Birmingham Cathedral Liturgy Plan:
Understanding calling: listening to context: naming aspiration.

May 2012
Updated October 2014
This liturgy plan seeks to record and explain both our current Cathedral liturgical practice and the theological understanding behind it. The plan also names some of the challenges that face us as well as our aspirations for the future.

We understand that the prayer and liturgy of the Cathedral, in response to the love of God made known in Jesus Christ, are its ‘beating heart’. All of our other activity, our life as Christians and our maintenance and development of our building and Cathedral Square should flow from these primary activities.

We hope that this plan will inform and enable necessary development of our building, including a new lighting scheme. It is important that changes within the building form part of an overall plan and hold the principles and practicalities of our liturgical life to the fore.

‘Understanding calling’: we believe that the Cathedral, like an individual, has a vocation and calling from God. We discern this vocation by listening to the Holy Spirit, studying scripture, seeking the counsel of wise friends and being under the authority of our Bishop.

‘Listening to context’: we believe that we also need to listen closely to our physical context and culture, to the life of our city and diocese and to the signs of the time to understand our liturgical vocation.

‘Naming aspiration’: we seek to name our aspirations in order that, by God’s grace, we may move forward into realising them.

I thank everyone who has taken part in preparing this plan, and all who have offered wise counsel.

Catherine Ogle, on behalf of the Chapter of Birmingham Cathedral
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Birmingham Cathedral Liturgy Plan:
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Introduction

Lord God, you draw us by your beauty
and transform us by your holiness;
let our worship echo all creation’s praise
and declare your glory to the nations;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(CW Prayer following Psalm 96 CW DP p792)

The Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) has recently produced draft guidelines for the production of liturgical plans or statements by cathedrals. It has suggested that such documents, used in conjunction with strategic plans, might help cathedral chapters to plan for the future with greater long-term insight, especially where such planning concerns re-ordering the interior of the cathedral. A well-attended conference held in Norwich in November 2010 provided further impetus to the production of such plans.

1. Definitions of liturgy

Liturgy itself is the action of the whole church at prayer

(Kenneth Stevenson, Liturgy Reshaped, SPCK, 1982, p3)

Activity performed not for private ends, but for the sake of the people

(Gerhard Podhradsky, New Dictionary of the Liturgy, Chapman 1966, p123)

The totality of symbols, hymns and actions by which the church makes known her adoration of God

(P. Gueranger in Podhradsky G., op cit, p124)

Process creating what Walter Brueggemann has called a ‘zone of possibility’ within which we can not only envision alternative futures, but act upon them.’

(Susah White in Oxford Companion to Christian Thought p.393)

2. A theological understanding of sacred place

‘The incarnation affirms the importance of the particular, and therefore of place, in God’s dealings with humanity.’ Within scripture and Christian thought there is an ongoing tension between the significance of place and the particularity of God’s revelation, and the universal and eternal God beyond time and space.

John Inge has explored and articulated this dialectic with great skill in his study, ‘A Christian Theology of Place.’ His argument is a great affirmation of the ‘materialist’ aspect of our

1 John Inge ‘A Christian Theology of Place’ p x
faith and of the significance of place to religious experience. Particular places may be viewed sacramentally, that is, as places that direct us beyond themselves to the eternal and ineffable. The incarnation means that the material is enabled to be a vehicle for the spiritual. Places of ‘sacramental encounter’ are those in which we experience ‘new ways of seeing’, in which our vision of the material world is ‘transfigured’ and we are enabled to glimpse the reality of heaven on earth. ‘Holy places’ are those places that remind us of the presence and action of God everywhere. Inge claims that ‘sacramental encounters’ can lead to a transformation of the place, as well as to the transformation of individuals and communities. The role of the place is to root believers in their faith and point them towards the redemption of all places, in Christ.

We believe that our Cathedral is a house of prayer. It has a calling and vocation to be a sacred place in which sacramental encounters take place, believers are rooted and grow in faith, children are nurtured, the Christian story is encountered, and the gospel is proclaimed; a place where the Gospel is proclaimed in word and deed and where God is worshipped collectively and individually.

