also offered. Cathedrals became places of learning as many cathedral libraries came into existence. Instruction in Latin and liturgy was provided for novices or young men seeking to serve the Church. Especially in the monastic cathedrals, guest houses provided hospitality for travellers and infirmaries helped care for the sick. Although services were conceived of as being offered to the greater glory of God rather than for the benefit of humans, lay people were welcome to attend and must have been impressed by the great celebrations in the Church's liturgical year. It is impossible to say how frequently lay men and women came to the cathedral but there is much evidence of the worship and veneration of relics, pilgrimages to cathedrals for penance and healing, as well as attendance at civic ceremonies and special services.<sup>22</sup>

All the Monastic Cathedrals maintained schools – 3 types: i) Internal schools for young monks (which in later years became grammar schools) to prepare the brightest young men for study at the universities and the less academic for service within the

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<sup>21</sup> Lincoln came to have 58 prebendaries and Salisbury had 52. There were 30 at York and 20 or more at the remaining Secular Cathedrals. (Interview with Nicholas Orme, 19/9/05)

<sup>22</sup> Lehmberg S. p.87

monastery; ii) Almonry schools to provide elementary education for orphans or other poor children entrusted to the monks; iii) Song schools for choristers which, like the choristers' houses in the Secular Cathedrals, provided mainly musical training and prepared the boys to sing for the many cathedral services.

Cathedrals, therefore, for the major period of their existence were more concerned with 'keeping the Christian life'<sup>23</sup> rather than apostolic mission. They were power houses of study, prayer and music and no longer central bases from which teams of people went out to preach, teach and baptise. They did care for the sick in their infirmaries and bury the dead but this was more commonly a centripetal ministry where the cathedral communities offered a service for those who came *to* them.<sup>24</sup> Cathedrals during this period acted much like a college of cardinals, but they did not play a large part in the life of the diocese. 'There were sermons in Lent and they housed shrines for the people to visit on pilgrimage ... but they didn't do much evangelism'.<sup>25</sup>

## **Reflection**

The mission of cathedrals in the Middle Ages, being one predominantly of presence has a firm theological foundation in the Incarnation. Here is a Christian community 'tabernacled' in the midst of society offering a tangible sign of Christ's presence for all around to see. Unlike the monasteries of the Celts and Anglo Saxons, however, here was presence with power and wealth. The Church had moved from being a small persecuted minority to being a large influential organisation. An intimate relationship between throne and altar evolved; membership of the Church became a matter of course; the office of the believer was largely forgotten; the dogma was conclusively fixed and finalised ... the

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<sup>23</sup> Orme N, Interview 19/9/05

<sup>24</sup> Orme N, Interview 19/9/05

<sup>25</sup> Orme N, Interview 19/9/05



apocalyptic missionary movement of the early Church had settled in Christendom.<sup>26</sup>

Now that Christian civilisation had been established, the present task was to preserve and maintain it.

There was a dark side to all this – cathedrals, in becoming powerful landlords, can be seen to be expending ‘mission energy’ on meeting their own needs rather than those of the world around them. Now there was a magnificent edifice as well as a monastic community to maintain. The opulence of the Temple was certainly an attraction and could point to God’s majesty but the cathedral clergy, now more enclosed, were necessarily busier around the Temple, sustaining the round of worship, and therefore lost the centrifugal impetus of Christ’s former mission. However, was there really anything wrong with the idea of attempting to sustain a Christian civilization? Bosch thinks it is both logical and inevitable that things would develop this way after Constantine’s victory.<sup>27</sup> At least through the Benedictine influence cathedrals acted as a force for good as centres of learning, piety and pilgrimage. Christ was king of the earth and it was seen tangibly in the wealth and power of cathedrals. It may be, though, that the seeds of spiritual decline were sown in this bed of privilege.

### **Magnetic Mission – the Victorian Era**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was an age of energy and confidence in man’s ability to achieve and to reform. This period saw the reform of Parliament, school education, the armed forces and the Civil Service. The Church, like every other institution, was caught up in the spirit of the age and, not surprisingly, reformation came to the cathedrals.

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<sup>26</sup> Bosch D, p.237

<sup>27</sup> Bosch D, p.237

Certainly, in the early 1800s, Cathedrals were very unpopular and in need of reform. They were seen by many as havens of luxury and laxity,<sup>28</sup> “pockets of privilege, lethargy and decadence, inbred and self centred, staffed by lazy and pompous clerics, little concerned with ordinary people or the hardships of their lives.’<sup>29</sup> A scathing report by the journalist William Cobbett, when he visited Winchester Cathedral on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 1825 to attend matins expresses the view of the day. He found:

‘... a dean and God knows how many prebends ... and there were at this “service” two or three men and five or six boys in white surplices, with a congregation of fifteen women and four men! Gracious God! ... it beggars one’s feelings’<sup>30</sup>

Philip Barrett identifies three elements in his criticism that were commonly held: Clear anger directed at the wealth of cathedrals; a regret at finding such small congregations in such large buildings and a worldly approach that recognised the artistic merit of the architecture but saw little beyond a curiosity value in the life and worship of cathedrals.<sup>31</sup>

Such opinion led to the reforms of the 1830s. A Commissioners’ report published in 1835 proposed the abolition of all non-residency canonries in the cathedrals, a reduction to four in the number of residentiaries, and the appropriation of separate estates of the deans and prebendaries. There was also to be a reduction in the number of vicars choral or minor canons. It was believed that these measures would produce something like £130,000 a year which could be spent to augment poor livings and build new churches in urban areas with large populations. Thus, the Cathedrals Act of 1840 saw the financial and material resources of cathedrals greatly reduced.

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<sup>28</sup> Wade J, *The Black Book*, 1832

<sup>29</sup> Lehmborg S, p.271

<sup>30</sup> Cobbett W quoted in Barrett P, *Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: SPCK, 1993), p.2

<sup>31</sup> Barrett P, p.3

Friends of cathedrals hated the Act of 1840 for taking away too much. It was nicknamed the ‘Cathedral-crushing Act.’ Some, however, who were held with great respect, came to appreciate the value of such reforms. Perhaps the most important of these was E. B. Pusey, the leader of the Oxford Movement and Canon of Christ Church Oxford. In a pamphlet, written in 1833 against the prepared reforms,<sup>32</sup> Pusey saw the proposals as leading to the likely ‘destruction’ of an institution that did most to encourage a ‘learned and studious clergy.’ However, some years later, Pusey wrote:

‘The body of Cathedral Clergy have been called to re-examine the nature of their institutions, their duties and responsibilities, and the means of fulfilling them. While impressing upon others the importance of their office in the Church, they have probably deepened their own consciousness of it.’<sup>33</sup>

It will not be known whether it was an unrelated or a determining factor but the material poverty of the cathedrals seems to have coincided with their spiritual enrichment and their growing revival and popularity.

Thus Victorian reforming zeal, focussing on the function and purpose of institutions, came to the country’s cathedrals. Its effects were seen in several areas of the cathedrals’ mission and ministry.

### *Mission Services*

Increased congregations were evident at several cathedrals following the example set by Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s Cathedral of holding great nave services. These services were responding to the success of Methodist evening services and were

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<sup>32</sup> Pusey E B, Remark on the Prospective and Past benefits of Cathedral Institutions in the Promotion of Sound Religious Knowledge by Lord Henley’s Plan for their Abolition (London, 1833)

<sup>33</sup> Pusey E B quoted in Lehmborg S, p.279

obviously much appreciated and attracted large crowds.<sup>34</sup> Ely, with a total population of just over 5000 people saw worshippers of 1,200 in number on a Sunday evening in 1872.<sup>35</sup> In some places these services were seen as reaching out to poorer sections of society. At York, Dean Duncombe reckoned nine-tenths of the working people who came to the nave services never went to any other church. Others, however, believed they drew worshippers from the parish churches.

Canon George Trevor was an incumbent in York during the twenty years after 1847. He saw his church empty as the Cathedral instigated nave services and flourished. In 1867 Trevor admitted to being ‘thoroughly beaten’ and he went to a parish in the countryside. Duncombe, however, denied the cause and effect to be necessary.<sup>36</sup>

Whether the new worshippers attending cathedral services were transfer growth, restoration or new is not clearly evident. Certainly, though, cathedral congregations became vast and preaching became an important part of the cathedral’s Mission.

### *Holistic Mission*

During this period cathedrals came to forge stronger relationships with their dioceses. This was in part due to the railway helping cathedrals to become centres of their dioceses. Side chapels were reserved for private prayer; lectures were held in the chapter-house; missions and quiet days were organised; school teachers, missionaries and temperance workers gathered there for meetings – bible classes for working men and night school for adults; choral festivals at the cathedral became very popular; great services for charity children were instigated. The cathedral was in vogue.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ‘The nave service at St. Paul’s with the excellent preaching of Canons Lidden, Lightfoot and Dean Church became one of the great services of England.’ Not less than 2000 attended, sometimes up to 6000. Chadwick O, *The Victorian Church Part II* (London: A and C Black, 1970), p.381

<sup>35</sup> Goodwin H, *Recollections of a Dean in Essays on Cathedrals*, ed. Howson J, 1872, p.28

<sup>36</sup> Chadwick O, p.381

<sup>37</sup> Chadwick O, p.385

### *Involvement of Missionary Bishops*

The stronger relationship with the wider community in the county was also due, in part, to the greater involvement of the bishop in the cathedral's affairs. Dean Alford of Canterbury urged the 'absorption' of deans 'into the episcopal office' in 1869,<sup>38</sup> and E. W. Benson put this into practice when he became Bishop and Dean of Truro. Benson stressed the responsibility of the honorary canons at Truro to act as his council and consulted them over several diocesan matters.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Benson was anxious to associate mission work in the Truro diocese 'definitely and closely with the Cathedral as the centre of the life and work of the diocese'.<sup>40</sup> He thought that every diocese ought to have a large staff of missionaries and pioneered the suggestion at the first diocesan conference at Truro in 1877 that there should be a band of missionaries based in the cathedral under the direction of a canon missionary.<sup>41</sup> This was obviously not simply wishful thinking because in 1895, Canon Donaldson was able to report that during the previous years the missionaries of Truro Cathedral had helped various parishes in Cornwall on 130 occasions.<sup>42</sup>

### *Tourism*

The development of the railways also encouraged tourism. Cathedrals that generally had been closed except for Sunday services were now open. Complaints from visiting vicars

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<sup>38</sup> Alford H, 'Cathedral Reform – a Supplement', *Contemporary Review*, vol xii, September 1869, p.365

<sup>39</sup> Barrett P, *Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: SPCK, 1993), p.252

<sup>40</sup> Donaldson A, *The Bishopric of Truro* (London, 1902), p.77

<sup>41</sup> Benson E, *The Cathedral: Its Necessary Place in the Life and Work of the Church* (London: John Murray, 1878), p.133

<sup>42</sup> Donaldson A, p.78

and lay people about the noise, bad language, litter and dirt testify that cathedrals were open to all kinds of visitors from every walk of life.<sup>43</sup>

### *Music*

Another great improvement was in the music and quality of service offered which helped to enlarge congregations. Perhaps the person who did most to raise musical standards was Samuel Sebastian Wesley. Widely regarded as the best organist of his day, he was also a zealous and fearless campaigner – ‘A radical reformer, berater of the clergy and particularly of the dignitaries of the Church’.<sup>44</sup> He managed to increase the pay of cathedral organists and campaigned for lay clerks (choirmen) to be paid properly otherwise he felt a choir member who had to work would be no better than ‘a tradesman amongst singers and a singer amongst tradesmen’.<sup>45</sup> In this way, together with populists like Stainer, he helped transform the quality of the sung services which in turn attracted more worshippers to cathedrals: ‘A hymn tune was not only a melody but an instrument of evangelism’.<sup>46</sup>

### **Reflection**

There is, therefore, considerable evidence that cathedrals both stimulated and responded to a growing interest in them in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Those who ran cathedrals recognised that they had a responsibility towards those members of the public who visited them. The awareness of this responsibility, added to the burgeoning links with the bishop, the diocese and the city, meant that cathedrals had a growing sense of mission during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Good appointments to cathedral posts like Benson,

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<sup>43</sup> Barrett P, p.268–269

<sup>44</sup> Report in the Western Morning Post 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1944

<sup>45</sup> Wesley S, *Cathedral Music* (London: Hinrichsen Edition Ltd, 1849), p.57

<sup>46</sup> Chadwick O, p.396

Lidden, Church, Westcott, Butler and Lightfoot were also vital in this. These men cared deeply for the cathedral and its impact on wider society. Their zeal, vigour and enthusiasm were very influential in developing the mission of cathedrals in this era.

It seems, therefore, that the Reforms of 1840, which removed many of their assets and caused such an outcry from certain quarters, forced cathedrals to engage more fully with the wider world. Cathedral appeals, restoration programmes and lack of resources forced some new thinking. The Victorian restoration of cathedrals helped to turn them outwards and, as they began to look out and serve, so they attracted people in with a magnetic force.

## **Chapter 6**

### **MISSION-SHAPED CATHEDRAL**

The next section is an attempt to look at cathedrals today in the light of the Mission-Shaped Church report.

It recognises that mission is a wide subject incorporating many aspects of ministry. The report uses the three words ‘mission’, ‘shaped’ and ‘church’ to describe a story and also to ask: ‘What if mission shaped the Church?’ so this section looks at the missionary call of the cathedral today through some of the key factors governing its ministry:

- I. Children-shaped Cathedral
- II. Heritage-shaped Cathedral
- III. Finance-shaped Cathedral
- IV. Worship-shaped Cathedral
- V. Evangelism-shaped Cathedral

These titles, therefore, can be seen as dimensions of what a mission-shaped cathedral might look like if governed by these factors. Each chapter not only explores what is happening at present but also examines the potential of these shapes to further the missionary task of the cathedral.



