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What is this about?

The weekly publication of Pew News now goes to over 1500 subscribers and does a great job in communicating what is happening in the Minster and among its community. The bimonthly magazine *Southwell Leaves* has interesting articles as well as news. Both are available via the website. However, for some while I have seen there is a communication gap and so this is the first edition of what I hope will become at least a monthly communication from the Chapter. One of the challenges of the past six months has been that news soon becomes out of date as Government and Church of England advice has needed to change rapidly in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Even as I write, tighter restrictions on social gatherings have been announced overnight and we are wondering how or if this may affect public worship.

Reopening the Minster and worship

The Minster staff team have done an impressive job in quickly preparing for reopening the Minster in June and ensuring it is 'Covid secure'. Thank you to the vergers especially who have adapted to new roles, not least in collecting 'Test and Trace' data and keeping everything clean. We have taken all the necessary measures for worship and general visiting, but we are not complacent, so if you see anything that could be improved please let us know.

The return of the Cathedral Choir... very soon

Following the Chapter meeting yesterday we are delighted to announce that after six long months the Cathedral choir is returning. The **lay clerks** will sing from this **Sunday 13 September at the 10am Eucharist and 3pm Evensong**. The choristers will begin rehearsals from next week and will sing services after the half term break. We look forward to welcoming eight new girls and four new boys. We will gradually build up the service schedule, starting with a **Saturday evensong on the 19 September at a new and earlier time of 4pm**. We have benefited from a grant from the Cathedral Choirs Emergency Fund and the Church Commissioners and we are most grateful to them and others whose generous gifts are helping sustain our wonderful Music Foundation of which we are rightly proud.

Worship

The new **1.15pm Holy Communion service** has proved to be much appreciated by both visitors and the Minster community who prefer a midweek, shorter service and this will continue into the autumn. Canon Richard and I are keen to reintroduce the **Sunday 8am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion**, and we hope this will be from **4 October**.

All services will be in the Nave for the foreseeable future. This is partly because we can maintain social distancing and the required cleaning in this space, but also because of the disruption of the *Leaves Project* work in the Chapter House.

Do check Pew News and the website for details of all services. We have some special occasions coming up – including Ordinations, Harvest Festival, Animal Blessing, a service to mark Prisons Week and much more.

Visitors

Since the return of the Stewards and duty chaplains we have welcomed over 3,000 general visitors. Although around 25% of what we would expect for

the summer weeks, those who have come have expressed warm appreciation of the Minster being open. Income from donations is, not surprisingly, down considerably but the average donation per visitor has doubled! We are keeping under review the opening times of the Minster and would like to expand them as staff return from furlough to work. The Archbishop's Palace remains closed for general visiting.

Cathedral Shop open and online!

Thanks to the return of staff and volunteers the shop has been trading since 16 June and is looking splendid. Along with the Cathedral it has been awarded the 'We're good to go' Covid certificate by Visit Britain. It was important that our shop stood alongside other retail traders in the town to signal that Southwell was 'open for business' and is a vibrant place for shopping as the economy restarts. There are plans to expand the opening hours (currently 11am – 3pm Tuesday to Saturday). If you don't live locally, the online offer is growing too so please support the shop as all its profit generates income for the Minster.

The Minster Centre and staff

Adele Poulson, COO, has been carefully managing the return of staff from furlough, some now on flexi-furlough. There are plans to reopen the Minster Centre from October with some staff continuing to part work from home. A new telephone system is soon to be installed so staff will be contactable directly whether working from home or in the office. We are also working towards improved IT in the Minster to enable live streaming of services. The appointment of a new Residentiary Canon has been delayed but is now a focus for the autumn and we hope soon to be ready to begin a recruitment process. I am very keen that we build the clergy team to full capacity again.

Sacrista Prebend

The Chapter recognise that Sacrista cannot safely reopen and return to the

ministry it was previously offering in a 'Covid secure' way, so the house must remain closed. However, the very good news is that the Community of St Laurence Trust has gifted funds to the Chapter which we have identified as money for capital investment in the house, garden, and car park. We want this work to commence over the winter months ready for reopening with improved accommodation and facilities next year. The Chapter is fully committed to the future of the House and this unexpected gift has arrived at the right time, for which we are truly thankful to God and those whose generosity and prudence in past times has made this brighter future possible. The other piece of good news is that very soon we will announce the appointment of a new Warden.

Looking ahead

The Chapter has been working intensely over the last months keeping a careful eye on cash flow and income/expenditure. While there are obvious challenges for all Cathedrals in the aftershock of 'lockdown', we are developing a strategic plan which uses our precious resources, people as well as assets, to sustain and develop our mission to best serve the town, county, city and diocese. In all the difficulties of the last months there have also been some unexpected opportunity to reset our priorities for mission and growth. We will announce more later in October as plans come together after a Chapter away day on 12 October. The Chapter will meet next on 24 September.

Central to everything is the Cathedral's primary vocation and charism as a holy place of prayer and worship which draws all who come to the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Amidst immense uncertainty our gospel is a focus of timeless hope and confidence.

Thank you for reading this far! When all staff are back, we will improve the presentation of the newsletter but meanwhile we hope this has brought you up to date.

Please visit the website for further details www.southwellminster.org



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