The sacred place also enables an experience of sacred ‘space’. A visitor referred to Birmingham Cathedral as a ‘breathing space’ in the city – a place where he can find some space to think and re-orientate himself within a bigger context. Rowan Williams has referred to religious buildings as places that encode ‘history, mortality and belonging...’. These buildings encourage us to encounter and reflect on life’s big issues. In them we can see our lives in the context of eternity.

The four magnificent Burne-Jones windows in Birmingham Cathedral depict moments of epiphany, revelations of God’s loving activity among us: incarnation, crucifixion, ascension and last judgement. These events reveal heaven on earth; they are experiences of communication between heaven and earth. The windows support, we believe, our vocation as a ‘gate of heaven’ (Genesis 28: 17). The Cathedral’s vocation is to be a ‘thin’ place where we can glimpse, and even have a palpable sense of, the kingdom of heaven on earth.

We therefore aim to ‘claim the space’ as sacred by

- keeping most of the worship as visible and audible as possible so that it is clear to visitors that worship is our core activity, ‘what we do’, even if they do not participate. It is hoped that those who slip in during services to light a candle or leave a prayer request will feel that their individual action is part of something much larger.

- maintaining and developing holiness, awe and beauty of the cathedral through the upkeep of the fixed fabric, furnishings, lighting, cleanliness, tidiness, sensitive flower arrangements, music, sacred artworks, other art and exhibitions.

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2 Williams, Sharrington Lecture 2010
3 Paula Gooder, Heaven p61
4 Gooder, Heaven p 20 ff
3 Setting the Scene

3.1 An understanding of the contemporary city

Birmingham Cathedral is set in the heart of the business and commercial area of Britain’s second city. In modern society as a whole, and especially in the city, there has been a significant loss of sense of place. This is due to many factors including the demise of the industries on which cities were originally and distinctively created, and the design and branding of chains of shops, shopping centres and businesses tending towards standardisation rather than local character.

The Judeo-Christian tradition understands the ideal city as the holy place in which God ultimately chooses to dwell among his people (Revelation 21:3) with gates open at all times to the people of all nations (Isaiah 60:11). The reality of cities however, is that their built environment can be detrimental to community and well-being. According to Inge, ‘the essential problem is that cities have been viewed in instrumental or consumerist terms.... design(ed) to meet private needs, rather than foster public life.’ As Johnston argues, place and places are important, not just because of their different physical environment but also because people respond differently to the opportunities and restraints of those places. Winston Churchill put it this way “first we shape our buildings and then they shape us.” The Urban Task Force of 1999 led to the creation of the English Cities Fund which aims to promote urban living and reverse the trend from ‘place’ to dehumanizing ‘space’. Lord Rogers contrasts the increasing social polarisation of the city and the creation of ‘single minded spaces’ with the need to encourage ‘open-minded spaces’ which can foster shared, public life and thereby community.

We believe that Birmingham Cathedral is called to be a place in which public life and community can be modelled and fostered. Confident in our Christian identity we can be ‘open-minded’ and ‘open-hearted’ to our city and region, hospitable to the wider community including the stranger and those who represent the ‘other’.

We recognise that we are set at a ‘Crossing Place’. The Cathedral Churchyard is a place of continuous pedestrian traffic. This gives us a challenge and an opportunity to offer our building as a place where people, from all the diversity of the city, can be at home and where reconciliation and significant civic conversations can take place in safety and peace. According to scripture, Wisdom stands at the crossroads (Proverbs 8). The Cathedral, set at a ‘Crossing Place’ might be a place of significant encounter, human, as well as divine.

The building is an icon of God’s faithful presence in the city, past, present and future. It can be a safe space for all, but is never neutral or value free. This sacred place, in the modern commercial city, set at an angle within the Cathedral Churchyard, offers a question and a

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6 Inge, p16 quoting Johnston, Exploring Place; exploring the practice of human geography, Oxford, 1991
7 Inge, p 20
critique to the prevailing culture. Here the life and witness of Jesus can be provocative and truly radical.8

We therefore aim to maintain to the highest possible standards the Cathedral building and its surrounding churchyard both as a living witness to the Christian faith as and as asset to the city’s built environment.