# I CHILDREN-SHAPED CATHEDRAL

## Introduction

In an era that tends to view education in terms of its usefulness, cathedrals are able to witness to something richer, deeper and more rounded. As we have discussed, many of the ancient cathedrals were monastic institutions which, in the Middle Ages, were one of the few educational resources in their locality. Later cathedral schools were a vital part of the developing educational provision in this country. Today, although some cathedrals have schools associated with them (especially choir schools) cathedrals have no formal or statutory educational role – this is provided elsewhere. Thus the educational potential of cathedrals is associated more with their architecture, history and social significance and with the fact that they are living Christian communities, and relies on people visiting them. ‘Cathedrals can and should lift the heart above the everyday and towards God.’<sup>1</sup>

John Inge describes with enthusiasm the ‘Pilgrim Train’ that he organised at Ely Cathedral, in conjunction with the local railway operating company.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that the experience had captured the children with all of their being – it enabled a sense of awe to awake in them. Stories like that have been related by many who welcome and work with children in cathedrals.<sup>3</sup> A common feature is the way children start talking in

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail interview with John Inge, former Vice Dean of Ely. 4/10/05

<sup>2</sup> ‘... 400 school children from Harlow in Essex were dropped off at Ely Station and walked the half mile up the hill to the Cathedral. They were met by vergers and clergy half way up, fully robed and walked in procession to the south door of the Cathedral. The intention was that they were then to turn east on entering the Cathedral and proceed to St. Ethelreda’s shrine on which they would place bunches of flowers ... it had all been rehearsed ... but once the children entered the Cathedral to the sound of the great organ playing, having looked up at the beauty of the Octagon ... they were completely overcome. The Pilgrim train came to a grinding halt. The Cathedral stewards couldn’t move them on because the children seemed so overwhelmed ... in awe. It took half an hour to get to the shrine!’

<sup>3</sup> ‘The children look up, their eyes widen, their mouths open but they say nothing’ Comment by David Risden Education Officer for Exeter Cathedral in Interview on 28/9/05.

Also Crossland J, *Evangelism in English Cathedrals* (Dissertation Cliff College, 2002), p.118  
Interview with Canon Trevor Dennis: ‘Children feel the stillness and respond’.

whispers when they come into the cathedral having been chattering excitedly outside a few minutes earlier.

### **Growing Popularity**

Development of schools work is one of the areas that seems to have grown rapidly in cathedrals over the last ten years. All of the Cathedral Education Officers who responded to my short questionnaire spoke of a rise in the number of schools visits.<sup>4</sup> St. Paul's Cathedral had been most dramatic:

‘Since I launched the education service in May 2003, we have seen figures rise by at least 40% and our database for schools from 680 to 1500’.<sup>5</sup>

This is an area in which many Cathedral Chapters have worked hard and seen a need: ‘Many children never enter a church during their early years’.<sup>6</sup> A majority of cathedrals now employs at least one qualified teacher as an education officer. Together with the volunteers they recruit and train, they welcome many thousands of schoolchildren each year to cathedrals. Education centres have been set up in several cathedrals which provide an area where children can be welcomed, taught and offered hospitality. David Ridsen at Exeter and Marilyn McInnes from Chichester both attribute the increased interest from schools partly to changes in the National Curriculum and agreed syllabi for religious education in schools. A visit to a cathedral can help teachers hit many of their curriculum targets so, therefore, they believe they have become more popular. Many cathedrals offer ‘schools days’. At Wells Cathedral, all leavers from church primary schools (Year 6) are invited – and nearly all attend – which means 3000 children in and around the cathedral over 2 days! Chichester has a whole day for sixth form students which will have to be

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<sup>4</sup> Exeter, Salisbury, Ely, Chichester, St. Paul's Cathedral Education Officers.

<sup>5</sup> Arends L. E-mail response 6/10/2005.

<sup>6</sup> Inge J, 4/10/05.

offered twice next year ‘because of demand’.<sup>7</sup> ‘Ely attracts 4000 children to the Cathedral on four days in October.’<sup>8</sup>

All of the above would seem to indicate the great potential that cathedrals have for connecting with children and hence addressing the ‘time bomb’ that MSC observes. With less than 4% of children in this nation in church on Sundays and the subsequent decline in basic knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, the work of Cathedral Education Officers and their volunteers offers an opportunity to engage children with the gospel story that local churches might not receive or have the resources which enable them to respond. The opportunity is present, yet the manner in which it is taken will determine the effectiveness.

### **Education and the Meaning of Life**

It is obviously a good thing that cathedrals have been able to relate relevantly to many aspects of the National Curriculum and that schools seem to be responding so positively to invitations to visit. Science, history, mathematics and RE can all be ticked off the list of a busy teacher at a cathedral visit. However, education departments of cathedrals do not exist simply to deliver the National Curriculum.<sup>9</sup> John Crossland found that some cathedral education departments were very wary of taking too strong a spiritual line even though this is not only suggested but even encouraged by the National Curriculum. At Norwich, where they cater for 12,000 children every year, he found that ‘faith input was said to be low key’.<sup>10</sup> At Manchester, on the other hand, the education officer worked in

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<sup>7</sup> McInnes M, 19/10/05

<sup>8</sup> Inge J, 4/10/05

<sup>9</sup> John Inge felt that dressing children up as monks for a day, whilst hugely enjoyable, would not be doing a great deal for those involved unless it enabled them to make connections between the life that the monks lived and the meaning of their own lives.

<sup>10</sup> Crossland J, p.79

conjunction with the canon missionary and here there was a policy of allowing children time to reflect on God and the Christian story to which the building related.<sup>11</sup>

In my interview with David Ridsen,<sup>12</sup> I addressed the issue of spiritual formation and evangelism in the cathedral's educational work with children. He detected a different attitude from the school's perspective in the last few years. Whereas teachers had been wary, and 'scared stiff of indoctrination' by the cathedral in the mid-1990s, today there was more intrigue and curiosity as to 'where God related to this vast building and to people's lives.'<sup>13</sup> This invitation was affirmed by Laura Arends, the education officer at St. Paul's, who felt that the understanding of the Christian faith amongst teachers had decreased in the last five years. She attributed this to the fact that most teachers she saw on school visits were 25–35 years old (young) and therefore were unlikely to have benefited from Christian nurture in school, home or church. However, she noted that many of these teachers seemed 'curious' about the Christian faith, not just the artefacts. In this sense, the lack of knowledge seemed to spur interest and a positive attitude.<sup>14</sup> David Ridsen perceived an increase in the understanding of the Christian faith amongst children at primary schools (though a decrease in secondary schools) which he attributed to the improved input that primary RE teaching has received from the government in the last four years.

### **An Engaging Observation**

Certainly David felt there were opportunities to address faith matters if done sensitively. I observed his introduction to schools where he takes them up to the high altar in the

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<sup>11</sup> Crossland J, p.77

<sup>12</sup> Interview with David Ridsen Exeter Cathedral 28/9/05

<sup>13</sup> Interview with David Ridsen Exeter Cathedral 28/9/05

<sup>14</sup> E-mail response from Laura Arends St Paul's Cathedral 6/10/05

cathedral (the Holy of Holies) and describes the cathedral building as being: a thank you to God; a place that emulates heaven and a place of community.<sup>15</sup>

As a missionary I was impressed by the way David blended education and spirituality in his introduction and enabled both children and teachers to reflect on the significance and meaning of their own lives. In the final section, by asking them to eat bread that had been signified as Jesus' body and then asking 'Where is Jesus now?', he had made, in effect, an evangelistic appeal in a sensitive yet probing manner. It, in no way, felt inappropriate or forced.

### **Pilgrims on a Journey**

Several cathedrals engage children with the Christian faith through the motif of *Journey*. This is mainly because it links so well with the history of the building and community – people have been coming on pilgrimage to cathedrals for well over a thousand years. Thus, there is plenty of opportunity for interactive, entertaining and stimulating learning as children dress up as Abbots, Priors, Bishops and Pilgrims and to put themselves in the shoes (or sandals) of those who made up the cathedral community many years ago. More importantly, from the perspective of this research, is that the idea of *pilgrimage* dovetails

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- <sup>15</sup> 1. *A thank you to God* ... For Creation – there are many animal and nature carvings in Exeter Cathedral.  
... For Jesus Christ – they see the cross and he explains how Jesus died.
2. *A place that emulates heaven* Here the children are asked to lie on the floor and look at the beautiful vaulted ceiling. In medieval times this was perfection on a building site – designed to make your jaw drop. He points out that by great craftsmanship and beauty, we glorify God by giving of our best to Him.
3. *A place of community* David draws their attention to the altar, links it with the last supper, hospitality of bread and wine and the death and resurrection of Jesus.  
All children and teachers are given bread to eat in connection with Jesus' words: 'This is my body given for you'. When they have eaten the bread, David then asks them, in silence, to think: 'Where is Jesus now?' This later produces stimulating reflection of a spiritual as well as educational nature.

with current missiological findings: Christian conversion is much more of a journey to faith rather than simply an on-the-spot event of crisis.<sup>16</sup>

## Two Examples

At Chester Cathedral, Judy Davies the education officer runs a week of ‘Pilgrim Days’ for one week every year. Aimed specifically at Year 5 pupils, Judy defines pilgrimage as a personal journey to a specific place.<sup>17</sup> Her aim is not only to educate the children with historical facts but to give them space to think, enjoy themselves and to experience the cathedral as a ‘living building’. During the day, the children engage in a variety of activities.<sup>18</sup> Although Judy says she does not evangelise, there is no doubt that during these days the children are encouraged to engage with spiritual matters, not just historical facts. The pilgrimage days are not aimed at church schools – the majority of children are not from a Christian background. She says, however, that many children bring their parents back to visit the Cathedral, such is the impact on them.<sup>19</sup>

At Exeter Cathedral a 20 minute interactive pilgrimage service has been designed to involve the children – body, mind and soul.<sup>20</sup> There was an initial anxiety on behalf of

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<sup>16</sup> Finney J, *Finding Faith Today* (Swindon: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992)

<sup>17</sup> She outlines the historic purpose of pilgrimage as visiting a special place, to enhance one’s standing with God, to understand something more clearly, to pray for a particular concern, to obtain forgiveness, do a penance and to experience a sense of personal fulfilment.

<sup>18</sup> They observe the skills of the craftsmen in stone, glass and artwork around the building; they take part in a workshop – (calligraphy, sewing, stained glass or story telling, choir, dance, bellringing, mosaic) – to experience doing something as beautifully and carefully as possible: in the lady chapel they learn about the Cathedral through the ages, undertaking a role play to explore why people in the past made pilgrimages; in the Refectory they learn about the Cathedral when it was a monastery – they put on a simple habit, eat a simple meal and listen to a ‘monk’ reading (the visitors officer dresses up as the strict Abbot!); in the children’s chapel the children are encouraged to consider, in silence, their own ‘journey’ and to think about their hopes for the future. A candle is passed around and children may voice their hopes or write prayers which are collected up in a basket to be placed on the altar during a closing act of worship.

<sup>19</sup> Crossland J, *Evangelism in English Cathedrals* (Dissertation Cliff College, 2002)

<sup>20</sup> After some workshop activities the children gather, as pilgrims, outside the Cathedral and are met by a member of the clergy and verger and incense is wafted over them. They enter the Cathedral and stop at the font to be sprinkled with water reminding them of God’s welcome, love and new life for them. They then process up the nave to the crossing to stop at the crucifixion triptych where the children are encouraged to look at the vivid painting and to ask questions. A short account of the crucifixion and resurrection is given. We say ‘sorry’ prayers and the children are invited to ‘kiss’ the cross (as pilgrims hundreds of years ago would have done). We then move further eastward up the North aisle to the tomb of Edward Lacy – known

the instigators of the pilgrimage service that it was verging on proselytising, however, feedback from teachers who attended (often with little or no faith) has been very positive. They liked the fact that the service involves movement and is not sedentary, is tactile and engages imagination. They observed that it stimulated the children's minds and offered them an opportunity to open up to spiritual matters. The teachers also responded warmly to the opportunity for the children to pray for those who were sick or in trouble. Some of the teachers themselves evidently found the experience personally 'moving' and helpful.<sup>21</sup> It may well be significant that all the teachers present were under 40 years of age.

### **Reflection**

Although there may be fear of indoctrination from some quarters it seems to me important, as John Inge urges, we offer not just facts and teaching about religion but some hands-on experience. The experiential culture we live in demands more from cathedral education programmes that simply interpret signs and symbols and give ten key facts about the cathedral. There is no doubt that some education officers are wary of accusations of indoctrination being levelled at them and therefore deliver programmes that shy away from a spiritual exploration. However, the second key attainment target for most RE syllabuses is 'learning *from* religion', which requires pupils to respond, evaluate

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for being a saintly man with healing gifts. The children see how the stone on the tomb has worn smooth from the touch of thousands of pilgrims over the years asking for help and healing. The children are encouraged to name friends or family members about whom they are concerned who are sick. We sing a simple chant as a prayer and hold a silence together asking for God's healing power and presence with those that have been named. Finally, the children proceed to the very Eastern end of the Cathedral – the Lady Chapel – where they view the icon of Mary, hear how she offered herself to God and was obedient to him. The children are here invited to light a candle, offer their hopes and make a response to God, if they wish.

