The Very Reverend Dr David Ison, Dean

Cherishing our cathedrals

Welcome to another edition of Dome magazine.
In this season of Eastertide, may you share in the blessings of Easter and the good news of the resurrection.

As I write, we have recently witnessed the devastating fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. We pray for all people in their grief for what has been lost and remain steadfast in our hope that the means may be found to rebuild it. As stewards of the renewed St Paul’s Cathedral, we are reminded of the Latin inscription resurgam: ‘I shall rise again’, that the Cathedral bears.

More so than ever, we must cherish our cathedrals which stand as a testament of faith built to the glory of God. This includes the need for sustained investment in our cathedrals and for fundraising to support this work. In addition to an ongoing programme of maintenance work and repairs to the fabric, at St Paul’s we are also pursuing special projects to ensure that the Cathedral is fit for purpose in the 21st century and beyond. This includes the Equal Access Project, a new ramped entrance at the north transept, which begins construction this summer.

This year, the City of London takes as its theme ‘Fantastic Feats’, to celebrate our wonderful buildings and the Cathedral is taking part in a number of ways, from organ festivals and sermon series, to exhibitions and family activities.

A new Collections exhibition, opening in the crypt on 23rd May, explores the Great Restoration of the 1920s which followed the delivery of a Dangerous Structures Notice by the City of London on Christmas Eve 1924, forcing the closure of the Cathedral. The exhibition follows the remarkable investigations and structural work that took place as well as the internal adaptations that enabled services to continue and the national fundraising campaign that secured the necessary funds within a matter of months.

We must cherish our cathedrals which stand as a testament of faith built to the glory of God.

In Cathedral life we are extremely fortunate to experience fantastic musical feats on a daily basis that elevate our worship at Evensong. In a recent campaign we encouraged people in our local community to experience the beauty and peace of Evensong, and we hear reflections from Dean’s Virger Charles Williams and Vicar Choral Carris Jones on what this service means to them.

The organ itself is a wonder of engineering and Organist Simon Johnson explores some of its history ahead of the Fantastic Feats Organ Festival when it will be put through its paces by world renowned organists.

Our new Chancellor, Dr Paula Gooder, reflects on our understanding of place and our experience of those places where heaven and earth might feel closer. For many of us the Cathedral is one of these places, and we believe that this incredible building we have inherited is integral to delivering our mission as a place of welcome and a community with a voice to help shape change in our society.

Unlike Dean Inge in the Great Restoration of the 1920s, we do not have The Times to do our fundraising for us; but we do have expert advice, and we do have many friends and much goodwill as we continue to play our part in being good stewards of this place for a new generation. Thank you as you join us in that ongoing work and so become a part of the life and the history of this remarkable place.
On the afternoon of 24 December 1924, Christmas preparations were interrupted by the unexpected and shocking delivery of a Dangerous Structures Notice from the Corporation of London.

This informed the Cathedral authorities that ‘the building is dangerous inasmuch as piers supporting the great dome have crushed and…are likely to fall’, and ordering the Cathedral ‘to take down the eight piers supporting the dome and replace with piers of solid ashlar masonry.’

Viewed as ‘an act of insolent rudeness’ by Dean William Inge, and causing widespread public dismay, the Notice generated a strong response and, while it did not actually lead to the piers being taken down and replaced, it was ultimately responsible for five years of extensive restoration work within the Cathedral. The subject of a new exhibition in the crypt, this was one of the most momentous periods in the Cathedral’s history.

Concerns had first been raised about the structural stability of the Cathedral in 1912, when an examination of the foundations suggested that the Cathedral was moving. Further fears were raised when a piece of stone fell in the nave in 1913. In response, the Cathedral Surveyor Mervyn Macartney replaced 3,000 cubic meters of masonry and reinforced two of the piers by injecting cement into their rubble core.

A commission was formed in 1921 to advise the Cathedral on further reinforcements. They concentrated on the condition of the masonry in the main piers and the settlement of the foundations, but decision-making was slow. The risk of disaster was becoming increasingly apparent; in the words of the commission Chairman, Sir Aston Webb, “the Cathedral was in danger of becoming dangerous”.

It was in this context that the Corporation of London issued their Dangerous Structures Notice. While it was deemed ‘physically impossible’ and prohibitively expensive to take down and replace the piers as had been ordered, it was agreed that the Cathedral structure would be preserved from any further damage by intensive restoration work that would include reinforcing the piers with metal rods and cement, repairing the defective masonry in the dome area, and strengthening the inner and outer drums supporting the domes with a metal chain.

The work began in March 1925, after £250,000 (the equivalent to over £10million in today’s money) had been raised for the work by Canon Treasurer Sidney Alexander with the aid of a press campaign by The Times. As Alexander wrote: ‘The money must be raised quickly if St Paul’s is to be saved from real danger. This is a matter that concerns every citizen of London, and indeed the whole of the British Empire.’

The Cathedral was partially closed to the public, with all services until June 1930 being conducted in the nave. A temporary screen blocked off the dome area and the east end, though the crypt and the Whispering Gallery were for a time still accessible to visitors.

The restoration work was overseen by Resident Engineer Colonel Sankey and Assistant Architect Godfrey Allen, and was undertaken by the Cathedral’s team of over 200 workmen. Starting at the crypt level and working upwards, the men drilled over 250 holes in the piers, into which steel bars between two and five metres long were inserted, followed by liquid cement injected at high pressure into the remaining cavities. The drilling produced a lot of dust and the work was...
disrupted by regular problems with the cement pump and the drill bits, but this method ensured that all existing gaps within the rubble core of the piers were effectively filled, eventually generating a crushing resistance that was greater than that of Portland stone.

By November 1927 the strengthening of all eight piers had been completed and work moved on to the repairing of defective stonework. The iron cramps used in the stonework by Christopher Wren were badly corroded and causing damage. By 1930 nearly 700 of these had been removed and replaced with 2,000 non-rusting versions.

In 1928 work began on strengthening the drum structure that supports the three domes. A steel chain made of intersecting links was placed around the outer drum just above the tops of buttresses. It was tightened slightly using wedges, and then encased with concrete. Further bracing between the drums using a system of 48 diagonal tie rods between inner and outer drums, in conjunction with a concrete floor, allowed the two drums to be effectively braced together so as to make them a single structure.

The restoration work as a whole was completed by May 1930 to allow for preparations for the service to celebrate the re-opening on 25 June 1930. Attended by King George V, Queen Mary, the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family, as well as various statesmen including Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, the service featured a procession from the west front to the dome of the 220 workmen who had worked so tirelessly on the restoration project. Through their dedication it was possible for the Surveyor Mervyn Macartney to declare that the Cathedral was now ‘as safe as human ingenuity can make it’.

The dramatic story will be re-told using photographs, drawings and reports from the Cathedral archive and objects from the Cathedral collections, in the north crypt aisle, from 24 May 2019.
First To Last Watch

And you wonder if the rumour of God came first,
if some force hummed within the Dean
or if purely logical, a practical need
drove his ST. Paul’s Watch call-out.

You wonder whose eyes the call crossed first,
A.G. Butler, R.P. Jones, B.M. Sullivan or E.S. Firth,
which, if any, dismissed its premise
as token, a pastime for unfit soldiers.

And who read, re-read, read again first
and found the cathedral’s bowel of a crypt,
whose thirst for battle did the meeting swell
and for whom was the thirst utterly quenched.

You wonder who dropped a pencil first
when its soft-scribble on notebooks stopped,
when the school-boys-playing-war mood turned
to poison-gas lectures, respiration drills.

And who of them marvelled at a bomb first,
who standing, viewed an impact fuse,
the jet propelled glider or parachute bomb
as baffling, as beautiful, as divine birth.

You wonder of them all who almost died first,
who excavating an incendiary,
hypnotised by its hidden spark, slipped a foot,
and falling, called out for Christ.

And the night thirty fell who arrived first,
did any liken bombs to hailstone rain
even as the sky over the city
was brighter than day, lit with flames.

You wonder who felt forsaken first,
who gaping at the dome’s hole,
the high altar shattered to splinters, fragments,
believed the kingdom had come and gone.

And when the war was done, who heard first,
who ran, returning uniforms,
who hummed what hymn and who rejoiced,
who sensing an emptiness, cursed.

You wonder who sipped the last toast first,
who, attending the final dinner,
hid a thin wrist’s unkempt trembling
for those they had lost and for what survived.