3.2 An understanding of contemporary society

Church-going Christianity is now a minority activity 9 but in the 2001 census 76% of the population identified themselves with a faith tradition and even in 2011 nearly 60% identified themselves as specifically Christian.10 Billings helpfully identifies this as “Cultural Christianity” the result of the legacy of 1,000 years of Christianity in Britain, including stories, words, images, values and morality. Christianity has influenced, if not shaped, music, art, literature, everyday speech and how we care for people. However, Christianity for most people now is non-creedal and non-attending and is more concerned with praxis than belief. The real religious views, attitudes and sensibilities of the majority of people are largely unknown.11 There is a contemporary emphasis on emotionalism - for many emotional well-being is the goal of life. Linked to this is an emphasis on the high sense of personal self-worth.

Alongside this there has been a national loss of corporate memory of the core Christian texts, including the Bible and Liturgical texts, as well as an understanding of Christian architecture, furniture and symbols. This is in part due to the decline in church-going but also due to changes to what has been taught in schools. A period of rapid textual change in Biblical and Liturgical language has had a part to play, though there are many benefits to be reaped from these changes, including comprehensibility of the texts. Nonetheless, in another context, that of visiting historic buildings, cathedrals continue to hold their own alongside other major national tourist destinations with over a quarter of England’s adult population claiming to have visited a cathedral within the previous 12 months.12

We believe that Birmingham Cathedral is called to serve people in our current context, in this place and time. Yet we are also called to challenge, when appropriate, the prevailing trends of post-modernity and to embody values of community, unity, humility, thoughtfulness and joy.

8 (Morisey A. Sacred Space in the City, Cairn 4 in North P & J)
9 (5.7% - Alan Billings, lecture 9/2011)
12 Spiritual Capital, 2012, p14
3.3 An understanding of cathedral

The ancient definition of cathedral is ‘the seat of the bishop and a centre for worship and mission’13. This is the place where his throne ‘cathedra’ is placed; this is the place from which the bishop directs the mission of the diocese and the Cathedral’s prime purpose is to support and assist him in doing this.

The Cathedral is the ‘mother church’ of the diocese, where the bishop celebrates the Eucharist on the great feast days of the church, where he preaches the gospel and teaches the faith. Here the church gathers around the bishop for ordinations of priests and deacons and other great occasions. Here daily worship takes place as a sign of the continual worship of the church universal, and as a reliable support to the Christians of the diocese. In this way the cathedral functions as a religious community of prayer within the city and diocese.

The cathedral may be looked to as a centre of excellence and strives to be worthy of this role and in some ways will be seen as ‘setting a tone’ in the diocese. It is important that its style of worship, though perhaps more formal than some parish churches, does not embody the extremes of Anglican churchmanship. Regular services should be clearly seen to be following the Prayer Book or Common Worship and should be made as accessible as possible to both regular and visiting worshipper.

The cathedra is also the teaching seat of the Bishop. The Bishop clearly demonstrates this by holding three study days a year in the cathedral for all the clergy. However, this role continues even when the Bishop is absent and is fulfilled through the holding of a variety of teaching events: weekly Tuesday Talks, the annual Urban Sermon, occasional lecture series and debates.

The governance of the cathedral is by a ‘body corporate’ comprising the Chapter, the College of Canons and the Cathedral Council. Within the body the Chapter takes decisions and directs actions, under the advice and with the support of the College of Canons and Council. A Community Committee also meets to consult and inform.

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13 As recorded in 1994 ‘Heritage and Renewal’ report of the Archbishops’ Commission
Birmingham Cathedral is one of the ‘parish church’ cathedrals. These cathedrals were created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the Church of England formed new dioceses to serve the rapidly growing population. Some dioceses decided to build new cathedrals (Liverpool and Guildford for example) others converted existing parish churches to cathedral status (Birmingham, Portsmouth, and Newcastle for example). In 1905 Bishop Charles Gore chose not to build a new cathedral, but to designate the existing St Philip’s as his cathedral church. Birmingham grew to be the nation’s second largest city. This juxtaposition of great city with modest Anglican cathedral is an important part of our story and identity. However, it does raise its challenges, not least the limited capacity (fire regulations 600 persons). For some, St Philip’s is simply not sufficiently grand or large to be an appropriate Cathedral for Birmingham and in the 1950s there was an attempt to address this through building a larger cathedral but this succeeded only as far as a plan. There are no current plans to build a new cathedral!

