



RIPON  
CATHEDRAL

6 November 2020

## **A Letter from the Dean to the community of Ripon Cathedral**

As the nation enters another lockdown and many aspects of life are curtailed for our safety, I write to update you about life at the cathedral and to assure you of our prayers at this difficult time.

There seems to be a general weariness amongst people as we begin the second lockdown. Unlike the last one, it comes as days shorten, temperatures drop, and we become increasingly aware that COVID-19 is going to present challenges for some time to come. The spiritual strength and inspiration that the Christian faith gives is important in every situation in life, but especially so at a time like this.

It is good then that the cathedral can be open every day, as a beacon of hope for the city and region. Throughout this period of lockdown, we can go into it to pray and light a candle. The *A Wing and A Prayer* exhibition remains as an inspiring symbol of the prayers and hope of people across this region. Also, in this season of Remembrance, we have provided the opportunity for private reflection and prayer with a 'wall of poppies' where individuals can leave a poppy to mark their own keeping of the Remembrance season. You can find this in the North Transept.

This Sunday is, of course, Remembrance Sunday. The usual Ripon Spa Garden ceremony of remembrance was cancelled some time ago. We had therefore planned to hold a remembrance service involving representatives of civic and military communities. Wreathes were to be laid at the High Altar, recognising that the east wall of the cathedral has been a war memorial since the early 1920's, with the names of the fallen inscribed into its very stones.

In fact, this service is going ahead! It has already been recorded and will be streamed from 10.30am on Sunday morning. I am grateful to all those staff who have made this possible and those who take part in it, including the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, Mrs Jo Ropner; Honorary Air Commodore, Countess Charlotte Peel DL; and the Station Commander of RAF Leeming, Group Captain Blythe Crawford. I am equally delighted that our Music Staff and Lay Clerks make their wonderful contribution. You can access it via the website.

It is understandable that many of us would prefer public worship to continue and will miss greatly the nourishment of the Eucharist, not to mention the fellowship that comes with being part of a worshipping community. If you have been able to join us in recent months, you will know that services have been well attended and it has been a joy that the lay clerks have been able to enhance our worship through September and October. Things were taken to an even higher pitch on the occasions when our choristers joined them! So, despite the absence of hymn singing, it has felt possible to offer worship that honours God and raises our spirits.

We will miss this over coming weeks, but, as with the last lockdown, we acknowledge that we do not cease to be a praying and worshipping community. Do, please, take advantage of the daily services (recorded and streamed from the cathedral): Sunday Sung Eucharist at 10.30am; Monday to Friday Evening Prayer at 6pm; Saturday Evening Prayer at 5.30pm.

In addition, we are providing prayer and worship resources for this Kingdom Season. As you will know, our vision for the cathedral has, for some years, been summed up in these words: *Growing God's Kingdom* and so it is good for us all who call the cathedral our spiritual home to use this season running up to Advent to ponder what it is to grow God's Kingdom in the current world. Our archbishops have also requested that we use these weeks as a month of prayer. So, we hope you will find this material helpful.

I am conscious that not everyone will be able to come to the cathedral for prayer or access our online services. We are therefore providing hard copies of this material. This will be delivered or posted to all those whom we know would appreciate it. We will also include a printed copy of our *Ripon Cathedral Annual Review 2019-2020* which has been available on our website for some weeks. It reminds us that life has not always been dominated by the pandemic, and that the cathedral has been active and serving since the pandemic began to impact on our lives. We hope and pray that 2021 will enable us to return to something like normal operation. We can only move forward, trusting God for the future, as we give thanks for the strengths of the last 18 months. Please, let us know if you are aware of anyone who would appreciate this material.

Canon Ailsa is setting up a network of people who will keep in touch with others on behalf of the cathedral by phone. However, it is difficult to make sure no one gets overlooked in a large congregation so we would appreciate your help. If you are aware of people who would appreciate our mailing or who would like to be included in the phoning network, please let the cathedral office or Canon Ailsa know.

On behalf of the whole cathedral community, I would like to send my warmest wishes to the Revd Caitlin Carmichael-Davis as she leaves us after the three-and-a-half years of her curacy. Her final day with us was due to be Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November, the Feast of Christ the King. As well as planning to celebrate the sure hope that Christ will one day reign on earth as in heaven, we had fully intended to mark joyfully the wonderful ministry that Caitlin has offered in her time with us. Her gentle, thoughtful, cheerful manner has been appreciated by us all. She has worked effectively with all generations, and those who have received regular pastoral care from her will certainly miss her. We all will miss her!

Thankfully, Caitlin has agreed to come back from Lancaster, at some convenient time in the new year, to enable us to say thank you and farewell properly. For now, we wish her well for the move and every blessing as she begins her incumbency in the Diocese of Blackburn.

As we look forward to Advent, with its welcome message of hope, I encourage us all to take comfort and strength from our faith in a saviour who knew suffering and yet who demonstrated that God's love cannot fail, whatever happens. Inspired by his call to love both God and our neighbours, let us remain constant in prayer, do what we can to be a blessing to others, and be kind to ourselves. Finally, please can I encourage us all to continue to use the cathedral's prayer, appropriate in all seasons but not least in this. You can find the words below.

With my prayers and best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dean John', written in a cursive style.

Dean John

### **Ripon Cathedral Prayer**

Creator God,  
you reveal your love for us in Jesus  
and sustain us by your Holy Spirit;  
by your grace, open our eyes to your presence  
and our ears to your call,  
that united with our patrons St. Peter and St. Wilfrid  
and in the whole community of Ripon Cathedral,  
we may serve your will and see your kingdom grow  
in this City and Diocese;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen