



Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi

Croesawu ymwelwyr fel pererinion

St Davids Cathedral

Welcoming visitors as pilgrims



Oddi wrth Y Deon: Y Tra Pharchedig Dr Sarah Rowland Jones LVO OBE

From the Dean: The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones LVO OBE

Adroddiad Y Deon i'r Cabidwl / Dean's Report to Chapter Gorfennaf 26 July 2018

'Unless the Lord builds the house, the labourers work in vain' Psalm 127:1

'Os nad yw'r Arglwydd yn adeiladu'r tŷ, y mae ei adeiladwyr yn gweithio'n ofer'

'Cenhadon yn cynrychioli Crist yw ni ... Cymoder chwi â Duw ... Dyma, yn awr, ddydd iachawdwriaeth'

'We are ambassadors for Christ ... Be reconciled to God ... Today is the day of salvation' 2 Cor 5:20, 6:2

'Gwnewch beth bynnag a ddywed wrthyhych – Do whatever he tells you.' Jn 2:5

Let me begin with thanks – to God, in whom all things work for good; to the Bishop for appointing me; to those who kept the Cathedral going in the interregnum, especially now-Archdeacon Dorrien and Canon Leigh, and all the Cathedral staff. Thank you, also, for your warm welcome and support.

Since most of you know the past life of the Cathedral better than I do, I'll focus on my first impressions and emerging vision, before looking ahead more broadly.

Thus far, my perspective is still largely shaped by the broad approach shared in the sermon at my Induction, with Mary's advice to the servants to 'do whatever he tells you'; St Paul's words in his Second Letter to the Corinthians that we are ambassadors for Christ, sharing the message of reconciliation, and challenging all that today is the day of salvation; and the Psalmist's admonition that 'Unless the Lord builds the house, the labourers work in vain'. All this guides our call to offer 'holy hospitality' with the ministry of welcome to both 'friends' and 'strangers' (Rom 15:7, 12:13).

And while it is the role of all Cathedrals to worship God and pray for their Bishop, alongside this, the lens through which we primarily see St Davids is as a pilgrim destination; and a place where one and all are invited, even challenged, to take a step forwards in response to Jesus Christ's call 'Follow me', by the time they leave this sacred space, this holy ground. This is as true of those of us who are here daily, as it is of those who come once in a lifetime – and all between. It is as true of those who have been faithful, devout Christians for decades, as those who are barely aware of the spiritual dimension of life. It is true whether we are from the Parish, Diocese, Wales or the wider world.

How does this work in practice? Pilgrimage is increasingly on the world's radar screen – witness the increase from a few thousand walking to Santiago di Compostella just twenty years ago to the couple

of hundred thousand or more now; or the recent BBC three-part series. And more interest in walking to St Davids with spiritual intention seems to be springing up all the time.

But what do pilgrim visitors do when they arrive here? You will see that I have altered the strap line from 'Turning visitors into pilgrims' to 'Welcoming visitors as pilgrims', and it seems to me that we have to give increasing substance to this welcome, and thus enrich visitors' capacity to encounter and engage with the Cathedral as pilgrims. While people are continually touched by the numinous and recognise something transcendent here, they have far fewer resources than earlier generations on which to draw to make sense of this experience in terms of the Christian gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, which is of course the heart of what we are about. St David is not the destination – he is the signpost: this place matters because Dewi's community, and generations following, found it a place where they could come close to God, whom we best know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So we are reviewing the menu of what we offer. Friday's noon Shrine Prayers have been rewritten with an order of service for both participant and leader (Canons in Residence will be pleased to know!) that more explicitly spells out the Christian heart of pilgrimage. We're also preparing a shorter meditation for use daily at noon in the Nave; and versions for independent groups and individuals. The much-loved Prayer Walk will be developed. We have the Labyrinth, with Christian guidance. We are broadening the availability of leaflets from eg SGM.

On a larger scale, there is urgent need for somewhere quiet to pray and reflect. I want to explore glassing in the St Thomas chapel. Enhancing visitors' capacity to share in worship through renewing the lighting and sound systems is a more prosaic, but equally pressing need, as anyone who has recently sat at the back of the Cathedral will know! And there will doubtless be other initiatives – all ideas gratefully received, and I look forward to exploring with you and learning from you.

In pursuing these objectives, we should be aware of two big anniversaries just over the horizon. As well as being the Church in Wales' centenary, when we will share in Province-wide activities, 2020 seems the best guess for the 900th anniversary of the Roman Catholic church recognising St David within its calendar of saints. Bishop Joanna and Bishop Tom Burns of Menevia are already beginning to plan joint events around 1 March. There will doubtless be more we can do through the year.

Then 2023 sees the 900th anniversary of Pope Callixtus II's decree that two pilgrimages here equal one to Rome. This should certainly be a peg on which to hang a very public renewal of the call to holy pilgrimage, with broad engagement with local and wider Tourism and other bodies.

So, there are many exciting opportunities before us! This is the context in which we need to hone our policies and practices of governance, in order to give stronger foundations on which to build. Chapter as now constituted ensures that faithful obedience to God's call upon us remains our overriding objective, while providing structures within which we can harness whatever expertise we need. Thank you to you all for being partners in the gospel, fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, and co-workers in God's ripening harvest-fields, in the hope-filled times ahead.

SRJ