Birmingham Cathedral was consecrated as the town’s second parish church in 1715. It still retains, for the most part, its original footprint as designed by Thomas Archer. It is English Baroque in style and is essentially a one-roomed space. Originally designed as a ‘preaching box’ with shallow eastern apse it had a three decker pulpit in the central aisle to aid preaching to people in the galleries as well as to those sitting in box pews below.

Ecclesiological and liturgical development had architectural expression in changes to St Philip’s (see appendix 3) most notably, in the extension of the east end to form a chancel for a robed choir and more prominent altar in 1884. At the same time large stained glass windows by Burne-Jones were introduced at both the east and west ends. These are master-pieces in the art of stained glass and convey the story of Christ’s nativity, crucifixion, ascension and final return with great beauty and visual impact. A reordering of 1980-2 extended the chancel into the nave and the altar table was moved to the chancel apron. In theatrical terms the altar table moved from a remote proscenium arch to a thrust stage. This analogy is apt as the painted ‘marbled’ effect, carried out at this time to the columns around the chancel, lend a greater theatrical effect to the building. But more important, it visually demonstrates that the Eucharist is at the very centre of the cathedral’s life.

This layered texturing of architecture, although very modest here compared to ancient cathedrals, is an important part of demonstrating the engagement of the community.
through history with the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{14} It helps tell the story of people and faith in this place.

\begin{quote}
We therefore aim, when undertaking any liturgical reordering or adding or replacing furniture or furnishings, to ensure it consciously adds to this ongoing story.
\end{quote}

5. Current liturgical patterns at Birmingham Cathedral

5.1 Regular Services:

Sunday: 
- 9am Holy Communion (said)
- 11am Choral Eucharist (children’s church running alongside)
- 3.30pm Choral Evensong (BCP)/ Evening Prayer

Monday – Friday: 
- 8am Morning Prayer & Holy Communion.
- Noon mid-day prayers, led by Chaplain
- 5.45pm (Shorter) Choral Evensong (BCP)/Evening Prayer

Tuesday: 
- Tuesday Talk – a weekly opportunity for those working in the city centre to get off the treadmill of the working day to engage with a topical subject from a Christian perspective or a Biblical passage connected to the world of work.

Wednesday: 
- 1.10pm Holy Communion (BCP – sometimes choral)

Saturday: 
- 9am Morning Prayer & Holy Communion.
- 3.30pm Choral Evensong with visiting choir (BCP)/Evening Prayer.

All services, except where BCP specified now use Common Worship (CW).
The times of Evening Prayer change on weekdays during choir holidays.
There are regular healing services and many special services in addition to the above.

Morning Prayer is combined with Holy Communion and the congregation tends to sit together near the front of the nave so there is a collective feel to the service. This is less so at Choral Evensong where the congregation is more scattered; unlike many cathedrals the congregation does not gather in the quire, alongside the choir, as space does not permit this. Sitting in the nave has the advantage that the congregation enjoys a more balanced musical sound but may serve to emphasize that this is very much a service of passive rather than active participation which some may interpret as either exclusive and unwelcoming or more of a concert than worship.

There are occasional changes to the above schedule to enable special services and events. This tends to affect Evening Prayer and particularly so in Advent. However we try to

\textsuperscript{14} Perham, Michael (ed), The Renewal of Common Prayer, SPCK 1993, p28
advertise this in good time and as widely as possible. These changes are not made without careful consideration.

We regularly review the times of services and changes have been made in recent years especially to weekday services. In 2009 Evensong/Evening prayer was moved from 6pm to 5.45pm and in 2010 the first service of the day was changed from 7.30am to 8am. Both changes were made so the services linked better to the beginning and end of the working day in Birmingham city centre. There has been success in this especially in raising attendance at the early service.

In 2013 we benefited from being a ‘case study’ in the Church of England’s study on the congregational growth of cathedrals. The report by Canon John Holmes noted that a stimulus to growth in many cathedrals has been the development of a diversity of worship styles. He felt that Birmingham Cathedral could be doing more in this area.