<sup>21</sup> Conversations with teachers following two pilgrimage services undertaken at Exeter Cathedral, February 2004 and September 2004

and apply what they have learned.<sup>22</sup> Good RE, therefore, is intended to be experiential as well as informative.

My observations, together with those of Laura Arends (education officer at St Paul's Cathedral) would seem to suggest that some cathedral education programmes may need to catch up with the spiritual expectations of those outside the Church. If we do not offer the opportunity of a spiritual experience when children come to the cathedral we are not only missing an evangelistic window, but we are also not adhering to the requirements of the 'secular' National Curriculum or meeting the expectations of the teachers. In today's postmodern culture there is a danger that some cathedrals may not be seen as spiritual enough in their work with children.

Indeed, Mark Ireland has discovered that current research indicates that children are born as spiritual beings. The task of the educator is, therefore, to foster and nurture the innate spirituality of children, enabling them to respond in their own way. This approach, he feels, provides great opportunities to give children experience of the Christian story without seeking to prescribe how they should respond to it.<sup>23</sup>

Cathedrals, today, therefore, would seem to offer a wonderful opportunity for children to develop their spirituality and encounter the living God. Through an experience that explores the history of the building, the life of its community and the gospel story on which it is all founded, the children are invited on a spiritual journey that does not stop at the end of the day's visit. The MSC report highlights the 'time-bomb' that is ticking away, as less and less children are involved in Sunday schools and clubs. Along with the emergence of local mid-week clubs in schools, trips to cathedrals are playing a role in keeping the Christian story alive amongst children in our society. It is a role with a huge

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<sup>22</sup> The National Curriculum – The Standards site: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/religion](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/religion)

<sup>23</sup> Ireland M, *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), p.89



mission potential but one that requires further development and resources if it is to be realised.

## II HERITAGE-SHAPED CATHEDRAL

### Introduction

Most cathedral constitutions contain the definition of a cathedral as ‘the seat of the Bishop and a centre of worship and mission’. As has been discussed earlier, since the era of the Celtic cathedrals, the notion of the bishop gathering his household or familia around him for prayer and support has directly related to his missionary activity. Thus, the proclamation of the gospel in the early years was always the central purpose around which all the other activity gathered. Although progressively overlaid by other functions (almost suffocating it in some periods) this dimension was never completely lost.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, cathedrals have once again found themselves to be at the forefront of evangelism. This, however, has not come so much from their relationship with the bishop as from the character of their buildings and the heritage they represent. Visitor ministry is now an important aspect of the life of every cathedral and this, therefore, is a real evangelistic opportunity.

The style of mission involved here, however, appears in some ways not immediately in tune with the MSC report. The evangelistic opportunities presented by visitors is ‘mission in reverse’ and of a centripetal nature. Whereas the apostolic mission of the Celtic cathedral era and the thrust of MSC is centrifugal and speaks of a ‘go to them’ approach; this is very much magnetic mission and ‘come to us’. Also, whereas the early apostolic mission and MSC tends to emphasise the importance of mission being based around the life of a community and relationships, here in cathedrals much of the focus of attention is on the heritage and the architectural qualities of the building – not the cathedral community.

## Tourists

Michael Sadgrove, the dean at Durham Cathedral, views this ministry ‘as something of a balancing act between competing and sometimes conflicting claims made for the building or on it, and on its resources and its people’.<sup>1</sup> In particular, he refers to the perceived tension between ‘cathedral-as-visitor-attraction’ and ‘cathedral-as-place-of-worship’ which can pose questions about the primary task of cathedrals. Stephen Platten, however, sees that tension resolved by the cathedral community embracing *hospitality* as a key attitude and primary ministry. He identifies the rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 53, as setting the agenda for all who would welcome both tourists and pilgrims:

‘All who arrive as guests are to be welcomed as Christ, for he is going to say, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”’.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, visitors to cathedrals are not a new venture. Monks have been offering hospitality to pilgrims since the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Welcoming visitors who are less intent on a journey of faith but more of an outing or holiday began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The dean of Chester in 1925, wrote:

‘Motor buses and charabancs are beginning to make even large rural dioceses and comparatively small and remote Cathedrals accessible. Outings are popular; the Cathedral is missing a gorgeous opportunity if it does not make the pilgrimage to itself the most delightful outing of all. It will need to have its Refectory and its kitchen equipped for the rapid brewing of plenty of tea’.<sup>3</sup>

It was Bennett who pioneered the opening up of cathedrals and the abolition of the entrance fee; throughout the late Victorian era and up until 1920, virtually all cathedrals had charged for entry – some a fairly stiff fee. For Bennett, everyone has to be welcomed

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<sup>1</sup> Sadgrove M, (Lecture at The Pilgrims’ Association Annual Conference: Durham, 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Platten S, E-mail correspondence 27/9/05

<sup>3</sup> Bennett F, *The Nature of a Cathedral* (London: Mowbray, 1925), p.62

and the cathedral and its staff were to offer themselves and respond to the needs of every soul who arrived, for people come to cathedrals for widely varying reasons.

Today, with the boom of the tourist industry, cathedrals are much visited places. Even smaller urban cathedrals stand as significant buildings in their cities attracting thousands of visitors – Bradford, not on the main tourist routes, receives 25,000 visitors a year.<sup>4</sup> Canterbury Cathedral, York Minster, Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s Cathedral receive millions and are now high up in the top ten of all visitor attractions in Britain. There is a terrific challenge here for cathedrals, as mission centres, to proclaim the Christian faith to the many who come through their doors with little or no faith. Particularly, the challenge is how to do it in an appropriately sensitive manner that is not felt to be coercive. Dean Bennett again seems to have been something of a pioneer in working to help tourists turn into pilgrims. He writes:

‘We need to get rid of the idea that the primary business of a Cathedral and staff is to act as policemen and showmen. The primary business is to help those who come, to feel and to profit by the religious impress of the place.’<sup>5</sup>

### **Evangelism through Interpretation and Journey**

One of the opportunities of reaching out to tourists is through *interpretation*. As an increasing number of visitors come with little or no religious background a number of deans<sup>6</sup> understand the cathedral’s task as not only helping visitors to enjoy the historic and aesthetic qualities of the architecture but also to become more curious about the meaning of sacred space. Michael Sadgrove would like people to ask: ‘What kind of faith

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with the Verger of Bradford Cathedral 10/9/05

<sup>5</sup> Bennett F, p.48

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Christopher Armstrong (dean of Blackburn) 24/11/04; e-mail correspondence with Michael Sadgrove (dean of Durham) 2/10/05; e-mail correspondence with Stephen Platten (formerly dean of Norwich) 21/9/05

is practised here?’ and hopefully even, ‘what would it mean to become part of it?’<sup>7</sup> This directly evangelistic task is sometimes described as inviting tourists to become pilgrims.

Many cathedrals offer this ministry of interpretation with leaflets that describe, not just the architectural significance but also the spiritual significance of font, pulpit, lectern and altar. In this way they can tell something of the Christian story.<sup>8</sup> Others go further with exhibition displays that recount a history of the building and intertwine it with the Christian story.<sup>9</sup> While yet others offer the opportunity of a guided tour using an audio-cassette and headphones. The ‘Guide Port’ system developed by Nick Fry<sup>10</sup> at Chester Cathedral is easy to use, imaginatively animated and sensitively draws the listener into the gospel story through its guided journey around the building. The facility was well used on the day I visited, by adults and children alike.

In a similar fashion Wakefield Cathedral launched *Discovery* in February, 2005 – a spiritual journey through the building. *Discovery* is advertised as an audio tour with a difference.<sup>11</sup> In interview, John Holmes revealed that he intended to ‘be upfront with visitors about the opportunity to make a spiritual journey’<sup>12</sup> as the research they undertook in 2003/4 revealed what others have found – a society with a growing ignorance of the Christian faith and yet obvious spiritual hunger. Interestingly, the increasing acceptance of spirituality as a desirable aspiration for all people is affirmed here by the fact that *Discovery* has prompted support from Wakefield City Council and

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<sup>7</sup> Sadgrove M, e-mail correspondence 2/10/05

<sup>8</sup> For instance, ‘the lectern is in the shape of an eagle which carries the bible on its back, an image of how the word of God is spread around the world’; and ‘There are also candles and a crucifix on the altar ... The candles remind us that Jesus is “The light of the World” and the crucifix reminds us that Jesus died on the cross in order to save us.’ Excerpts from The Welcome leaflet ‘The Living Cathedral’ at Exeter

<sup>9</sup> Salisbury Cathedral

<sup>10</sup> Nick Fry, Visitors’ Officer for Chester Cathedral

<sup>11</sup> It invites visitors to the Cathedral to use places and artefacts in it to reflect on their unique, personal spiritual journey. Aimed at adults and older teenagers (key stage 4 and above) the narrative is enhanced by music recorded by the Cathedral choir and music staff.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Canon John Holmes July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Wakefield Civic Society. They recognised 'its valuable addition to the region's spiritual and cultural heritage.'<sup>13</sup>

### **Reflection on Pilgrimage**

What is good for children is often good for adults. Using the motif of pilgrimage to help people connect their lives with faith issues through a guided tour around the cathedral is proving effective. As discussed in the section entitled 'Children-shaped Cathedral', pilgrimage is widely embraced because conversion is increasingly being seen as process rather than event. Mike Booker and Mark Ireland take research undertaken by John Finney in 'Finding Faith Today' and develop it further. They note how even the dramatic conversion stories recounted in the Acts of the Apostles may be more fully understood in terms of a journey towards faith and this is also true of other conversion experiences in the New Testament: 'Peter's journey to faith occupies the whole of the period of Jesus' Ministry, and if there is a conversion moment it cannot be definitely identified'.<sup>14</sup>

Cathedrals are well-placed to help people on their journey in life and faith.<sup>15</sup> This linking of a place of Divine revelation with the dynamic of movement – a journey – which is such a helpful symbol for Christian function and life, seems to be why pilgrimage is evangelistically effective. It takes seriously three important missionary values – the context of the location (the Cathedral building), the life experience of the visitor, and the power of the gospel story – and makes connections between all three. This may not be overt evangelism but it is deeply connected to the gospel of God incarnate.

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<sup>13</sup> Canon John Holmes 6/7/05

<sup>14</sup> Booker M and Ireland M, *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), p.5

<sup>15</sup> This certainly seems to have been the intention of those who built the great medieval cathedrals to be the destination of pilgrimage, as at Durham. The body of St. Cuthbert was brought by the exiled monks from Lindisfarne to this rocky peninsula in 995 CE, where they built a church. 'To understand Durham properly you need to think of it, not as a church that contains a shrine, but as a shrine around which a church was created.' For many Cathedrals, the notion of journey seems to have been integral to their creation from the beginning – pilgrims have been drawn to them for hundreds of years. Sadgrove M, Lecture at The Pilgrims' Association Annual Conference: Durham, 2004)

One further observation worth noting here is that cathedrals seem to be waking up to this missionary opportunity at the heart of their life. In 2002, John Crossland, in his dissertation on Evangelism in English Cathedrals, found that none of the cathedrals he visited (10 in all) had produced a spiritual guide to the building ‘though several have it in mind’. By 2005 we can confirm that this is no longer the case – Wakefield, Chester, Norwich and Exeter show that the opportunity is now being grasped.

### **Evangelism through Spiritual Encounter**

Cathedrals would then seem to be well placed to help people on their spiritual journey. Some experiments at Exeter Cathedral produced interesting results. In March 2004, a Saturday prayer day for all ages was organised and advertised through the diocesan news and databases. Hardly anyone from the diocesan church family came. There were 18 at the opening service in the Cathedral nave at 10 am and 12 of those were leaders and helpers for the day. There were some calls to ‘pack up and go home’ but it was decided to persist.<sup>16</sup> The day was intended as a teaching day for the Church family to see the potential of prayer stations. What transpired was an effective evangelistic encounter as hundreds of visitors entered the Cathedral and engaged with these prayer stations. They just happened to be there – most were tourists, some pilgrims, some in distress and actively looking for solace and help. Several were tearfully thankful for being given the opportunity to ‘nail their prayers to the cross’ or ‘receive oil and prayer for healing’. This

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<sup>16</sup> Different kinds of Prayer Stations were set up all around the Cathedral – a desert for quiet contemplation in one chapel, praying with bubbles in another. At one station there was a map of the world spread out, with nightlights that could be lit and placed wherever one chose on the map. At another, there was a fishing net suspended over a swathe of blue shiny paper where there was an invitation to cut out a fish shape, write on it the name of a person to come to Christ and then place it in the net. At another, a small pile of stones before a cross with an invitation to ‘build a cairn of hope’ by adding a stone, remembering those who carry heavy burdens and placing them and their needs before the Burden Bearer. At another, there was a ‘prayer tree’ where coloured ribbons could be tied on to branches with an encouragement to pray for friends, family, colleagues or oneself to grow in faith. In a quiet chapel two people were available with oil to offer anointing with prayer.

was a public who generally did not attend church services yet were spiritually open and searching.

A follow-up experiment at Christmas time 2004 revealed a similar response. A Christmas Prayer tree, where people were invited to write their prayers on a cut-out card in the shape of a candle, bell or bauble and hang it on the tree, was festooned with over 250 prayer requests after just 4 days. At the 'Cairn of Hope', the box of 300 stones had been emptied after a week (by Boxing Day) and 300 more stones had to be found immediately as people seemed to find this a tangible way to pray for the victims of the Asian tsunami.