Inua Ellams
Within the Cathedral Collections is a massive bronze head of the coped and magisterial Canon Sidney Arthur Alexander. This sculpture sat for many years in the library, next to a bust of Alexander’s long-standing colleague Dean Inge. The advice received by Inge before taking his post was that to be Dean was to be “like a mouse watched by four cats”. Inge was some mouse, certainly, but the most dangerous of the cats was Alexander.

Appointed a canon in 1909, Alexander was to serve the Cathedral for thirty-nine years, for much of that time as Canon Treasurer and Chapter Treasurer. In 1911, and again in 1922, Alexander shouldered the burden for Chapter, of raising funds to stabilise the endangered fabric. In 1924 work was under way when the City Surveyor served a Dangerous Structure Notice on the Dean. Inconvenient as that was, it gave impetus to a third appeal in The Times newspaper: Alexander’s total fundraising reached £400,000, the expenditure of which he was able to oversee himself to ensure the future stability of the Cathedral.

Alexander and Macartney established the St Paul’s Watch in 1915, and Alexander lived to revive it in 1938 with Godfrey Allen, Macartney’s successor. There was little action in WWI, but the experience gained was invaluable in 1939-1945: the revival of the Watch was vital to the survival of the Cathedral.

Alexander’s influence as Treasurer may have gone to his head: his love for St Paul’s and his business acumen were evident; but orthodoxy had become his doxy. When Dean Inge retired, Alexander was transfixed by the idea of his own succession to the deanery; rebuffed, he resisted and ended his days sadly in Amen Court. Those with whom he had disagreed nonetheless found it entirely fitting that he – the man who saved the Cathedral – should be put to rest in a place of honour in the Cathedral crypt.
FANTASTIC FEATS
OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

What will you discover at St Paul’s this summer?

24 May - 27 October

stpauls.co.uk/fantastic-feats
stpaulscathedrallondon
@StPaulsLondon
Bringing new life to the Collections

Building on the success of the Great Fire exhibition in 2016, the Collections Department has worked on a new interpretation for the space.

Evaluation of the ‘Out of the Fire’ exhibit, co-ordinated by the Cathedral’s Audience Development Officer, revealed that visitors learned more about the life and work of St Paul’s as a result of the display and that they felt it added value to their visit. The provision of information on the history of the Cathedral, using the Collections, provides an extra layer of interpretation for our visitors which makes their experience more enjoyable and promotes greater understanding of what the Cathedral is and does.

Building on the success of this installation the Collections Department has worked on new interpretation for the same space which will tell the story of how St Paul’s was saved from potential collapse in the 1920s. The topic complements the theme of ‘Fantastic Feats’ selected by the City of London to celebrate London’s buildings in 2019. The logistics for a relatively simple display such as this are surprisingly complex, a fantastic feat in itself!

The objects, a collection of surveying equipment and tools and associated archive material...
from the period were researched by Jane Insley, a volunteer currently undertaking studies for a PhD. Using the information generated by Jane and various other sources, it was then possible for myself and our Archivist, Sarah Radford, to structure the display in order to convey a complicated narrative in an accessible way. We selected the objects and archive material which best supports the story and wrote the text. The information was checked by Robert Bowles, a structural engineer with long-standing association with St Paul’s, to ensure accuracy. The images, captured by Graham Lacdao, the text and objects were submitted to a designer to arrange them appropriately for the production of light box covers. The objects have been measured and weighed for display by a History at Work Placement student Jamie Robinson, from Goldsmiths College, and were cleaned in preparation for the exhibition by the Cathedral’s Senior Object Conservator. Research had to be undertaken on the types of materials from which the objects were made and an appropriate cleaning method was devised accordingly, so as not to damage the surfaces of the objects. Mount makers were enlisted to design and make the supports for the objects which will be on show in the display cases. One of the archival items which will be on display, a richly illuminated book listing the hundreds of donors who provided the financial support required to save the Cathedral, has been returned from deposit at London Metropolitan Archives for the exhibit. The Works Department have moved two monuments to temporary storage to make way for the display, and they have winched two elaborate architectural models to the Cathedral floor from the Collections store at Triforium level. This will be the first time that some of the items have been displayed for the public in nearly one hundred years. Funding for the project has been generously provided by The Alan Baxter Foundation.

The department has arranged three lunchtime talks in June to accompany the display. Book via the Cathedral website at [www.stpauls.co.uk/talks](http://www.stpauls.co.uk/talks):

**A High Risk Strategy? The impact of Wren’s revisions to the design of St Paul’s**
Tuesday 4 June 13:00-14:00
Dr Gordon Higgott, Architectural Historian

**Belt and Braces: Saving St Paul’s in the 1920s**
Saturday 15 June 11:00-12:00
Robert Bowles, Structural Engineer

**Mother Church & Masterpiece: Maintaining St Paul’s Cathedral for the Future**
Wednesday 26 June 13:00-14:00
Oliver Caroe, Surveyor to the Fabric, St Paul’s Cathedral
The title ‘Fantastic Feats’ ties us in with a festival of the same name that is being run by the Corporation of the City of London. Their subtext is that the festival should encourage us to “scale the heights of imagination and celebrate towering triumphs of architecture, invention and engineering”.

Early organs were amongst the world’s most complex and spectacular marvels. They were introduced into monasteries in the 10th-century, thereby “saluting the maker of All Things with the most advanced apparatus” (Peter Williams). Move forward 1100 years to St Paul’s Cathedral, and the “most advanced apparatus” now consists of 7246 pipes ranging in size from 10 metres to the size of a small pencil, spread around five different locations of the building, all controlled from two identical consoles, each of five keyboards, a pedalboard and over a hundred pistons.

Father Smith’s instrument from 1697 was one of the largest of the time, yet began life speaking only into the quire. The St Paul’s organ has always searched for the latest technological innovations to overcome the acoustical challenges – more power, and more locations from which pipes can fill the building with sound. It was the Victorians who grasped the means by which these objectives could be achieved. Father Willis, a considerable inventor, emerged as the pre-eminent British organ builder; arriving at St Paul’s in 1872 with a brand new idea – requiring a fantastic feat of engineering, no less – to divide the St Paul’s organ on either side of the chancel. His development of tubular pneumatic action meant that pipes and console no longer needed to be near one another. At St Paul’s it opened up new possibilities for the placement of pipes in the dome (from 1900) and, later with actions electrified, the west end (1970s). Digitalisation and
computer technology means that the player now has unlimited resources in making combination changes with ease.

But the true fantastic feat of the organ is when Dryden’s ‘wond’rous machine’ becomes St Cecilia’s musical instrument. In engaging the finest organists from around the world to put the instrument through its paces in diverse and multifaceted programmes, we allow pipes and mechanisms to become truly alive and transcendent.

In June I’ll be performing an eclectic programme that is topped and tailed by two Fantasias and Fugues in G, opening with the one by Parry (who is buried in the crypt), a piece that was certainly influenced by the closing one of Bach. The centrepiece of the programme is an arrangement of the first movement of Franck’s orchestral Symphony in D minor. Before the concluding Bach, a little sorbet in the form of my new piece Get up into the city and go!

In July we are honoured to welcome one of North America’s greatest concert organists, Ken Cowan, in a rare appearance in the UK. Praised for his dazzling artistry, impeccable technique and imaginative programming, he maintains a rigorous performing schedule that has taken him to many of the world’s great performing venues.

For the August concert, Professor Daniel Beckmann, Organist of Mainz Cathedral and very much the new star on the German organ scene, makes his St Paul’s debut, playing works by Reubke, Schumann and opening with all three of Dupré’s Op.7 Preludes and Fugues.

Finally, our fantastic new Sub Organist, William Fox, makes his debut in our summer series in a diverse programme of works including Schoenberg’s rarely heard Variations on a recitative.

As Stravinsky noted, “The Church knew what the psalmist knew: Music praises God. Music is well or better able to praise him than the building of the church and all its decoration; it is the Church’s greatest ornament.” The Fantastic Feats Organ festival is therefore the ultimate ‘triumph of architecture, invention and engineering’.

Tickets £12 (£8 concs) available from fantasticfeatsorganfestival.eventbrite.co.uk. To qualify for Friends discount, insert promotional code ‘friends’ or ‘friendsconcs’
Thursday 2nd May, 6.30pm
Bine Bryndorf (Denmark)

Thursday 6th June, 6.30pm
Simon Johnson (St Paul's)

Thursday 4th July, 6.30pm
Ken Cowan (Canada/USA)

Thursday 1st August, 6.30pm
Daniel Beckmann (Germany)

Thursday 5th September, 6.30pm
William Fox (St Paul's)

Tickets: £12 (concs £8)
Available from
www.fantasticfeatsorganfestival.eventbrite.co.uk
www.stpauls.co.uk
Choral Evensong:
A timeless tradition

A beautiful stream of prayer in music, Choral Evensong offers us a moment to detach from the modern world, and feel connected to something greater than ourselves.

In the early part of this year, in a new style of campaign for the Cathedral, we encouraged people in our local community in the City to discover the beauty and peace of Evensong, especially in those dark and stressful early months of the year.

From the early 1700s sung evening prayers were held at St Paul’s Cathedral at 3pm and took place in the quire. The first service to be held beneath the dome was an evening service held on Advent Sunday, 28 November 1858.

Choral Evensong is a daily ritual, marking the moment as the day turns to evening. However throughout our history it has marked significant moments in history and celebrated incredible feats of human endeavour.

Singer and American Civil Rights Activist Paul Robeson was invited to sing at Evensong on 12 October 1958. Robeson’s appearance raised funds for the Defence in the South African Treason Trials, in which 156 people, including Nelson Mandela, were accused of treason. The service was attended by around 4,000 people, with many standing at the back, and there were huge crowds outside the Cathedral.

We continue to mark poignant global and local events at Choral Evensong. In June 2018 WheelPower, the national charity for wheelchair sport, celebrated the 70th Anniversary of the Stoke Mandeville Games and the birth of the Paralympic Movement at a special Evensong. The service was preceded by a showcase of wheelchair sport in the Churchyard and even included a wheelchair fencing demonstration under the dome during the service itself.

See our service schedule for details of upcoming regular and special services: www.stpauls.co.uk/serviceschedule
CARRIS JONES
Alto Vicar Choral

Whatever you believe, Evensong is an opportunity to detach from the modern world for a short while, to quiet the mind, breathe in and out, to marvel at the beauty of the sacred space around you and feel connected to something greater than ourselves.

Choral Evensong is an integral part of our country’s rich musical and religious heritage. It is a rare opportunity in busy modern London to connect with our shared history through a service that has remained nearly the same in its basics since the day of Elizabeth I, but continues to flower as a living tradition in the cathedrals and parish churches. It’s an unusual thing to encounter words written in 1662 with music that may have been written as recently as 2018 – it manages to be ancient and modern all at once.

At the beginning of every Evensong that I take part in, I feel absolutely connected to my predecessors as Vicars Choral; those who have stood in the same spaces in the choir, singing the same words over hundreds of years. Evensong provides an opportunity to listen in on a beautiful stream of prayer in music – and one of the things that makes it so special is that it feels so intimate and approachable, even though it is taking place in the grandeur of St Paul’s. Whatever you believe, Evensong is an opportunity to detach from the modern world for a short while, to quiet the mind, breathe in and out, to marvel at the beauty of the sacred space around you and feel connected to something greater than ourselves. I can come into Evensong really struggling with my daily preoccupations, and through the calm rhythm of the words and music, I come out feeling refreshed and ready to re-join the rush.

CHARLES WILLIAMS
Dean’s Virger

Evensong is one of a number of still points that takes place within the bustle and movement of a busy day. We open our doors at 7 o’clock in the morning and our day begins with Morning Prayer; not knowing what the day may bring, or who will visit us, or how the things they see, hear and experience will touch them. But we do know that whatever thoughts or feelings or concerns they may bring with them, every single person is of infinite value, and a member of a wider family of all those who have come before us.

Hourly prayers and moments of stillness punctuate the day, the heartbeat of the Cathedral through prayer. As the day turns to evening, we close the day with those who have been with us or have just arrived, and those who through the centuries have marked the ending of the day in the same way in this place and on this site. It is a time to contemplate what has been and what may be to come, to be taken out of ourselves through music, words and the beauty of the place and to sense a wider perspective than ourselves. To be open to the widest perspective of all; the one in which we live and move and have our being.
In the image of God: Exploring gender and religion at St Paul’s

Caroline Kamana explores the new workshops on Religion, Families and Gender offered by the Hackney-St Paul’s Project and what questions these raise for students.

“How many actual memorials are there to women in St Paul’s?” asked a teacher accompanying a group of secondary school students. The question came right at the beginning of a workshop on Religion, Families and Gender (one of four new offerings for GCSE students, developed as part of The Hackney – St Paul’s Project). I replied that I didn’t know. The teacher looked unsatisfied. Counting historical monuments wasn’t my objective. Rather we provoke learners to reflect on and engage with the narratives of gender prejudice and discrimination within Christianity, exploring perspectives on gender roles and theologies as set within the heritage and contemporary landscape of St Paul’s.

Religious Education content specifications changed in 2016; teachers are required to provide their learners with more 21st century case studies, whilst exploring how these might link to biblical texts and encouraging critical thinking and reflection. Developed in consultation with teachers, the Hackney – St Paul’s Project affords a unique provision to extend this; discussions are stimulated by investigating the art, architecture, history and living church community of St Paul’s. For ‘Religion, Gender and Families’ we outline and probe figuration of women in St Paul’s. Some of these are visible but for the most they are invisible – this itself forms the basis of discussion. How does this reflect thinking about women within historical and contemporary society, secular and spiritual? Students learn of St Paul’s ‘hidden’ stories including Hilda Hewlett, the first woman in the UK to get a pilot’s license and the creator of the frame for The Light of the World, and Jane Brewer, whose pine(apple) sits atop the South West tower. We trace the narratives of the Suffragettes protesting Dean Inge’s outspoken dismissal of their cause. We think through the history of the Movement for the Ordination of Women and the contributions of founding member Margaret Webster (wife of former Dean Alan Webster). Without MOW’s work we could not have celebrated the installation of Bishop Sarah in 2018, in the very seat under which the Suffragettes planted a bomb in 1913. Whilst Bishop
Sarah’s name is etched in the Cathedral's stonework, her ministry serves as an invisible memorial to the transformation of thinking about the role of women within the Anglican Church and to those women and men who strove to make change.

In the quire, learners are encouraged to reflect on the pictorial representation of the Christian story, from within the book of Genesis in the quire mosaics to the eschatological presentation in the apse. The sinful Eve is pitted as an opposite to a virginal Mary in the quire mosaics, the very colours of the mosaics depict a particular narrative: Mary literally stands out – highlighted in gold and clothed in brightly coloured tesserae, Eve, meanwhile, presented in darkened muted colours, naked and looking ashamed. Learners consider stereotyping, archetypes, prototypes and tropes, investigating how this might unpack thinking around one of their set texts: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:17) Created as equals? Partners? As different? In his image? How do you understand image? A reflection, an imprint? Are we both Eve and Mary as portrayed here? How is this ‘in the image of God’?

Facing Henry Moore’s Mother and Child, the group of teenagers engage in lively debate about ways in which the sculpture makes tangible discussions around family life in today’s society. How might this sculpture help 21st century Christians understand Ephesians 6:1-4 (obey your parents) whilst thinking about the nature, purpose and importance of family? Responses include: A single parent family. An unbroken bond between parent and child. A child gives as much to the parent as a parent to the child. One flesh, one body, we are all one in Christ. Does it have to be a mother; is it a father? We can learn and be fed by any kind of family. Do all families and all Christians look the same? On cue, Bill Viola’s Mary starts with the figure of Mary breastfeeding her child in front of the any-cityscape. The whole group turn to their right, silent and mesmerized. What does this make you think about? “That for some Christians, God can be everything and for everyone. I didn’t expect to think about this in St Paul’s”, said one girl. Perhaps it’s time to stop counting memorials to women in St Paul’s and, as those year 10s remind us, remember to see the every as the image of God.
Dr Paula Gooder, Chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral

Why St Paul’s Matters

Dr Paula Gooder was installed as the first Lay Chancellor at the Cathedral recently, here she reflects on those places where God’s presence can be felt more easily.

We all have places that are special to us: places that remind us of happy times – or sad ones; places where important events in our lives have taken place; places where we feel peaceful or at home. Places can and do affect us, whether they are places that we visit regularly or are entirely new to us. Places give us a sense of rootedness, of identity and of belonging. Throughout Christian history places have been important too and some people identify places in which they feel close to God. The Celtic Christian tradition called these places ‘thin places’. The idea was that in a ‘thin place’ heaven seemed particularly close to earth – a place where God’s presence could be felt more easily. Thin places were sacred and special.