We need to keep the pattern of regular services under review to retain a focus on mission. Whilst we do provide a wealth and diversity of ‘special’ and ‘apt’ liturgies and events, we need to consider carefully how we can develop and resource further diversity of worship as part of our regular diet.

5.2 Music

The Cathedral supports an excellent, paid cathedral choir comprising men, girls and boys. There is no linked choir school so choristers are recruited from schools across the city and region. The Lay Clerks often travel in after work and the Choral Scholars are mainly at local Universities, especially Birmingham Conservatoire. This impacts on the times and length of weekday services.

The choir has particular expertise in the early, polyphonic choral tradition, though a wide range of music is used in worship including modern choral, and music from the Taizé and Iona communities. Composers have written music specifically for our choir. The voluntary Cathedral choirs make a significant and very valuable contribution to our worship singing a similar style of music. Occasionally other styles of music, such as that led by modern worship bands, feature in Cathedral worship and these come from diocesan sources, though lack of space can make bringing in a band difficult, especially for Eucharistic worship.

We seek to share the excellence and beauty of the English Choral Tradition at regular Cathedral services and showcase it appropriately at other times. Latin text is still used but we always provide the English translation in the service sheet. It is our custom and practice to use inclusive language in congregational hymns whenever possible and especially at CW services.

Cathedrals have a particular duty to conserve the tradition of the church. We recognise the value of the unique English choral tradition and the role of Cathedrals in cherishing this especially against a backdrop of its demise within the majority of parish churches.
We recognise our own responsibility in this and during some recent years of financial difficulty the continuation of the choir this was given high priority. The Chapter is committed to maintaining and improving this situation.

However, we note that Cathedral style music gives little opportunity for congregational singing other than hymns and this can alienate and even distress those who are used to joining in the Gloria, the Sanctus etc. (which in Common Worship are marked ‘ALL’).

At Diocesan Services our recent practice has been to use Eucharistic liturgical music which alternates between choir and congregation and we have received considerable positive feedback on this. At Diocesan Evensongs we have tended to use the more accessible of the canticle settings (definitely not Latin) and to explain the tradition of joining in through listening and standing rather than actually singing. However, Cathedral style music does have very valuable mission opportunities – a service which demands little participation can be very helpful to those not used to participatory worship and to occasional visitors unfamiliar with the form of services. This is especially so at times of distress: the music can often articulate emotions which are very difficult to put into our words and enable deep encounters with God.

We note that there is a creative tension between where we are, and where many of our parishes are, and this is a considerable challenge to us. We are proud of the excellence of our choirs, however we recognise that further thought is needed regarding mission opportunities and the mission imperative, if our musical tradition is not understood or appreciated by our congregations.

5.3 Healing ministry

The Cathedral has been offering healing services twice a month (First Saturday 9am, Second Thursday 1.10pm) for some decades. This is an important ministry and since 2008 laying on of hands and anointing has also been offered on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 11.00am Eucharist which has brought it more into the mainstream of cathedral life. The north aisle ‘chapel area’ is used for this ministry at the 11am service. Space is tight but we have worked hard to find the best layout which allows for movement and gives privacy. Due to the demand for this ministry we try to allocate two priests to it.

Visitor Chaplains continue the healing ministry informally during the week. On occasion we receive requests for the ministry of reconciliation (confession). There is no special place for this but we tend to use the choir stalls as they offer relative privacy and the opportunity to kneel.

We need to keep this ministry and the space it needs under review. Further thought needs to be given to providing appropriate space for confessions.
5.4 Special Liturgies

The devising and hosting of services designed for special occasions is a very significant aspect of Cathedral life and is a vital part of our ministry and mission. The chart below demonstrates the level of growth in this area of our work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EVENTS/MEETINGS/GUIDED TOURS IN CATHEDRAL AND SQUARE</th>
<th>CONCERTS</th>
<th>SPECIAL SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>15 + recitals</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>16 + recitals</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>27 + recitals</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>25 + recitals</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>33 + recitals</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>22 + recitals</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In December virtually every possible time slot is used for a Carol Service. Every year there are Ordination & Admission of Readers’ Services, new Canons to install, the Annual Justice Service, and Junior School Leaver’s services, as well as significant events to respond to e.g. Commemoration of WW1 and requests from organisations e.g. LoveBritishFood’s National Harvest.