### **Reflection**

The observational findings outlined above are in accord with research carried out by Hay and Hunt.<sup>17</sup> Comparing questions in the BBC's 'Soul of Britain survey' of 2000<sup>18</sup> (see Table IV) with those they had asked in 1987, Hay and Hunt were looking to see if there was a correlation between decline in Church attendance and a drop in positive response to questions about spiritual experience. To their surprise, they found an increase in positive responses, not a decrease. Hay indicated that there might not have been a great change over the 13-year period in the frequency of spiritual experiences but that now people feel more able to admit to such awareness. Thus, there seemed to be either a growth in spiritual awareness or that people felt happier to own the term 'spiritual'.

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<sup>17</sup> Hay D and Hunt K, *Understanding the Spirituality of People Who Don't Go To Church* University of Nottingham, 2000)

<sup>18</sup> Answers to a Survey present in television programme during summer 2000 used by Robert Warren in a Rural Evangelism lecture at Swanwick in November 2000



**Table (IV)**

Frequency of report of religious or spiritual experience in Britain for years 1987 and 2000			
	<b>1987</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% increase</b>
A patterning of events/transcendent providence	29%	55%	90%
Awareness of the presence of God	27%	38%	41%
Awareness of Prayer being answered	25%	37%	48%
Awareness of a sacred presence in nature	16%	29%	81%
Awareness of the presence of the dead	18%	25%	39%
Awareness of an evil presence	12%	25%	108%
<b>CUMULATIVE TOTAL</b>	<b>(48%)*</b>	<b>76%</b>	

\*This includes totals for respondents to two additional questions asked in 1987 about 'a presence not called God' (22%) and 'awareness that all things are One' (5%), i.e. the total of 76% for the year 2000 is quite likely to be relatively speaking an underestimate.

In further interviews with people who had no formal connection with Christianity, Hay and Hunt found that people often talked in spiritual terms.

These findings that point to there being an innate spirituality in humans affirm the biblical understanding of humans being created in the image of God and designed to live in relationship with him. Or as Augustine puts it poetically: 'O Lord you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you'. This is certainly a reality to which the Church in general, and cathedrals specifically, need to be attuned.

Thirteen years ago, Graham Cray observed that 'Postmodern people are more likely to come to faith through experience ... But one of the tragedies of today is that some elements of the Church are now so firmly secularised in their disbelief of the supernatural that they have nothing to say to a culture which increasingly takes spirituality and the supernatural for granted.'<sup>19</sup>

There is both encouragement and challenge for cathedrals here: encouragement that people may well be spiritually aware and searching, despite a lack of Christian

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<sup>19</sup> Cray G, *From Here to Where? The Culture of the Nineties*, Board of Mission Paper 3 (London: Board of Mission, 1992)

grounding or upbringing: and a challenge to reach out in imaginative and appropriate ways that help people in their spiritual search toward an encounter with the living God in Jesus Christ.

### **Hospitality**

Good signs, helpful leaflets, imaginative prayer stations and pilgrimage installations all play their part in drawing the visitor into a spiritual exploration beyond the architectural one obviously on display. However, human warmth and welcome is a vital part of the process. Most cathedrals today employ a Visitors' Officer who coordinates a team of volunteer welcomers and guides. In effect they are the human face of the Cathedral and the effectiveness of the Cathedral's outreach to visitors rests largely with them.

In a sense these welcomers act as evangelists (though few would see themselves in this rôle). Certainly they are witnesses to the Christian faith in the front line as they greet many people who, apart from their visit to the cathedral, would otherwise have no contact or association with a Christian community. Where welcomers are sensitive to the spiritual needs of the people, able to point them in the direction of candle-stands, prayer stations, chaplains or listeners, then they are cooperating with the cathedral's witness and outreach.

Every cathedral would like to see itself as a place of welcome, invitation and generosity. This is more than a matter of smiling at people who come through the door, making them feel glad that they have come – but even this simple act of welcome can easily be overlooked. Many cathedrals have a 'welcome from the dean' in the guide book or visitors' leaflet that speaks of a welcome reflecting the values of the Kingdom of God:

‘We hope that this will be a place where strangers are made welcome, seekers may find God, believers may grow in holiness, and Christians may engage with the issues of our times.’<sup>20</sup>

and,

‘this is your Cathedral. It is open every day. It exists to make the love of God for all humanity a living reality. That love knows no boundaries. I hope you will feel at home here, and experience that love for yourself.’<sup>21</sup>

and,

‘A very warm welcome to Exeter Cathedral ... during your visit this building will become your Cathedral and a place for you to meet with God.’<sup>22</sup>

This welcome on paper stands or falls by the quality of human warmth and hospitality received by visitors on entering the Cathedral.

### **The Volunteers**

It is no easy task to be a cathedral welcomer today. Volunteer role descriptions and Ministry of Welcome Handbooks<sup>23</sup> set out huge lists of expectations and advice about best practice. Whilst being produced ostensibly to help welcomers welcome, there is possibly an eye on the need for the organisation to protect itself against litigation in the event of a mishap or accident caused by a welcomer. One such handbook includes 19 duties that a welcomer is expected to perform!

Indeed, the volunteers have a double-edged task which is recognised in the varying terms by which they are identified – ‘welcomers’, ‘guardians’, ‘stewards’, ‘volunteers’ – at different cathedrals. They are called to welcome visitors in the name of Christ yet also care for the heritage and prevent it being violated or abused. Sadly, the

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<sup>20</sup> McPhate G, *Chester Cathedral* (Jarrold Publishing, 2003), p.1

<sup>21</sup> Mursell G, *Welcome to Birmingham Cathedral* (Birmingham Cathedral, 2004), p.5

<sup>22</sup> Collings N, *The Living Cathedral* (Wire Eater Publishing, 2004), p.5

<sup>23</sup> Exeter Cathedral and Ely Cathedral

latter role is necessary as acts of arson or vandalism are not uncommon.<sup>24</sup> The stewards and welcomers thus have a difficult balancing role in being open and trusting (seeing Christ in the guest) yet astute and wise about dangers to health and safety (knowing the devil prowls around like a roaring lion).

Whilst many volunteers perform their duties with enthusiasm, enjoyment and a sense of satisfaction and their ministry is received with genuine gratitude by visitors, I perceived some tensions. This seemed mainly to do with the age difference of those welcoming and those visiting. Welcomers and stewards are often elderly. The Visitors Officer at Exeter Cathedral estimated that the average age of the volunteers was over 70 years of age.<sup>25</sup>

One dean spoke of feeling ‘powerless to change a system which, in my heart of hearts I know needs changing’. He went on to describe his welcomers as ‘the sitting and knitting brigade’ and his fear at ‘intervening to upset the cosy cartel of volunteers who have always done it that way’.<sup>26</sup> Another Visitors’ Officer, in describing his volunteers, said: ‘Sometimes I feel like I’m running a daycare centre for the elderly ... I can’t sack them in case they die ...’<sup>27</sup> Yet another Visitors’ Officer saw that his volunteers were ‘not particularly welcoming to anyone who doesn’t look respectable ..., young people get ignored ...’ and felt that ‘the senior age of the volunteers impaired the inclusive welcome of the Cathedral.’<sup>28</sup> Whilst this might be viewed as anecdotal evidence, I feel there is some weight to it as it has been confirmed from several different professional sources working in different locations. My own observations confirm the challenge that exists for cathedrals in their witness of welcome: It is commonly thought that visitors are generally

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<sup>24</sup> In the autumn of 2002, a young man set light to the altar linen in Exeter Cathedral and caused £20,000 worth of damage to the fabric. Were it not for the quick thinking and action of one of the virgins, the harm could have been far more serious – to both humans and fabric.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Dr. Julie Lewis 23/9/05

<sup>26</sup> Jackson M, A lecture: Cathedrals Today and Tomorrow, Dublin Cathedral 12/10/02

<sup>27</sup> Remark by the Visitors’ Officer for Norwich Cathedral at The Pilgrims’ Association Conference, 2004

<sup>28</sup> A Visitors Officer at the Pilgrims’ Association Conference, 2004 (wishing to remain anonymous)

from the NADFAS and National Trust mould – born before 1950, middle class, from a church background – however, I observe, and others confirm, that it is a much broader range than that.<sup>29</sup> To reach out to visitors born after 1975 cathedrals will need some *welcomers* who are born after 1975. Otherwise the image cathedrals project can so easily be that of a worthy museum for those who like that sort of thing, instead of a vibrant community open to people of all ages and from all backgrounds.

### **Reflection**

One of the key mission values of MSC is that a missionary Church is focussed on God the Trinity and the understanding that mission starts in the heart of God. The Church is called to be a reflection of the Divine in its community life, its welcome and hospitality.

Cathedrals are surely right to pay much attention to this aspect of their ministry. For the gospel presents us with a God who in Christ comes running to meet us, embraces us with love, opens the door to let us into his presence and then stands back so that we may have space to be and grow.<sup>30</sup> God's welcome is a homecoming.

Thus, in the fortunate situation in which cathedrals find themselves, where many people desire to visit them, it seems that the potential may not be being realised. Crucial questions need to be asked: What quality of welcome is being offered? Are people who are visiting welcomed by people like them or does the human face of the cathedral's welcome indicate that this community has a narrow band of communicants? Will the people meet the living God when they meet the local church, as embodied in the cathedral *welcomers*?

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<sup>29</sup> Welcome desk attendant at Chester Cathedral 25/9/05; and Dr. Julie Lewis, Exeter, 23/9/05

<sup>30</sup> E-mail correspondence with Michael Sadgrove 2/10/05

### **III FINANCE-SHAPED CATHEDRAL**

#### **Introduction**

Cathedrals have become big business. A survey undertaken in 2002 discovered that a total of 8.8 million people visited the 42 Anglican cathedrals in England. Those visitors generated £91 million from visitors for the benefit of local economies and directly supported 2,600 jobs.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly cathedrals are increasingly working in partnership with their cities – the visitors have become a key economic factor for both city and cathedral. There are, therefore, factors other than gospel imperatives that tend to impinge on visitor ministry in cathedrals.

There are clear dangers for cathedrals falling into the same trap as the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple became an important factor in the economic success of Jerusalem. There is evidence that the Temple with its sacrificial system came to focus on profit as its main purpose. Only Temple animals were really unblemished and therefore acceptable for sacrifice. Thus, having, in effect, a monopoly on the animals-for-sacrifice-market, these animals were marked up in price. The system was firstly corrupt and secondly was being carried out in the ‘Court of Gentiles’ (where the outsiders were) arousing Jesus’ righteous anger.

#### **Visitors – Guests or Customers?**

There seems to me a temptation for this ‘mission-in reverse’, in which cathedrals are engaged, to become also a selfish mission, particularly when financial resources are tight. The whole thrust of the cathedral’s mission can easily become an effort to maintain the institution. The income from visitors is seen as crucial to ensure the upkeep of the fabric, to sustain the high quality of music and worship through a professional choir and

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<sup>1</sup> Payne R, *Building Faith in Our Future* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p.31

to keep everything going. This is justified by the comment that unless the standards are maintained then people would not visit and there would not be the mission opportunity in the first place! However, a financial dependency on visitor ministry can seriously compromise its missionary purpose because anything that appears to hinder the much needed cashflow may be viewed as secondary and unwelcome. On a recent visit to Chester Cathedral, the person on duty at the welcome desk candidly told me that one of the great benefits of the newly installed system of charging for entrance was that ‘no vagrants or street people come in now’.<sup>2</sup>

It would be easy to be naïve about all this. Most cathedrals seek income from visitors not to make a profit, but to survive financially. They also need the resources to improve their visitor centres and quality of welcome. “The funding of fabric maintenance has become almost unsustainable in some places and the accessing of funds from public bodies ... eats up time and energy that could have been devoted to mission.”<sup>3</sup> People who work in cathedrals feel the burden of looking after the heritage ‘– it is a huge responsibility’.<sup>4</sup> The ECOTEC survey found that cathedrals spend almost £11 million a year on fabric maintenance, of which only £1 million is granted by English Heritage. Amazingly, the report says, the rest is self-funded.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubting the honourable and honest intentions of those who feel their duty is to maintain the fabric of the beautiful building so that it can be passed on to the next generation intact. My observation, however, is that, because of the continual pressing need for more finance, the task of maintaining the cathedral institution tends to stay the focus of attention – like a hungry toddler desperate for food. The primacy of God’s Mission to proclaim the Kingdom becomes peripheral or subsumed in the goal of

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<sup>2</sup> Conversation with Welcome Desk attendant at Chester Cathedral 25/9/05

<sup>3</sup> Sadgrove M, (A lecture to the Pilgrim’s Association Annual Conference) Durham, 2004

<sup>4</sup> A comment at a Chapter meeting by the Acting Dean, Canon Neil Collings. November 2004

<sup>5</sup> Payne R, *Building Faith in Our Future* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), p.31

sustaining the cathedral machine. Thus, with regard to ministry to visitors, it is easy to see how the gospel principles of welcome, identified in the rule of Benedict (where the stranger is greeted as Christ himself) can become skewed. When visitors are charged or seen as a valuable source of income they are no longer guests but customers.

## **A Current Debate**

There is currently a public debate about the funding of cathedrals and their ‘success’ which will lead us to some important theological questions and reflection. Firstly, let us understand the debate. The Church Commissioners proposed in January 2004 that funding toward cathedral administration and clergy posts should be reduced by £4 millions and that funds could be better spent ‘enabling and energising work that parishes, deaneries, even dioceses acting in isolation may find hard to kick-start if unaided’.<sup>6</sup> The new fund would be used to help sustain growth where it cannot be financed locally, to help fund new initiatives – fresh expressions of Church.