This idea of places which felt noticeably holy is far from new and it stretches back much further even than medieval Celtic Christianity. The Old Testament, in particular, regularly refers to places that were considered to be especially holy; places that opened directly into heaven. The temple in Jerusalem was certainly seen in that way and the holy of holies, at the heart of the temple, was thought to be where God came down from heaven from time to time to live in the middle of God’s people. As a result the Temple was thought to open directly into heaven itself. As important as this idea was for the temple, it went back even further than that. Before the temple was built, various Old Testament characters declared particular places to be holy places. Probably the most important of these occasions can be found in Genesis 28.10-17. In this passage, Jacob fell asleep at a place he later called Bethel (which means house of God) and dreamt that there was a ladder stretching from earth to heaven and that angels came up and down the ladder from heaven to earth. When he woke up he said: ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ (Genesis 28.17)

Later on in the New Testament Jesus referred back to this event when he said in John 1.51: ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ His reference, though, changed the passage in an important way – the angels didn’t ascend and descend anymore on a particular place but on a particular person, Jesus. As a result, he was implying that the gateway to heaven was no longer one place but wherever Jesus was present there was the gateway to heaven. This is very important for our understanding of place. For Christians we do not need to travel far and wide to find a single special place that opens into heaven – we can find that special place wherever Jesus is known, and loved and worshipped.

Throughout the day, from early morning until night, Jesus is worshipped in this place and has been for hundreds and hundreds of years. This means that there is nowhere on earth – absolutely nowhere – which cannot, in principle be a gate of heaven but there are still places in which it is easier to worship, that are more naturally gates of heaven. For some people – and I am certainly one of these people – St Paul’s really does feel like a gate of heaven: a place where your gaze and heart are pulled upwards in worship of God; a place in which
God feels more easily present than in other places. But not everyone feels this. Other people find the building too grand and impersonal to consider it their thin place and, in any case, many people find somewhere outside – the sea, mountains or woodland – to be their own thin place.

Whether you think that St Paul’s Cathedral is a natural thin place or not, it still matters because of John 1.51. Throughout the day, from early morning until night, Jesus is worshipped in this place and has been for hundreds and hundreds of years, as a result it is a gate of heaven and, in it, it is just possible that, one day, you might catch a glimpse of an angel. Either way the next time you are in the building, take a moment to reflect and see whether you think St Paul’s is a thin place or not.
MAY

Thursday 2 May, 6.30pm
Concert
Fantastic Feats Organ Festival
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/fantastic-feats-organ-festival

Sunday 5 May, 1pm
Sunday Forum
St Paul's Adult Learning:
The Paradox of Freedom
SPEAKER: Graham Tomlin

Thursday 9 May, 5pm
Evensong with the Installation of the Precentor and Chancellor

Friday 10 May, 1pm
Collections Talk
The Stonemason: An insider’s history of Britain’s buildings
SPEAKER: Andrew Ziminski
Register for free tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/talks

Saturday 18 May, 2pm
Workshop
St Paul's Adult Learning: Radical Discipleship: Caring for the Stranger
SPEAKER: Krish Kandiah
Tickets £15, register at www.stpauls.co.uk/adultlearning

Tuesday 21 May, 5pm
The 365th Festival of the Clergy Support Trust

Thursday 30 May, 6.30pm
Lecture
St Paul's Adult Learning: Holy Envy:
Finding God in the Faith of Others
SPEAKER: Barbara Brown Taylor
Register for free tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/holyenvy

JUNE

Saturday 1 June, 10am
Reflective Day
St Paul’s Adult Learning:
Silence for Beginners
SPEAKER: Richard Carter
Tickets £45, register at www.stpauls.co.uk/adultlearning

Sunday 2 June, 1pm
Sunday Forum
St Paul’s Adult Learning:
What did Jesus look like?
SPEAKER: Joan Taylor

Tuesday 4 June, 1pm
Collections Talk
A High Risk Strategy?
The impact of Wren’s revisions to the design of St Paul’s
SPEAKER: Dr Gordon Higgott
Register for free tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/talks

