

# The Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Southwell: Episcopal Visitation: Report to the Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham

## Executive Summary and main recommendations.

### *Mission*

The mission is epitomised by the magnificence of the building, the image of the open arms of Christ and the welcome. The Minster presents itself as a place to come to; it is exemplified by *Time Travelling* but the mission is not clearly articulated. In talking to members of the Minster staff and others, the visitation group discerned no sense of any overall missionary strategy – different people and groups simply championed their own views and interests.

- The mission of the Minster as Cathedral and Parish Church should be clarified. This would impact on worship (see below) and all other areas of the Minster life.
- Mission should guide the day-to-day work of all the staff.
- In a generally evangelical Diocese, should the Cathedral be part of a catholic leaven, or aim to align itself more clearly with its ecclesiological context?
- The review group supported the case for a Dean and a Minster which represented something of the Catholic tradition, not least within the Bishop's Staff and as a focus for a gentle, open engagement with the wider community.

### *Music and Worship and Pilgrimage*

There is a conflict between the needs of the Parish and the role of the Minster as Cathedral in the normal Sunday worship. The needs of both the Parish and the Diocese should be considered in the context of the two main Sunday morning services. Timings and location also need to be examined. The Rector Chori is a superb musician and acts as an entrepreneur to maintain the choral tradition – but the latter needs to develop and grow. The musical repertoire could be extended to include more modern ingredients.

- The pattern of worship needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. Both Sunday morning services need development – perhaps eventual convergence. This will require joint working by the Precentor, Canon Pastor and Rector Chori and flexibility of approach. In planning future worship the resources of the residentiary canons and other clergy, and of verging staff must be considered
- A Liturgy Advisory Group should be established to take this recommendation forward.
- There is a funding crisis, especially for the provision of lay clerks. Some suggest that there should be an appeal for the Music Foundation, before significant building needs are identified for the Minster. Any appeal for funds must be part of a wider strategic plan.
- The girls' choir should become a formal part of the Foundation.

- Opportunities to develop further the pilgrimage potential of the Minster, especially for adults, should be explored.
- A rigorous business plan in a partnership with the Diocese should support the future strategy of the Sacrista Prebend as a retreat house and spirituality resource.

### *Education*

*Time Travelling* is exemplary as a flagship activity. The small-scale work with children in the parish context is not currently embraced structurally within the organisation. Problems have been identified with regard to children's and youth events in terms of a lack of clarity in knowing who to contact in the cathedral.

- We recommend that an Education Committee covering both children's and adult education should be formed linked to the Diocesan Director of Training and the Diocesan Board of Education.
- We recommend that an information pack is produced.
- The Canon Theologian should have a job description and a role within the Education Committee.
- The Minster should be developed as a resource, particularly with regard to the Libraries.
- Links with the Universities should be developed through the Canon Theologian.
- The relationship with the Minster School should be re-invigorated and the School Head invited to Chapter at regular intervals.
- Work needs to be done on a dedicated chaplaincy team for the Minster School (clergy & lay) from within the Minster.

### *Pastoral Care*

Pastoral care of the Parish is well-developed, but the pastoral role of the Minster to the wider 'cathedral' congregation is unclear.

- The Canon Pastor should be enabled to fulfil his role as Parish Priest by freeing some of his time from Cathedral duties. (See reconsideration of the pattern of worship.)
- Opportunities to give pastoral care as Cathedral should be developed. There should be a stronger partnership with the Diocese in this regard.
- The roles of the Bishop of Sherwood and the Canon Missioner with respect to pastoral care in the wider Diocese should be clarified.
- The link between pastoral care and teaching is lacking, with no continuity of preaching and teaching.
- Pastoral outreach to the Diocese and the wider world needs developing. The title "Canon Pastor" may be misleading, since the role tends to be focused on the Minster, but might give the impression of a wider brief.
- The distinctive ministry of Readers within the overall ministry of the Minster should be reviewed.
- After service care and hospitality provision to be reviewed.

### *Staffing*

Staff are highly motivated, most (including lay staff) regarding their job as a vocation. They are hard-pressed and most are working excessive overtime and some in excess of the EU Working Time Directive.