The reaction of some to this news was very cool – seeing it as a knee-jerk reaction to address a situation of decline in the wider Church. The dean of Winchester, Michael Till, perceived cathedrals as ‘a success story ...’ and that ‘... although old, they were one of the new ways of being Church’.<sup>7</sup>

Others were more vehement in their opposition to the report:

‘Why, oh why ..., at a stroke, do the Church Commissioners propose to weaken and diminish that part of the Church that is working hard and working well? Rightly, Cathedrals are called flagships of the Spirit. Any admiral who so reduced support for his key ships as to impair them would be dismissed with ignominy.’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Article in the Church Times 16<sup>th</sup> January 2004, p.3

<sup>7</sup> Church Times 16<sup>th</sup> January 2004, p.3

<sup>8</sup> The Very Rev. Richard Lewis The Dean Emeritus of Wells in a letter to the Church Times, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2004, p.10



Yet some, also with a knowledge of Cathedrals, saw things differently: Roy Barker, a former residentiary canon of Chester Cathedral, recognised that cathedrals ought to be successful (whatever that means) as they had more and better-paid, experienced clergy than any parish church. Their large impressive buildings are architectural masterpieces. Their choral resources and musical output are unrivalled (costing though £150,000–£200,000 per year: far more than most total local churches' budgets). 'The Dean Emeritus of Wells utters the primal scream of the Cathedral babe about to be brought into the real world of self-sufficiency.'<sup>9</sup>

### **Reflection**

Certainly in days of global travel, sightseeing and tourism are a growth industry. It seems hard to see how cathedral 'heritage' (especially on the tourist trail) can fail. Although cathedrals have a wider rôle than to their local community (they serve the city, the diocese and the county in many varied ways) it is true that they are subsidised by the Church Commissioners and many have property assets worth millions. However, the financial reality is more like a family living in a stately home penny pinching at every step to try and save the edifice for the next generation. From an historical perspective, however, it may be seen that the proposed cutting of subsidies is a mirror of the Cathedral Reforms in 1840. Lands and properties were taken from cathedral patronage and used to pay for much needed ministries in fast growing urban areas across Victorian England. The Church Commissioners' payment of three clergy posts in every cathedral today, therefore, may be seen as compensation for larger resources taken away 165 years ago.

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<sup>9</sup> Canon Roy Barker, Canon Emeritus of Chester in a letter to the Church Times, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2004, p.10

Some would fairly say, then, that cathedrals are not, in effect, being subsidized. The £4 million received is theirs anyway.

And what of ‘success’? ‘Success’ in terms of the Kingdom of God cannot be measured by impressive buildings or large head counts boosted by special services (carol concerts, civic ceremonies, diocesan gatherings). Real “success” seems to be, from Scripture, the christlikeness of a church’s total ministry. We note that Jesus went up to the Temple as a boy with his family and that when in Jerusalem he taught in it, even though against the wishes of the Temple authorities. Much of his ministry, however, (according to the Gospels) was through small local synagogues, in the open air – in fields, on the beach – and in people’s homes. In the end he rebuked the goings on in the large, impressive Temple (destroyed in 70 CE). He gave priority to prayer, fasting and obedience to his heavenly Father. He moved among ordinary people in their homes and at their work. He walked the way of the cross – self giving, not self aggrandisement.

## **Conclusion**

Cathedrals have a unique ministry as powerhouses of service across a city, a county and a diocese. It is a huge and onerous responsibility. Cathedrals, also, have the task of introducing visitors to Jesus Christ. In all this, subsidies may be justified, though self-sufficiency may activate prudence and prayer. It is interesting to note again that, after the Reforms of 1840, when many thought they had been asset-stripped and impoverished, cathedrals then seem to have experienced a renewed effectiveness in mission and ministry. Coincidence or divine blessing?

## IV WORSHIP-SHAPED CATHEDRAL

### Introduction

A Cathedral shaped by worship. This is its default setting – cathedral style worship. In many ways, what we have today – professional adult singers, girl and boy choirs, educated privately at the cathedral school with fully-paid director of music and organist – is a tribute to the reformation of music and singing that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Very poor at the beginning of the Victorian era and looked down upon by parish churches yet, by the end, standards were high, much appreciated and cathedrals had become beacons of worship. For centuries, the singing and music in cathedrals was of poor quality and the services were usually said. This is almost inconceivable today, such has been the improvement of standards and expectations over the past 150 years. The Howe report refers to music as ‘the indispensable handmaid of great worship with its ability to inspire and to express aspirations and emotions better than words ... its universality able to transcend religious, intellectual and social business.’<sup>1</sup> Just over 10 years ago the Archbishops’ Commission on cathedrals found that when individual members of congregations were asked what was specially good about their cathedral, the first answer was invariably the music.<sup>2</sup>

### A Success Story

In my visits and observations of various cathedrals I could see no reason why this opinion might have changed. In a denomination that has declined by over 15% in the past 15 years, cathedrals are seen as ‘the success story of the Church of England’<sup>3</sup> by many.

Attendances at regular weekly services in cathedrals have steadily increased by a total of

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<sup>1</sup> Howe E, *Heritage and Renewal*, p.21

<sup>2</sup> Howe E, *Heritage and Renewal*, p.21

<sup>3</sup> Inge J, *Many Mansions* – unpublished paper, 2005

17% since the turn of the millennium. Nationally, 16,000 adults and 2,500 children and young people are usually present at Sunday services alone, while over the whole week the figures rise to 24,000 and 6,000 respectively.<sup>4</sup> My own investigations at Exeter Cathedral show that average Sunday communicants rose from 251 in 2001 to 292 in 2004.

You would be hard pressed to find a Cathedral Chapter that did not see the musical tradition as the main reason for growing attendances. MSC recognises the increase in attendance at cathedrals and is aware of new congregations that have grown based on the use of the traditional, Book of Common Prayer, services.<sup>5</sup> It attributes the ‘success’ to ‘people looking for mystery, beauty, stability and a sense of God’s presence ... discovered in forms and styles that reflect the Church’s heritage in liturgy and spirituality, and a sense of sacred stability in a fast changing world.’<sup>6</sup> The former vice-dean of Ely thinks the attraction is due to ‘the sense of the transcendent which is present in cathedral worship at its best ... architecture and music combine to make a feast for the senses.’<sup>7</sup> Others see the increasing mobility of the population as a factor combined with ‘a desire for top quality’.<sup>8,9</sup> It seems that people will now travel to the cathedral city rather than going to the parish church, even if it has a cathedral-style liturgy. In a rather snide but probably true statement one cathedral dean said: ‘People are glad to know that there’s at least one place in the diocese where traditional worship is done well.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Figures from the Research and Statistics Department, Archbishop Council, March 2005

<sup>5</sup> Cray G and Ling G, *Mission Shaped Church*, p.73

<sup>6</sup> Cray G and Ling G, *Mission Shaped Church*, p.74

<sup>7</sup> E-mail correspondence with John Inge 4/10/05

<sup>8</sup> E-mail correspondence with Paul Bayes, National Evangelism Officer for Anglican Church 6/120/05

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Carl Turner, Precentor and Director of Liturgy and Music of Exeter Cathedral 12/10/05

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by Paul Bayes in his e-mail correspondence 6/10/05

## **New Growth or Transfer Growth?**

What is unclear, however, is what proportion of the congregation is new Christians and what proportion has transferred from other churches. This would be an important and fruitful area for further research. Anecdotal evidence suggests that when large churches like cathedrals do grow, frequently it is because they are ‘recycling the saints’.<sup>11</sup> Christian students, young professionals and the retired move to a new area, for example and gravitate to a well-known large church, depending on their churchmanship. Also, a large church can affect smaller local churches in the same way that supermarkets affect local shops – they help to close them.<sup>12</sup> The magnetic quality of a Cathedral’s music and atmosphere can suck up Christians from outlying churches, thus draining them.

Even where there is seemingly new growth, often it is the case that lapsed Christians have found, in the anonymity and special presence of the Cathedral, a way *back* into the faith and the path of discipleship. This is the ‘returner’ policy that the MSC report mentions and stresses cannot continue – ‘the number of people with even a little church background is plummeting. Fewer and fewer fish remain in the river: the real catch is out at sea.’<sup>13</sup>

George Lings agrees with Michael Moynagh’s assessment and urges the successful churches to wake up to this problem. Together with Michael Sadgrove, he pinpoints busy-ness, the work-load of leaders and conflicting priorities<sup>14</sup> as the reason why large churches fail to reach out to the fastest growing people group in the Western world – people with no church experience. From my observations, however, cathedrals

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<sup>11</sup> Moynagh M, *Emerging Church* intro, p.105

<sup>12</sup> Campolo A, ‘Religionless Spirituality *Christianity and Renewal* (March 2003), p.18. Here Campolo suggests that ‘In community after community, mega-churches serve as magnets that draw people away from moderate sized and small churches that lack the facilities, financial resources and staff that can provide premier programmes and services that modern church people desire. Thus, the mega-churches grow, and the other churches decline. The net result is that fewer and fewer people are attending church these days.’

<sup>13</sup> Moynagh M, *Emerging Church* intro, p.105

<sup>14</sup> Lings G, Lecture on Ministry and Mission, Ushew College, Durham, 2/11/04

seem to engage with non-Christians better than many. I shall return to this in the next section.

### **Inculturation and Consumerism**

In several ways, cathedrals do seem to tap into present day culture and fit the mission context. They have become a brand name for excellence in classical style music and therefore attract people looking for this style of worship. People expect high standards of music and singing – they see and hear it on TV, carry it with them on their ipods and listen to it in their cars and living rooms. It is all produced to a high quality. Cathedrals, with their professional choirs, provide a similar quality which many local churches cannot match. In addition, cathedrals, in spending large resources on the *performance* of music in worship key into the fact that, in a consumer society, we seem to enjoy the performance of others more than *participating* ourselves. Indeed, in society we don't sing as much as our predecessors did (community folk-singing, social clubs or gatherings around the piano) but we do listen to a lot of music. Cathedral worship is less participative than local churches – more about listening to others sing, pray, read on our behalf. This is often a source of complaint and cathedrals are accused of élitism from some quarters of a church accustomed to the congregation joining in at almost every part of the liturgy. However, it may well be that, here, the cathedral and not the local church is more in tune with society.

### **Some Positive Aspects**

Cathedral worship thereby fits snugly into consumer society. This, combined with the seeming growth in spiritual awareness highlighted in earlier chapters, makes cathedral worship attractive for those who are searching spiritually. The former Canon Pastor of Peterborough Cathedral had been surprised at the number of seekers after spiritual truth

who found the cathedral to be the best place to carry out their quest.<sup>15</sup> An increasing network culture of belonging means there is no strong compulsion to attend the local church – better to travel further afield to enjoy ‘a professional standard of worship.’ At Exeter, there are several members of the congregation who regularly travel over 60 miles to attend the cathedral for services.

From an evangelistic perspective there are positive aspects: firstly, cathedrals can provide an entrance-point for postmoderns through offering an anonymous and aesthetically pleasing experience of worship. In tune with Grace Davie’s research, they provide the perfect opportunity for searchers to believe, without the commitment of belonging. Secondly, because cathedrals continue to be well staffed, members of the congregation (especially new members) do not need to be involved in the same way as in a local church. There is not the same danger of being trapped in overburdening roles of responsibility and being ‘over-committed’ in Church business.

Stephen Cottrell argues against those who would say this offers a kind of pain-free religion: ‘As a member of a cathedral congregation, one is much more likely to be able to focus one’s attention on the real issues of discipleship and ministry rather than being worried about sustaining the life of the institution.’<sup>16</sup> While this is true, others such as Bill Hybels of Willow Creek would say that involving people in the challenges of the church community is a way for them to grow in discipleship.

### **Some Negative Aspects**

The danger is that a worship-shaped Cathedral may not develop a strong community life except around the issues of music and worship – attendance reflects consumer preference for this style and quality of music. However, other missional aspects of the Church’s life

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<sup>15</sup> E-mail correspondence with Stephen Cottrell 27/9/05

<sup>16</sup> E-mail correspondence with Stephen Cottrell 27/9/05

(pastoral care, evangelistic outreach, social concern) become more difficult to develop as the congregation has not gathered around these in the first place and therefore does not feel as motivated to engage with them.