We do not receive many requests for Occasional Offices (baptisms, weddings, funerals) or Memorial Services but do our very best to respond positively when approached. Baptisms are usually held during the main Sunday Eucharist although in the last year Sunday Choral Evensong has proved to be a popular time for baptisms.

We are consciously trying to do more Special Services within the constraints of time and space. Ann Morisey helpfully describes the concept of “Apt Liturgy”\(^\text{15}\) – this is liturgy designed in response to a significant, often distressing event, planned with those who only half-believe in mind. It may or may not be held in a church (or outside a church). It requires speed, courage and emotional literacy on behalf of those designing and hosting the ‘event’. The service in the park in Winson Green following the summer riots 2011 and the Cathedral Vigil to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of WW1 in 2014 are examples of such events. We believe that special and ‘apt’ liturgies when skilfully and appropriately offered can be of both pastoral and missional significance.

We are increasingly attempting to have relevant information and prayer material for personal use available especially in response to disasters and significant deaths. Appropriate lighting and music (and bell-ringing) can very much help set the mood for these events and a times of joy and distress.

We had felt that we were somewhat impeded in this work by the lack of private chapels or bounded space for private prayer but we have noticed that does not seem to impede prayer; visitors simply sit down or kneel where they feel appropriate (and they rarely choose somewhere inappropriate). Our somewhat basic votive stands are in constant use. This sends out a very clear signal that Birmingham Cathedral is a house of prayer.

\(^{15}\) Morisey A. Sacred Space in the City, Cairn 3 in North P & J
Children make a very considerable contribution to the liturgical life of the Cathedral as choristers singing the liturgy. We currently have 30 – 40 choristers, both boys and girls. Their time with us often includes confirmation preparation classes in addition to the considerable liturgical education involved in being a chorister. The Cathedral also has a small number of children who regularly attend the 11.00 service. ‘Children’s church’ activity takes place in a room adjacent to the chancel during the Ministry of the Word and, as appropriate, they share activities and achievements with the adult congregation. The expansion of this work is constrained by available space especially on Sunday Mornings. It is difficult to see how this could be improved.

The largest numbers of children with whom we work come in schools groups. This work is carried out by the very able volunteers of the ‘Education group’. As this work is geared to the National Curriculum it is therefore primarily an educational rather than a liturgical experience but strenuous efforts are made to make the invisible visible e.g. en-acting baptisms. The windows make a significant contribution to this work and there is an element of pilgrimage included in most school visits.

We are committed to our work with children and are very proud of our strong volunteer commitment to this work. We are aware that educational visits should take a high priority in the cathedral diary.

We would love to have more suitable space for Children’s work during services.

5.5 Children

6. Understanding the Cathedral building as a whole

6.1... worship as theatre

Our understanding of Birmingham Cathedral as ‘one-room’ and its very sensitive acoustic makes a ready analogy with a theatre. The notion of theatre as locus for a unique live event, to which all contribute by action and attention and which takes the company and audience on a ‘journey’ that changes them, also gives a useful analogy for liturgy.
The one-room style and the audibility of even very quiet noise means that only one activity can hold sway in the Cathedral at any one time. In recent years we have worked hard at maintaining a prayerful atmosphere in the Cathedral between services and events.

The nave altar is used and microphones and loop system are switched on at even the smallest services, including mid-day prayers, so that it is clear to visitors that worship is our core activity, ‘what we do’, even if they do not participate. It is hoped that those who slip in during services to light a prayer or leave a prayer request will feel that their individual action is part of something much larger.

The acoustics of the space are sensitive and very sympathetic to small and medium choirs, chamber concerts, and organ. This is a straight-forward space (there is no echo) in which to amplify the spoken voice and all that is needed is a reliable sound and loop system. The HMS Birmingham Bell, under the tower, is rung at baptisms and other major occasions and can be heard very impressively throughout the space.

The CW Eucharistic liturgy emphasises gathering, especially around the table, and features presidency in which the president and congregation often dialogue so it is important that the president can be seen as well as heard by the congregation. The space around the altar and in front of it accentuates the altar, even though it is a modest feature. It helps focus attention on the role of the president as the liturgical leader, supported by the deacon. The recent gift of a new ‘all seasons’ frontal with matching fall for the lectern has helped ‘lift’ both altar and frontal.