- There is an urgent need to develop systems of consultation, decision-making and authorising for senior lay staff to act. Too much focuses on the Dean and clerical colleagues.
- The Administrator, who is not used to best effect, should be enabled to take decisions commensurate with her experience and abilities without recourse to Chapter.
- The Administrator should become a full member of Chapter to enable a connected sense of responsibility and operation.
- The process of introducing good human resources practice should continue and be fully supported.
- The purpose and pattern of staff meetings should be reviewed.
- Location of staff should be reviewed with a view to location on as few sites as possible – preferably one.
- Efficiency savings in some areas could be made.
- The role of marketing officer should be made full-time.
- The balance between full-time (7) and part-time staff (30) needs addressing.
- As the small, dedicated staff is very overstretched, should the Minster be open fewer hours?
- With regard to the management of volunteers, work needs to be done on good practice
- The Canon Missioner has no effective links with the Minster from the 10% of the job allocation. We suggest that this link is strengthened or cut

### *Finance and administration*

The finance function is weak with poor financial control mainly due historically to poor systems. There are serious issues about adequate financial control and planning. This is a high-risk area. There are limited links between the Diocesan structures and the Minster. The recent move to sharing the finance function with the Diocese is welcomed ensuring better liaison between policy making, financial control and evaluating potential for increasing income.

- We recommend that the shared finance function should continue as part of an evolving partnership between Diocese and Minster after review in October 2006.
- Both parties need to be proactive in seeking richer relationships for mutual benefit. In this connection it would be essential for both parties to have compatible IT systems, particularly with regard to finance.
- To rely on a single accountant makes an organisation particularly vulnerable.
- Budgets should be set on a three-year basis and modern management practices (business planning) instigated. A financial strategy document must be developed.
- There must be regular management accounts and close liaison with the Administrator.
- There is need for a review of internal controls for handling cash.

- There is a need for better defined responsibility of managers with full accountability for control at budget cost centres.
- There should be a review of all income sources to ensure optimisation, especially with regard to rental income and receipt of Gift Aid.

### *Fabric and Property*

The Church's landholdings in Southwell amount to over 19 acres (Church Commissioners 6.49 acres, Dean and Chapter 10.49 acres and Diocese 2.47 acres). About 6.75 acres are surplus to requirements. Some of the property is not fit for purpose and Vicars' Court, including The Residence and Rampton Prebend are in need of substantial external repair. There are opportunities for development of at least some of the surplus land to reflect the modern requirements of the Minster and its staff, and the possibility of realising financial benefits for the long-term maintenance of the historic buildings.

- A consultant should be appointed to take forward the recommendations from this review.
- A master plan should be drawn up of property needs and how these needs are realised with a view to the rationalisation of the use of property and improvement in standards of accommodation and facilities.
- It is vital for church elements (Diocese, Commissioners, Minster) to work together with the consultant in realising this potential.

### *Constitution and Statutes*

The 'parish' element claims to need a voice, though this viewpoint must not derail the important priority given to visitors and outsiders by a Cathedral church. There is a structure for consultation with the worshipping community, including regular open meetings with the two representatives on the Cathedral Council – but feedback indicates a continuing feeling of frustration. This issue will need to be grasped firmly by a new Dean. The role of Council and the relationship between Council and Chapter has been unclear. A joint away-day of members of Council and Chapter took place in May 2006 and recommendations will be made to the Bishop and the new Dean.

- The Bishop and new Dean should give urgent consideration to the recommendations arising from the away-day so that momentum is not lost in building a better relationship between Council and Chapter.
- The size of Chapter and the balance of its business should be reviewed with a view to making the role of Chapter more strategic
- The Minster as Parish Church: discussion should start as soon as possible with all stakeholders about what kind of body should represent the interests of the Parish in the absence of a Church Council.
- Churchwardens are perceived as little more than glorified sidesmen – should their role be enhanced or more closely defined?

*The new Dean*

- Should be a person of vision and stature with strong leadership skills; a team player. The vision should be about what a cathedral should be within a Diocese. He/she must understand the traditions and the building and work with them rather than feel constrained by them.
- A 'Catholic' Dean would provide a balance in the Diocese with two evangelical Bishops.
- Should be able to relate well to people; to the Minster staff; to the various county networks; and be prepared to have a high profile in the county.
- Should have good financial awareness.
- Should be a good delegator; given a wider diocesan role for the new Dean the role of Parish Priest should more obviously be that of the Canon Pastor.
- Must be liturgically and musically skilled.

**+ Alastair Derby**

The Right Reverend Alastair Redfern – Bishop of Derby – Chair

The Reverend Canon Peter Hill

The Venerable Garth Norman

Professor Clair Chilvers

Mr David Simpkin

Mr John Brown

The Venerable Robin Turner CB – Executive Secretary

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