The MSC report stresses the importance of a church being relational and that for a church to become a missionary church, a community of faith needs to be formed.<sup>17</sup>

Cathedral churches, like some other eclectic churches, may find difficulty in forming communities with strong relationships. The strength of belonging that exists tends to be for the musical tradition, the worship style or the magnificent temple-like building rather than to the other Christians who make up the body of Christ there. Paul Bayes sees that cathedrals whose communities are based on the worship may struggle to become missional unless they develop other important marks of the Church such as community, accountability and commitment. 'Church attendance based on glorious worship is a starting point, but if it's truly to be a missionary church it can't end there'.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly cathedrals would be failing in their missionary calling if they become complacent about numbers and did not help people develop their faith and move on in their discipleship. In the gospels we see how Jesus trained his disciples by sending them out to witness (Luke 9 and 10) and in the Acts of the Apostles it was through the community life of the early church (Acts 2:42–47). This communal and missional aspect of discipleship is one that cathedrals will need to develop further if they are to have a missionary impact beyond the individual. Today the credibility of the Church is vital to its message being heard. People seem no longer convinced of the gospel because something or someone with authority tells them, but because they see it lived out and demonstrated in the life of a Christian community. As Lesslie Newbigin persuasively

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<sup>17</sup> Cray G and Lings G, *Mission-Shaped Church*, p.43

<sup>18</sup> E-mail correspondence with Paul Bayes 6/10/05



states: 'the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.'<sup>19</sup>

## **Conclusion**

When the liturgical life of the Cathedral is linked with a pastoral vision and an evangelistic heart they become all the more attractive. In the past there was perhaps a complacency in thinking that the worship spoke for itself; that the stones somehow soaked up the praise and echoed it back to those who attended. The problem was that the stones often spoke a 'foreign language' that people could not understand. Today there is a new generation of precentors (with responsibility for the musical and liturgical life of the Cathedral) and some of these recognise Wesley's insight of the liturgy being 'a converting ordinance'. They are sensitive to atmosphere, aware of space, movement and drama yet mindful of the need to help those who attend infrequently to understand the service and symbols through good use of the rubric and introduction to services.<sup>20</sup>

Large services with full choir and organ are something that cathedrals are comfortable with and do well. It is something that people (Christian and non-Christian) clearly enjoy as the sales of recordings of cathedral choirs show. However, as the dean of Coventry stated 'one does not absorb faith by osmosis'<sup>21</sup> and there is certainly room to make more use of services that help people further understand and respond to the gospel.

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<sup>19</sup> Newbigin L, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), p.227

<sup>20</sup> Like others, the Precentor at Exeter takes great time and effort to elucidate what is going to happen and why.

<sup>21</sup> Irvine J, A Lecture at 'A Consultation on Cathedrals and Evangelism' Peterborough Cathedral 3/3/04

## V EVANGELISM-SHAPED CATHEDRAL

### **Introduction**

The Howe report was strong in its view ‘that cathedrals should be evangelistic in their vocational purpose ...’ and, whilst recognising that some were, it believed that ‘... most cathedrals could be more active in their evangelistic mission.’<sup>1</sup> It is instructive to see the evangelistic activity and mindset of cathedrals today, eleven years after that report was written. We shall approach the subject by looking at four different aspects: the opportunity presented by cathedral worship; a cathedral’s servant ministries, particular evangelistic events and cathedral leadership.

### **The Opportunities of Cathedral Worship**

As mentioned in the last section, I think cathedrals have a greater opportunity to engage with pre-Christians than some other large churches. One reason is that they act like sacred theatres attracting many people within their walls for all sorts of reasons – beauty, architecture, atmosphere. This temple-like presence and majesty of a cathedral, combined with scripture, prayers, and a few well-chosen words, beautiful music, has the ability to catch people off guard and fill them with a sense of awe. It prompts them to ask the big questions concerning the meaning of life.

Secondly, cathedrals ‘act like religious railway stations’<sup>2</sup> where all sorts of people turn up to services with different destinations in mind. Big services offer a safe space and anonymity in that many people are there, no one is expected to talk to their neighbour; not being local is an advantage – unknown, it is possible to be lost in the crowd, listen and respond without fear of being coerced into a commitment one is not ready to make.

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<sup>1</sup> Howe E, *Heritage and Renewal*, p.31

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

There are particular advantages for an evangelistic ministry also, in that people are not automatically labelled ‘Christian’ if they go to the cathedral. There is little fear of ‘Christian stigma’ being attached to them by their peers and therefore cathedrals can be, for them, laboratories of the spirit – places where it feels safe to experiment and explore spiritual matters.

Furthermore, cathedrals benefit from economies of scale. If the parish churches of the Church of England used to be seen as ‘good boats to fish from’ by evangelists, then cathedrals act like huge trawlers where all variety of humanity get caught up in the nets.<sup>3</sup> Several cathedrals now have a short evangelistic address at their carol services which are attended by thousands.<sup>4</sup> At both Exeter and Peterborough this opportunity has been realised in the comparatively large numbers<sup>5</sup> who signed up to explore further the Christian faith through a short course after Christmas 2003.<sup>6</sup>

There would seem to be a great potential for cathedrals to further develop this evangelistic ministry through the liturgical cycle and annual calendar of events. This has already been pioneered very effectively in many rural communities where a large proportion of a community will attend the church for festivals and particular

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<sup>3</sup> In 2004, two students from China asked, after the service, how they could ‘learn more about this Jesus’. Exeter Cathedral 7/1/04

<sup>4</sup> Coventry, Derby, Exeter and Peterborough and Southall have all incorporated this element into their Carol Services within the last four years, recognising the evangelist opportunity. (Cathedrals and Evangelism Consultation, Peterborough Cathedral 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> March, 2004)

<sup>5</sup> ‘An increasing number of churches are reporting difficulty in finding enough recruits to join courses for enquirers such as Alpha, Emmaus and Christianity Explored ... In a culture moving further away from Christianity many people need a short course on a topic that connects with them before they are ready to commit to a longer course like Alpha or Christianity Explored’. Ireland M, *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age*, p.84–85

<sup>6</sup> Peterborough, Leicester, Coventry and Exeter cathedrals all ran short enquirer courses. (Consultation 3/4<sup>th</sup> March 2001) After Christmas 2003, at Exeter, 45 attended the short course in Jan/Feb 2004. Nine of these had no church background. The advantage and privilege for the Cathedral was seen in its position to give an invitation to many who were pre-Christian and searching. Other churches in Exeter, especially the new churches, found difficulty in recruiting people on to Christian enquirers’ courses, though they had plenty of Christians prepared to help run the course. (Conversation with Russell Fenn, Pastor of City Community Church, Exeter (April 2004))

celebrations.<sup>7</sup> Remembrance, Holocaust Sunday, St. Valentine's-tide, Mothering Sunday, All Saints and the like all provide an evangelistic opportunity at cathedrals as many people will be present who are not yet practising Christians.<sup>8</sup>

Another particular evangelistic opportunity for cathedrals through their worship would appear to be their civic ceremonies and links with the city and council. As we have seen in the biblical review, there is much in scripture to make us cautious of state religion yet, to shun it leads to the danger of producing an unincarnational faith unrelated to the world. Certainly the rôle of the cathedral must not descend into merely consecrating the status quo. However, total rejection of the civic authorities will lead to the Christian community becoming a ghetto. A balancing act is called for along the direction of Andrew Wall's indigenising and pilgrim principles so that the cathedral will be close enough to relate well to the authorities yet also distinct enough to challenge them with the claims of the gospel.

On a personal level, cathedrals can offer quiet dialogue and pastoral care of people in political or public office who rarely find an understanding ear or supporting arm elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Such people are often 'too busy' to be involved or even known in the local community where they live, yet they come into contact with the cathedral through their work duties – attendance at mayoral and legal services, particular civic carol services and concerts, university degree services and the like. This is where the cathedral gets its label of ministry 'to the great and the good'. Cathedrals do not minister to these alone, but there is certainly an important ministry here. The breadth of this ministry can be seen springing

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<sup>7</sup> At Action, in Cheshire, attendances of 156 and 194 were recorded for the special memorial services held during All Saints-tide in November 1995 and 1996. Bereaved families were invited to church to remember with thanksgiving their loved ones, light a candle and to hear the message of God's hope in a short evangelistic address on the resurrection. These numbers represented 10% and almost 15% of the entire community.

<sup>8</sup> At Manchester Cathedral, Evangelist Robin Gamble has pioneered an effective 'Back to Church Sunday' which falls on 'Grandparents Day' at the end of September. He said: 'We are seeing significant increases in the cathedral congregation on this Sunday.' Interview with Robin Gamble, 26/9/05.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey, R. 'Cathedrals and Society' in *Cathedrals Now* ed Iain Mackenzie (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1996), p.105

from Jesus' own ministry to two very different characters – Zacchaeus and Nicodemus. People who have elbowed and cheated their way to positions of power and influence are often people of low self-esteem. The gospel of grace and acceptance can speak powerfully to the Zacchaeuses of this world. Equally, those who thought they had goodness and righteousness sewn up and neatly ordered will have their world views challenged and can start a new spiritual journey, like Nicodemus. Through hearing the gospel at civic ceremonies, combined with hospitality given and friendships made – many of our public servants have come to faith, or come back to faith through this evangelistic ministry of cathedrals.<sup>10</sup>

### **Servant Ministry**

The former dean of Worcester speaks of the importance of cathedrals offering both 'critical involvement' and 'critical solidarity' to engage with the fundamental issues of society and life.<sup>11</sup> This is a view that places evangelism in the wider context of mission and recognises that it is linked to that other mark of mission: to transform the unjust structures of society. Cathedrals are not always the ideal platform for this type of ministry because the buildings speak of power, dominance and a view of the church that is in control, wealthy and lording it over others. However, cathedral communities clearly feel the need to be involved in holistic mission and use their talents to meet obviously local needs. At Birmingham there is a ministry to refugees; at Sheffield,<sup>12</sup> Manchester<sup>13</sup> and Norwich<sup>14</sup> there is outreach amongst the homeless through a 'breakfast project', soup kitchen and work with the Association for Mental Health and those incapable of living on

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<sup>10</sup> Confirmed in e-mail correspondence with Stephen Cottrell 27/9/05 and Tom Wright 21/09/05. Also, from my own observations there are several members of the congregation who fall into this category at Exeter Cathedral.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey R, *Cathedral and Society*, p.100

<sup>12</sup> E-mail correspondence with Jane Sinclair 25/9/05

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

<sup>14</sup> E-mail correspondence with Stephen Platten 27/9/05

their own; at Lichfield and Exeter there has been an emphasis on ministry to prisoners. The new dean of Rochester has developed a vision to respond to urban deprivation in Medway – a project aimed at promoting social integration and processing new approaches to education.<sup>15</sup>

The involvement in holistic mission, as part of the outreach of a cathedral, has its theological roots in the gospel's bias to the poor, witnessed in Jesus' attitude and attention to those who were considered outcast or marginalised; also, in Jesus' incarnation mission upon which much of MSC's theology of mission is based: 'As the Father sent me, so I send you' (John 20:21). In helping it focus outreach on Kingdom issues there is less chance of the cathedral community becoming self-absorbed by its Temple – cult ministry and inward looking. There is a great temptation for a cathedral to see its mission solely in terms of providing worship for various organisations (as that is what they do naturally and well). The mission of a cathedral, however, would be greatly diminished without the spiritually nourishing effects of walking with a Pilgrim God whose concern and compassion is for those on the margins of society. (Deuteronomy 24)

### **Evangelistic Events**

As noted above, their grand scale and the beauty of their architecture (whether ancient or modern) means cathedrals can be effective venues for large evangelistic events. Each has the aura of a sacred theatre – an attractive stage for public events. Their location, often in the centre of a city, means they have the capacity to act as a meeting place and a natural public space where people gather.<sup>16</sup> The large number of Christians associated with a

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<sup>15</sup> E-mail correspondence with Adrian Newman 10/10/05

<sup>16</sup> Gamble R, (Lecture given at Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Cathedrals) Peterborough, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2004

cathedral<sup>17</sup> (relative to most local churches) creates the effect of a ‘Resource Bank’<sup>18</sup> – a sizeable community of Christians with a variety of gifts, resources of time, finance, goodwill and contacts which are often invaluable in evangelistic ventures.

### *Two Examples*

At Exeter Cathedral a project called ‘Life on the Beach’ (LOTB) was developed from a conversation between a professional artist, professional dancer and the canon missionary.<sup>19</sup> It is an attempt to engage people who would not normally come inside the cathedral with the fullness of the gospel.<sup>20</sup> Many of the guiding principles correlate with the theological basis of MSC.

LOTB recognises that the Mission is God’s, that his prevenient spirit is already at work in people’s lives and that many people are spiritually searching. The conversational approach of the Contact Team, based on Aidan’s evangelistic strategy,<sup>21</sup> is an attempt to adapt to our present culture. A dialogue approach in today’s postmodern world would seem to be more effective than a presentational and proclamatory approach. Where people are suspicious of authority and of overarching metanarratives yet see themselves

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Exeter Cathedral has a regular Sunday congregation of 500+ and the Friends of Exeter Cathedral number over 3000

<sup>18</sup> Gamble R, Peterborough, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2004

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>20</sup> Hundreds of 15–40 year olds (generation X and Y) sit on the Cathedral Green on sunny afternoons in the summer. These are the folk generally missing from church congregations. They rarely enter the cathedral. LOTB is an attempt to turn the cathedral inside out; to express the beauty of the gospel through creative arts, displays and performance; to provoke and engage people in conversation through sensitive dialogue and the draw them into prayer and contemplation through the use of prayer stations.

<sup>21</sup> Aidan had a difficult task in following the evangelistic ministry of Paulinus who had focussed more on a mass conversion missionary method through which many had been baptised. Unfortunately, when the previous king died many reverted to their former paganism. Thus, Aidan and his team were called to witness in a situation not so far from our predicament in Britain today: there were many pagans and also those who had been converted, but now subsequently lapsed and were either inoculated against the Christian faith or hoping to be restored. In this mixed society Aidan decided to walk the lanes of Northumbria speaking to everyone he met and asking them where they stood with regard to the Christian faith. If people answered positively to his question: ‘Are you a Christian?’, he would then ask them: ‘How could you be a better one?’ If people said: ‘No’, Aidan would ask them: ‘May I tell you something about it?’ When given the opportunity, Aidan would tell them about Jesus and send his monks, in the following week, to the villages where they lived. This conversational style of evangelism is almost a precursor of ‘Good news down your street’ and Emmaus or Alpha in your home. Rylands M. (Cliff College, MA Assignment) Dec. 2004

as spiritual, this gentle listening but probing method seems to engage with people and better fits our present culture. The core threefold objectives of LOTB<sup>22</sup> are derived from the biblical example of Jesus on the Emmaus Road and Paul in Athens, the evangelistic strategy of Aidan, Benedictine hospitality, and an attempt to register the importance of visual presentation and a growing spirituality in today's postmodern culture. The cathedral community acts as host and facilitator but the witnessing team is ecumenical and involves many new churches. The practise of having a different lead coordinating church for each event releases new energy, ensures variety but also maintains a cooperative spirit. Involving many Christians in the process of developing the aim of 'sharing and exploring the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ',<sup>23</sup> has been crucial in uniting the churches in this venture.