Tuesday 4 June, 7pm
Service to Celebrate
25 Years of Women’s Ordination in the Diocese of London

Thursday 15 June, 11am
Collections Talk
Belt and Brace:
Saving St Paul’s in the 1920s
SPEAKER: Robert Bowles
Register for free tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/talks

Sunday 23 June, 11am
Orchestral Mass
Wednesday 26 June, 1pm
Collections Talk

Mother Church & Masterpiece: Maintaining St Paul’s Cathedral for the Future
SPEAKER: Oliver Caroe
Register for free tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/talks

Sunday 30 June, 11am
Orchestral Mass

JULY

Thursday 4 July, 6.30pm
Concert

Fantastic Feats Organ Festival
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/fantastic-feats-organ-festival

Sunday 7 July, 11am
Orchestral Mass

Sunday 7 July, 1pm
Sunday Forum

St Paul’s Adult Learning: Every Tribe: Saints in a Diverse World
SPEAKER: Sharon Prentis

Sunday 14 July, 11am
Orchestral Mass

AUGUST

Thursday 1 August, 6.30pm
Concert

Fantastic Feats Organ Festival
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/fantastic-feats-organ-festival

Thursday 8 August
Summer Late
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/lates

Thursday 15 August,
Summer Late
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/lates

Thursday 22 August
Summer Late
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/lates

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 5 September, 6.30pm
Concert

Fantastic Feats Organ Festival
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/fantastic-feats-organ-festival

Thursday 29 August
Summer Late
Book tickets at www.stpauls.co.uk/lates

Thursday 10 July, 5pm
Friends’ Festival

Sunday 7 July, 6pm
ALMA Service

Sunday 26 June, 1pm
Collections Talk

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Get involved

**Ways to learn, engage, and get involved at St Paul’s**

St Paul’s Cathedral has been here for over 1,400 years and its primary purpose has always been as a place of worship and prayer.

St Paul’s Institute seeks to foster an informed Christian response to the most urgent ethical and spiritual issues of our times: equality, stewardship and the meaning of the common good. See [www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk](http://www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk) or contact institute@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

St Paul’s Collections Department organises specialist tours, pop-up displays, collections-based talks and other events throughout the year. See the Collections pages on the cathedral website for more information. [www.stpauls.co.uk/collections](http://www.stpauls.co.uk/collections)

St Paul’s Schools and Family Learning Department offers curriculum-based learning opportunities for school groups and families throughout the year. To enquire or make a booking please contact the administrator on 020 7246 8353 or via email: schools@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

St Paul’s Adult Learning Department organises forums, lectures, workshops and reflective days to explore being a Christian in the 21st century. For more information, see [www.stpauls.co.uk/adultlearning](http://www.stpauls.co.uk/adultlearning) or email adultlearning@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

Would you be interested in receiving email updates with information about upcoming events and news from St Paul’s? To register interest, email: development@stpaulscathedral.org.uk

For full details of daily and Sunday services please go to [www.stpauls.co.uk/worship](http://www.stpauls.co.uk/worship)

Follow St Paul’s Cathedral on social media for regular updates: 

@StPaulsLondon • /StPaulsCathedral • /StPaulsCathedralLondon
People help with the efficient running of the Cathedral with both time and money, for which the whole St Paul’s community is grateful.

You can support St Paul’s financially in a number of different ways. You can donate through our secure website, by completing a standing order form, or by contacting us on telephone. You may also consider supporting the Cathedral with the purchase of concert and event tickets, or by making a gift in your will. However you donate and whatever the size of the gift, we are extremely grateful for your support.

You can also support St Paul’s by becoming a **Friend**. This membership offers the opportunity for closer involvement with the life and work of St Paul’s, whilst helping to ensure the Cathedral can inspire generations to come. For more information, please call 020 7246 8370 or email friends@stpaulscathedral.org.uk.

Want to know more?
Visit www.stpauls.co.uk/support
Email development@stpaulscathedral.org.uk
Call 020 7246 8370
Friends Membership
friends@stpaulscathedral.org.uk
Evensong is an opportunity to detach from the modern world for a short while, to quiet the mind, breathe in and out, to marvel at the beauty of the sacred space around you and feel connected to something greater than ourselves.

Carris Jones, Alto Vicar Choral