Like any theatrical production the costumes are important. Vestments lend colour and dignity to worship as well as indicating the function of ‘key players’. See section 8.2 for more about vestments. The sense of gathering is created very powerfully when, at large diocesan occasions, Cathedral Canons and diocesan clergy join the choir and Bishop in the chancel and the congregation fills the nave and galleries.

The current Cathedral lighting is at the end of its functioning life and needs to be replaced. This gives us the opportunity to explore introducing new lighting that allows for greater ‘theatricality’ to support the impact and understanding of liturgy, journey and the liturgical seasons. We would wish to consider the provision of coloured lighting, particularly in the galleries so that colours relating to the liturgical seasons might be used for effect during worship, or perhaps to light the Cathedral at night to create a ‘jewel-box’ effect in the Square and communicate the purpose of the building and the life and beauty within. Recent experiments with using coloured lights on the ceiling in the chancel and under the tower have demonstrated how very effective this can be in setting the mood and the season.

Seats in the nave can be set out in ‘collegial’ form and this happens regularly for ordination services. A happy effect of this is that those seated in the galleries have a better view of the action of the drama than when the seats are in their usual position. They can also be set out ‘in the round’, in a square or in a diamond pattern all facing a central nave focus. The diamond pattern was used to good effect at the WW1 vigil but such patterns inevitably mean that some people are facing the ‘back of the action’ at least some of the time.
Because the Cathedral is just one space we recognise that we need to carefully balance activity with silence. Increased busyness may be a consequence of serving our parish, diocese and city, or it may be as a consequence of laudable efforts to find new ways of increasing income. However, we recognise that much of the drama that takes place day by day in our Cathedral is happening in silence, as individual people find time and space for God. We need to ensure plenty of occasions for this to happen.

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We aim, therefore, to keep a good balance in the cathedral both in terms of how it is used and in keeping the emphasis on what is important.

Considerations for the future:
- Is the conducting of the choir from the centre of the chancel a distraction and does it obscure the cross at the East End. Is there a satisfactory alternative place?
- The seating is close to reaching the end of its life.

6.2 .... liminal space – the gate of heaven.

It is not uncommon to liken the threshold to a church or a cathedral to ‘the gate of heaven.’ The architecture of the ‘main’ entrance to Birmingham cathedral is modest and functional. Strenuous efforts are made to make this welcoming and significant with striking and intelligent floral displays. However, it is very difficult to make it a space where visitors are invited to stop, pause, anticipate and prepare to move from the busyness of the outside world into this sacred space.

The sound system relays out into the porch and so heralds when ‘something’ is going on and this does sometimes cause people to soften the tones of their speech on entry. Well kept notice boards (just inside, at the back of the cathedral and on the opposite wall) may assist in communicating the distinct identity of the place but we are aware that our threshold leaves a great deal to be desired.

The sacred nature of a place may also be communicated by the ‘elaborate courtesy demanded by those who enter’\(^\text{16}\) from water stoops, head covering, silence and gestures of deference. To this end the current placing of the font, together with the Pascal Candle, as the first ‘encounter’ within the cathedral is helpful.

Similarly, on the way out, the brevity and suddenness of the exit fails to help people pause and assimilate the experience of the inside as they return to the outside.

\(^{16}\) Inge p118
We note that lighting the porch especially in winter months and the placing of a Christmas tree with fairy lights on it does attract people into the Cathedral. Remembering to turn the lights on as dusk falls is a challenge – could a sensor be fitted?

We aim to continue the strenuous efforts to keep this area as welcoming, beautiful and uncluttered as possible. We would welcome any building works which can enhance this e.g. incorporating into the flooring words of welcome and/or symbolic designs which hint at the main interior.

7. Inhabiting our space: beyond the walls

The Churchyard is Cathedral space and we believe that we should treat the Cathedral and it’s Square as ‘one sacred space’. The clergy, administrator, vergers and church wardens are making strenuous efforts, with partners, to reduce anti-social behaviour in the Square and are exploring the use of signage to enable those who walk across the Square, or use it as a place of recreation, to understand the nature of the place and of the seasons of the Christian calendar. The Chapter is pursuing the increasing use of the Square for a wide range of events to populate it ‘positively’ and is achieving considerable success in this.