LOTB has not seen dramatic conversions or droves of people becoming disciples of Christ due to the events. However, the continuing enthusiasm of the participating churches for future events is testimony to the experience being good for the witnesses. Two years on, relations are also beginning to be forged with some of the people who regularly sit 'on the cathedral beach' in the summer and who engage with the labyrinth, prayer stations and watch the performances. LOTB is more obviously 'seed-sowing' rather than 'reaping' at present.

One noteworthy observation has been the involvement of only a few members of the cathedral congregation amongst the large number of Christians involved at each event. The reasons appear to be several: a) the age gap between the cathedral congregation and those on the beach presents a great cultural gulf that is hard (and is perceived to be hard) to cross; b) many of the members of the congregation live far from

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix C – 1. Imaginative Presentation  
2. Sensitive Conversation  
3. Generous Hospitality

<sup>23</sup> Appendix C



the cathedral and only attend for services; c) many people come to cathedrals because they are ‘centres of worship’ and not because they are also ‘centres of mission’. MSC throws up an issue not just for cathedrals but also local churches. It is the worship style of a church that is often its key shaping factor – the central characteristic over which people choose to ‘shape’ themselves together into churches. Churches and cathedrals are not generally shaped by God’s Mission and certainly not by evangelism. We seem to have ended up with ‘worship-shaped churches’, churches where the worship style is what gives people their essential sense of belonging.<sup>24</sup> This is even more emphatically so in cathedrals where people travel great distances to attend worship.

At Manchester Cathedral, Canon Robin Gamble has undertaken evangelistic events that focus on the cathedral congregation and its wider community. ‘A Time for All’, in 2002, involved a diversity of organisations and sought to bring them together, closer to each other and closer to God. Bistro meals, an open day with trips up the tower, art and craft displays, bell ringing demonstrations all gave the feel of a church fête. Interspersed amongst this activity were short services and a video showing the ‘Miracle Maker’. On the Sunday, invitation services were held. The weekend was popular and followed up in subsequent years – ‘Angels’ in 2004 and ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’ in 2005.<sup>25</sup>

In pursuing this approach, Robin has been adopting the ‘Come to Us’ traditional evangelistic strategy of the church which MSC predicts will become less effective as we find fewer people on the fringes of the church and more people who are unchurched. (See Table II, the pie-chart, in chapter 3). Cathedrals, though, with their economy of scale are able to continue this strategy perhaps longer than local churches. A large congregation

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<sup>24</sup> Conversations with David Muir, the Parish Development Adviser for Exeter Diocese, 2005

<sup>25</sup> Telephone interview with Robin Gamble, 26/9/05

means there will be a good number of contacts – friends and relations – who can be invited to attend such an event. Robin feels strongly, though, that it is not a matter of either ‘go to them’ or ‘come to us’, but of both. The events he put on with the help of the cathedral community<sup>26</sup> attracted many people who were not invited but ‘who just happened to be passing by’.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Robin’s approach aims to build on the ‘returner’ policy of welcoming back the prodigals as well as reaching out to the unchurched. A ‘Back to Church’ Sunday scheme organised in Manchester Diocese in 2004 led to 800 new church members, some of whom were at the cathedral.<sup>28</sup>

This ‘mixed economy’ approach to evangelism at cathedrals may be more effective than one aimed solely at the open dechurched or at the un-churched. For evangelistic opportunities, therefore, cathedrals would seem to have a unique position amongst churches. Their central location in a city combined with their high public status means encountering many unchurched people. Their large congregations also means there is a sizeable church fringe of people who may be responsive to invitations.

### **Evangelism-shaped Leadership**

Often caricatured in a Trollopian fashion, deans and canons can be seen as elitist and remote. The very term ‘residential canon’ focusses attention on their housing which is (often, but not always) situated in beautiful cathedral closes. With this narrow picture together with the fact that the leaders are seen on Sunday in a glorious cathedral building wearing beautiful robes, the ministry of the cathedral leadership can easily be perceived as distant from that of the Carpenter of Nazareth.

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<sup>26</sup> Telephone interview with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

Robin had found great difficulty in getting the cathedral staff on board with the weekends. He felt that people only perceived the extra hard work involved. He reflected on the frustrations he encountered in motivating the congregation for mission. ‘Although warm towards me, they do not rush to volunteer!’

<sup>27</sup> Telephone interview with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

<sup>28</sup> Telephone interview with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

This, however, is a misconception and my research has discovered many deans and canons with a missionary heart and evangelistic vision. Adrian Newman, the new dean of Rochester is passionate about leading ‘a cathedral community that faces outward as a servant to the city and diocese and that has an apostolic role’.<sup>29</sup> He sees that cathedrals can play an important role evangelistically by ‘engaging with a range of people whose spirituality, lifestyle and morality is often questionable and unorthodox. We need a positive approach to be adopted to where people are *now* – rather than where we would like them to be.’<sup>30</sup> This sentiment chimes theologically with St. Paul who emphasised how ‘while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Romans 5:8).

In a similar vein, David Ison, the new dean of Bradford, outlined his vision for the cathedral as ‘a good news place, a place of dreams and a touching place which is envisaged together by the cathedral community.’<sup>31</sup> David sees the importance of the cathedral being ‘a community of the gospel – living what we believe, modelling hope – where people may touch and experience Christ through the body of cathedral Christians.’<sup>32</sup> He also understands the importance of communicating the gospel ‘by words, actions and attitudes.’<sup>33</sup> But Adrian and David, while aware of the opportunities that a great sacred building brings, are focussed mainly on developing the life and witness of the cathedral community. This correlates strongly with MSC theology based on the trinitarian nature of the Divine and the seminal thinking of theologians such as Newbigin and Bonhoeffer who saw that effective communication of the gospel was intimately connected to the corporate life of the Christian community.

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<sup>29</sup> E-mail correspondence with Adrian Newman 4/10/05

<sup>30</sup> E-mail correspondence with Adrian Newman 4/10/05

<sup>31</sup> E-mail correspondence with David Ison 31/3/05

<sup>32</sup> E-mail correspondence with David Ison 31/3/05

<sup>33</sup> E-mail correspondence with David Ison 31/3/05

To create a community that reflects the very nature of Christ needs good leadership.<sup>34</sup> Michael Sadgrove considers that the dean needs to be an evangelist, almost by definition.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, he understands that the dean must see the evangelistic potential of the building and community in all aspects of its mission – liturgical, pastoral, spiritual formation and in witness. He proposes that it is the dean who can most effectively exercise the evangelistic oversight of different ministries in the life of the cathedral: “Things don’t happen by chance. For example, if the liturgy is to be, in John Wesley’s unforgettable phrase, ‘a converting ordinance’, the best efforts of many people in the cathedral will need to be bent to ensure this remains a conscious aim with an effective outcome. In so far as the dean leads and models the witnessing life of the cathedral community then his or attitude is crucial.”<sup>36</sup>

There is awareness that some deans are inhibited in the evangelistic task of a cathedral. John Irvine identifies ‘workload and conflicting priorities as things that prevent evangelistic endeavour’.<sup>37</sup> Michael Sadgrove speaks of ‘the endemic temptation to allow leadership to collapse into management’.<sup>38</sup> Of course, these are common dangers for all church leaders today and are not exclusive to cathedral leadership. Evangelism is both an attitude and a project that has an external focus. Maintenance is always easier than mission, urgent *executive* tasks easily tend to take precedence over important *strategic* ones. Therefore, it is not surprising that evangelism is not always the priority it should be. Sadgrove’s proposal of a closer collaboration between bishop and dean in evangelistic activity (as highlighted in the earlier chapter on the apostolic mission of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon cathedrals) could well be a way forward. If deans saw themselves not

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<sup>34</sup>Both the work of Springboard (the Archbishops initiative during the Decade of Evangelism) and Natural Church Development (Christian Schwarz) have highlighted the importance of good, enabling leadership to growing, outward facing churches.

<sup>35</sup>E-mail correspondence with Michael Sadgrove 2/10/05

<sup>36</sup> E-mail correspondence with Michael Sadgrove 2/10/05

<sup>37</sup> Irvine J, (Lecture at Cathedrals Mission and Evangelism Consultation at Peterborough Cathedral) 4/3/04

<sup>38</sup> E-mail correspondence with Michael Sadgrove 2/10/05

primarily as incumbents of cathedrals who happen to find themselves on the bishop's staff, but first and foremost as members of the bishop's household, with the primary task of resourcing and supporting the bishop's mission in the diocese, then the cathedral's life and witness would be more likely to have an outward focus as it would be defined by the mission of the bishop.

In all this, we must be aware of the gulf between setting a vision and effecting one. Most cathedrals have mission statements and talk about the importance of the cathedral's mission. Generally, however, this mission appears in the form of music and liturgy and to a lesser extent in welcoming visitors and educating children. All, of course, are important aspects of mission. However, evangelism is rarely mentioned and certainly hardly appears in the budgets. A survey of five sets of cathedral accounts by the Asset Accountant of the Archbishop's Council did not raise one entry for evangelism.<sup>39</sup> At Exeter, out of a budget of over £1 million for the ministry of the cathedral in 2005, just £900 was allocated to 'faith sharing'. Indeed, Robin Gamble felt that by looking at the budget of Manchester Cathedral it could easily be perceived that the cathedral's mission was 'to preserve the building and fund the music'.<sup>40</sup> Cathedrals are not the only part of the Church that fails to make adequate material provision for evangelistic work.<sup>41</sup> Their favourable position in society for reaching out to many who are dechurched or unchurched, however, would seem to suggest that good opportunities are being missed. The 'success' of the cathedrals may be causing complacency and clouding their missionary endeavour.

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<sup>39</sup> E-mail correspondence with Lee Marshall, Asset Account for the Archbishop's Council, Church House, London, 20/10/05

<sup>40</sup> Interview by telephone with Robin Gamble 26/9/05

<sup>41</sup> J. John, in an address to Exeter Church Leaders told us that 'less than 10% of resources across all the main denominational churches goes into evangelism'. Giving an analogy of a hospital, he said that the way the churches apportion their budgets is 'akin to a hospital putting the majority of its money into palliative care but finding peanuts for obstetrics and midwifery'. Riverside Christian Centre 10/1/04

## **Conclusion**

The evangelistic opportunities for cathedrals remain favourable. In their worship setting and service to the wider society they are obviously building bridges, Christ is being revealed and some people are becoming disciples as a result. Cathedrals provide a wonderful stage for the launching of large evangelistic events but the lack of commitment by the cathedral congregation to the ministry of evangelism means that they may be better suited to ecumenical partnership in their venture rather than on their own. There are promising signs in the evangelistic intent and purpose of several deans and canons. Budgets must match vision more effectively, however, if the apostolic role of cathedrals today is to become a reality.

## **Chapter 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **The Research Quest**

Our research was an examination of the missionary activity and potential of cathedrals in the light of the Mission-Shaped Church report. To what extent have cathedrals lived up to their description as ‘centres of mission’ and in what way is mission shaping the life of Anglican cathedrals today? Before attempting to summarise our findings it is important to note any weaknesses of the research method.

#### **Weaknesses of the Research Method**

While the leader’s questionnaire encouraged a prolific response from many which proved to be useful information for the dissertation, it did not provide suitable material for statistical analysis. The questionnaire for education officers, however, did produce useful data but that questionnaire engaged with a small number of people and it must be acknowledged that it acts only as a pointer to the need for further research. The male/female balance of interviewees and contacts was heavily weighted towards men. Only 5 out of 27 were female. This may have skewed the responses. On the other hand, it may be a reflection of the male dominated leadership that exists at present in cathedrals. In hindsight, it may be that the original enquiry – biblical, historical and present day – was too wide-ranging. Undertaking the biblical review and historical research meant that the present day enquiry was not as comprehensive as first envisaged. The historical and biblical research, however, was felt to be important for understanding the missionary shape of cathedrals in the present and possibly for the future.

### **More Questions ...**

The enquiry succeeded in outlining areas for further research:

1. How much of growth in cathedral congregations is due to transfer growth or new growth? The evidence of this enquiry tentatively suggests that much of it is transfer growth, but further research is called for here.
2. With little emphasis on small groups, cathedrals would not seem to be naturally good at helping people 'belong'. How many people find the cathedral is a (first base) way in, or a way back to faith, but end up being nurtured and disciplined in other churches?
3. Do Anglican cathedrals have the potential to be centres of apostolic mission again in a postmodern world or are the new 'apostolic cathedrals' seen in Holy Trinity Brompton with its Alpha course and lay theological college, St. Thomas Crooke's with its Order of Mission (TOM), the Iona Community with its infectious passion for justice and spirituality or in Willow Creek with its world-wide teaching ministry?

These questions, in particular, have arisen as potential areas for further research following this enquiry.

### **Mission-Shaped Cathedral**

The research has certainly produced more questions but it has also allowed us to draw some conclusions, however tentative.

1. The biblical evidence warns of the dangers of focussing narrowly and complacently on God's presence in the Temple. For God's people to forget the outward focus of this mission is to lose sight of the Pilgrim God whose care is for the whole



creation. His presence is found primarily in human beings – Jesus Christ, his community of followers and unexpected people on the margins. The review of scripture indicates that cathedrals must remember that they are first and foremost a Christian community, not a building – called to be bearers of the divine presence, an embodiment of the Good News and beacons of God’s Spirit to a society that walks in darkness.

2. The historical research has highlighted the way the shape and direction of the cathedral’s mission has changed down the centuries. That mission has adapted to a changing cultural context and constitution of the church community. It has shown how the cathedrals were most active in apostolic mission during the early centuries. Here, the buildings were wooden, temporary constructions. Bishops that were renowned for their humility and spiritual authority were closely involved with their evangelistic enterprise and society was largely pagan.

The power and opulence of cathedrals in the Middle Ages, combining with their sense of being at the centre of a Christian world, seems to have led to an understanding of mission in terms of Christian presence. The revival of cathedrals, from the spiritual doldrums of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, under the Victorian era coincided with a removal of assets that forced them to engage more fully with the wider world. The Victorian reforming zeal helped turn cathedrals outward and as they began to look out and serve, so people were attracted in to their worship and community.

The historical research, taken together with that of the ‘Evangelism-Shaped Cathedral’ points to the importance of good leadership and an outward missionary vision. The greater involvement of bishops in cathedral ministry may well have the effect of directing that focus outward to the needs of the diocese. Presently, cathedrals seem to be in a ‘magnetic mode’ of mission-drawing people in to their worshipping community. If

cathedrals are to play a significant role in the re-evangelisation of this country in the future, the findings of the MSC report indicate that they will need to rediscover their apostolic shape of former centuries as we now face a society that is becoming rapidly un-churched and pagan.

3. The section on ‘Children-Shaped Cathedral’ revealed how schools visits to cathedrals are rising. With the fall in numbers of children attending church on Sunday, indicated by MSC, cathedrals have a great opportunity to be at the heart of telling the Christian story amongst the young people of this nation. In a similar fashion the ‘Heritage-Shaped Cathedral’ section highlighted the growing openness in spirituality and the opportunities that arose for engaging visitors with the gospel story. Further investment or redirection of resources into these two important ministries is needed if a real impact is to be made.

4. Worship is the natural ‘shape’ of most cathedrals and congregations have gathered around their particular style. It is a main reason why many see cathedrals as ‘a success story’. It is, however, I feel a success built on consumerism and branding. There is little evidence that the worship is helping make many new disciples but there is some evidence that the cathedrals growing congregations may be at the detriment of other churches in the surrounding locality.

Cathedrals have great opportunities to be centres of mission and this paper has shown in what ways these opportunities have been taken. The perceived success and numerical growth of cathedral congregations may, however, be leading to a complacency about whether they need to be engaged in mission and evangelism. There is a danger that some cathedrals, particularly those with a musical tradition, may be focussing primarily

on being centres of worship (and not also of mission) as it is the traditional worship that currently attracts regular Sunday worshippers. If, however, this growth is really transfer growth and not new disciples, then there will be problems in the long term.

When a river begins to run dry the fish will collect in the deep pools where there is still some oxygen and food. Eventually, however, if the drought continues, even the deep pools will run dry – it is just that the deep pools feel the effects of drought last of all. The challenge for cathedrals today is to be more than the deep pools that attract the last life of a dying church. Rather, this study has shown the potential for them to become deep well-springs that revitalise the church and transform a world that is thirsty. It has happened before. With God's grace, a visionary leadership and the motivation of the Christian community, there is no reason why cathedrals cannot be centres of apostolic mission again.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **A. Questionnaire sent to cathedral leaders**

1. Why do you think cathedral congregations are growing at a time when many parish churches are in decline?
2. In what way could the cathedral, as mother church, play more of a pioneer role in mission for the diocese?
3. Do you perceive any failures on behalf of cathedrals in the area of mission?

12 Questionnaires were sent out. 9 replies were received. Replies were not necessarily to the questions posed but the questionnaire was used as a springboard by the respondent to speak generally about his/her views on cathedrals and mission. Much of this was useful for the dissertation as opinion from a cathedral leader but not helpful for statistical analysis.

### **B. Questionnaire to all cathedral Education Officers**

1. In your opinion (or knowledge if you have figures) has the number of schools visiting your cathedral increased or decreased in the last 5 years?
2. Has the number of children visiting the cathedral increased or decreased?
3. What opportunities do you use for introducing the Christian faith to children?
4. In your opinion, has the understanding of the Christian faith amongst children and teachers grown or declined in the last 5 years?

5 replies received (from a potential 24). All 5 gave increases for questions 1 and 2 and 4 replies noted a decline for question 4 with 1 respondent unsure.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interviews**

1. The Very Rev. Christopher Armstrong (Dean of Blackburn) on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004.
2. Mrs. Margaret Withers (Archbishops' Officer for Research in Evangelism Amongst Children) on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005.
3. Canon John Holmes (Canon Missioner at Wakefield Cathedral) 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005.
4. Dr. Julie Lewis (Visitors' Officer at Exeter Cathedral) on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005.
5. Canon Robin Gamble (Canon Evangelist at Manchester Cathedral) on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2005.
6. Mr. David Ridsen (Education Officer at Exeter Cathedral) on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2005.
7. Canon Carl Turner (Precentor at Exeter Cathedral) on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2005.
8. Professor Nicholas Orme (Professor in Medieval History at Exeter University) on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2005.
9. Professor Nicholas Orme (Professor in Medieval History at Exeter University) on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2005.



## APPENDIX C

### Action Research Journal

#### 1. Life on the Beach (2004)

**The Vision:** The aim was to proclaim the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ; to reach out to the 15–45 year olds which the Church has lost touch with. Since December 2003 a small group from across the denominations met to explore the possibilities for provocative and creative outreach that would intrigue and engage onlookers. We wanted people to see the beauty of the Christ we follow through the creativity of the artists who share their gifts.

**The Opportunity:** The Cathedral Green at Exeter acts as a natural amphitheatre and attracts hundred of people during the day who come to relax, meet up with friends and share a picnic. The City Council nicknames it ‘the beach’ – a natural gathering point and place for recreation.

**The Practice:** Four Saturdays in 2004 were designated to pilot the idea on a limited budget but with much prayer and plenty of creativity and enthusiasm.

**15<sup>th</sup> May 2004** took the theme of ‘Creation – Roots and Shoots’. Coordinated by the cathedral community and Central Parish of Exeter, on a beautiful sunny day, the sunbathers on the Green gradually engaged with the displays and installations produced by Maureen Douglas’ 15 metre square labyrinth, Christian Aid, Fair Trade, Devon Green Action, a silver birth tree planted in the Cathedral by Ruth Harvey Regan, posters of Jesus painted by artists from different cultures and displayed like a street artist’s paintings, a prayer tree, beautiful dance by Vivienne Touris, melodic singing by Becky and Andrew Worthley and intriguingly, amplified birdsong. For the children, there was clay-modelling and face painting on creation themes.

**Reaction:** Those handing out refreshments were encouraged by the conversations they got into and the interest shown by many people about ‘what was going on and why?’  
A heated conversation was had with one young man who felt that ‘Christian Aid’ was a selfish title. His misunderstanding – that aid was to go only to Christians – led into a lengthy and deep conversation about why Christians believe God’s care is for *all* people.  
The Christians from different denominations had enjoyed working together.

- 19<sup>th</sup> June: Another fine but windy day gave a chance to build on the previous month. ‘Crisis, What Crisis?’ under the coordination of ICE (Initiatives in Christian Education) introduced Exeter Gospel Choir: 40-strong, male and female, all ages and in flowing dark green robes they made a stunning impact attracting a great crowd. Mime artists, musicians, dance and storytelling followed.
- Reaction: Although we had the installations from the previous month, it was good to have more performance as it engaged with onlookers and drew them in to look at the installations and ask questions.
- 17<sup>th</sup> July: Poor weather-wise but with the energy of Riverside Christian Centre coordinating the event, the theme of ‘Hope’ and some top class performance from TV magician and escapologist Peter McMahan, funky rockabilly puppets and the excellent Exeter Gospel Choir, we managed to hold our biggest crowd yet. This led to good conversations afterwards with the contact and listening team. There was a great spirit from working together ecumenically.
- 18<sup>th</sup> September: A wash-out – rained off.

Reactions to the year: *Life on the Beach* is a small, tentative experiment. Difficult to predict its future. Encouraging early signs – Christians from diverse church backgrounds witnessing together to the love of God as seen in Jesus is heart warming; to engage with people who are intrigued and provoked by creative displays and performance is exciting. There seem to be many who are open to spiritual things. God seems to be already at work in their lives and they are searching. *Life on the Beach* is one small opportunity to help them on their journey home.

### 2005 Jan/Feb Review

We revisit the aim and objectives. The group decides to change ‘proclaim the love of God’ to ‘explore the love of God’. Felt to be less patronising and give a sense of learning together more about God’s love without losing the cutting edge of sharing Christ with people. Therefore we aim: ‘to explore and share the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ.’

Objectives are influenced by Aidan’s practice of evangelism where he got into conversation with people, the Benedictine monastic hospitality of seeing Christ in the face of every stranger and the modern desire for colourful presentation. Thus our objectives for each day of witnessing are to be threefold:

1. Imaginative presentation
2. Sensitive conversation
3. Generous hospitality.

- May 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 Training given for the contact and listening team at Riverside Church, Exeter. Based on Jesus' conversation with the disciples on the Emmaus Road and the witnessing style of Paul and Philip, 12 people engaged in discussing, sharing and learning together the art of listening and sharing faith.
- May 14<sup>th</sup> First LOTB of the summer is rained off. The River Dream Centre were very disappointed. 60 young people had turned up to help! We have booked an extra day in August to try again.
- June 18<sup>th</sup> Exeter Network Church (a new Anglican Church plant) coordinate LOTB today. Sunny, warm – plenty of people about as the annual craft fair is today.  
The Melanesian Brothers perform their music, dance and drama and gather a good crowd (150–200 people). One of the brothers gives testimony of their trials endured back home, the 7 brothers martyred and talks about how God has helped him. He then leads the crowd in prayer. It is so natural and feels just right. There is quiet as he prays. A wonderful moment. Many conversations follow from this.  
Exeter Network Church have paid for a junk-drumming band to help with some participative performance. Young children join in. Christian surfers have a pitch on the Green and attract many young people.  
One installation offers a foot spa and massage for weary shoppers. This proves very popular – the organisers report that when people relaxed they talked about all sorts of things. Most of all they were intrigued as to why this was being offered free! This led into conversations about faith and life.  
No one is reporting that anyone has decided to become a Christian but there is a sense that people are being helped on their journey home to God. Exeter Network Church members are keen to be asked next year! A great day. Wonderful spirit of cooperation between Christians and relaxed and easy engagement with people.  
The free fair trade chocolate and juice being given away also provokes a reaction from members of the crowd. They ask 'Why?' and this gives the contact team permission to respond naturally in the fashion of 1 Peter 3:15.  
The labyrinth is well used and the portraits of Jesus from different cultures cause many people to stop and look.
- July 23<sup>rd</sup> A wet day. Riverside Church coordinating. They have Bobby Ball arriving to do an hour. He's late. The Melanesian Brothers shoulder responsibility for performance and produce a powerful and moving performance of 'the Lost Son'. Despite the drizzle a crowd remains transfixed. Bobby Ball arrives and does 5 minutes! The crowd disperse as the rain gets heavier. We must prepare a wet weather alternative in the shopping centre next summer!

## **Prayer Stations at Exeter Cathedral**

*March 13<sup>th</sup> 2004*

Different kinds of Prayer Stations were set up all around the Cathedral – a desert for quiet contemplation in one chapel, praying with bubbles in another. At one station there was a map of the world spread out, with nightlights that could be lit and placed wherever one chose on the map. At another, there was a fishing net suspended over a swathe of blue shiny paper where there was an invitation to cut out a fish shape, write on it the name of a person to come to Christ and then place it in the net. At another, a small pile of stones before a cross with an invitation to ‘build a cairn of hope’ by adding a stone, remembering those who carry heavy burdens and placing them and their needs before the Burden Bearer. At another, there was a ‘prayer tree’ where coloured ribbons could be tied on to branches with an encouragement to pray for friends, family, colleagues or oneself to grow in faith. In a quiet chapel two people were available with oil to offer anointing with prayer.

*Easter 2004*

Outside on the Cathedral Green three large crosses were set up on Good Friday following an ecumenical procession of Christians from the different churches in the City. There was a final act of worship on the Cathedral Green around the crosses. The Christians eventually dispersed but many hundreds of the public were spending time on the Green. To draw them into prayer and to engage with the cross we set up a prayer station inviting people to ‘nail their prayers to the cross’. Hammers, nails, ribbons and cards were provided. At the end of the afternoon, 150 prayers were taken down from the cross and placed on the altar of the Cathedral for evening prayer. The Cathedral congregation were surprised at the large number of people who had been moved to respond.

*Christmas 2004*

A follow-up experiment at Christmas time 2004 revealed a similar response. A Christmas prayer tree, where people were invited to write their prayers on a cut-out card in the shape of a candle, bell or bauble and hang it on the tree, was festooned with over 250 prayer requests after just 4 days. At the ‘Cairn of Hope’, the box of 300 stones had been emptied after a week (by Boxing Day) and 300 more stones had to be found immediately as people seemed to find this a tangible way to pray for the victims of the Asian tsunami