In addition to many other types of events, current examples of worship include:
- two annual wreath laying events: pub-bombings and workers’ memorial day
- 2009 – Blessing Days
- first part of Palm Sunday 11.00 am Eucharist
- early morning Easter Eucharist
- entrance and exit of coffins
- processions Chrism Mass, Ordinations, Readers’ service, Justice service
- occasional Carol Singing
- praying on the streets – in partnership with other churches

A strong team of bell-ringers ring before the 9am service every Sunday and for the 11am service alternate Sundays. The team is increasingly ringing for other major services and, as requested, for weddings. The use of a half-muffled peal against the Vigil to commemorate the start of WW1 was very effective in setting the mood and drawing people into the Vigil.
8. Understanding our context

8.1 Understanding our faith: rhythm and road

Steven Croft (Bishop of Sheffield) posed the questions at the 2011 Precentors’ conference:-
- Where is the rhythm? Can the life-beat of the worship and rhythm of your cathedral be heard, seen and observed?
- Where is the road? Can the way of discipleship, the road to faith be seen?

The rhythm of worship as it currently happens (as set out especially in section 5 above) is made visible and audible throughout the day. We often invite people to continue their visit to the Cathedral quietly should they not wish to actively join in with a service.

The question posed by the Bishop about the road to faith being seen in the Cathedral is very pertinent. The restrictions of size make a sense of pilgrimage within the building difficult and processions for clergy, choir and congregation are somewhat truncated, being mostly restricted to the central aisle. Currently a physical sense of journey, or pilgrimage, is restricted to visitors going to side aisles to light candles, or being invited to walk up to the three east end windows. It might be seen as perhaps a happy outcome of the location of the columns that, in order to view these scenes of Christ’s birth and death, visitors need to journey, to ‘go out of their way’. The rest of the Cathedral reveals itself in one dramatic sacred space, so this one journey offers an alternative experience.

The road to/of faith is also signed by ensuring that the key symbols and ‘furnishings’ are of appropriate stature as well as being clearly visible. The cross is the key Christian symbol. We have an illuminated cross at the East end which is particularly prominent when the overall lighting level is low. The large crucifix (see section 6.iv) dominates the east end of the north aisle and this attracts many who wish to pray quietly.

The road to/of faith is also conveyed to children’s groups by an excellent volunteer education team in the cathedral. We are aware that we are carrying out this work on a ‘shoe-string’. Recent carpeting of galleries gives the education team more scope for sitting children comfortably for introduction and reflection. The needs of visiting schools and colleges groups should be considered in the review of our welcome/spiritual/heritage printed resources.

We signal that private prayer is important by maintaining an atmosphere of prayer as much as possible. We signal that we believe God hears and answers our prayers by inviting prayer requests though we note that the box they go in is more practical than beautiful! It is important that we regularly refer to these intercessory prayer requests in our services.

The road of faith is also demonstrated by making clear that we are a welcoming and inclusive faith, we are concerned for all God’s creation and we are committed to the
Christian service. The dismissal at the Eucharist is emphatic – ‘Go in peace to love and serve the Lord’.

8.2 Understanding our cathedral: presentation and beauty

The presentation of sacred space is vital to mission. Clutter, shabbiness and dirt fail to convey a sense of the sacramentality of the space and are an insult to our faith. We agree with Demott that humans seek beauty and, in turn, beauty supports virtue. Morisey argues for the sacred space to be overwhelming as this helps renew human morale and energy but also makes people feel more vulnerable as they are ‘taken out of themselves’ by the feeling of not being totally in charge of their life. Working towards tidiness, cleanliness and as much beauty wherever possible must be a priority for any sacred space.

Our flower arrangers achieve a consistently excellent standard of beautiful and thoughtful floral display that speaks of faith and commitment and lifts our hearts to worship. Recent activity to re-polish worn woodwork, introduction of a new Laudian frontal and altar and pulpit fall, tidying up and re-painting are all significant and important and show that we value our sacred place. This is a witness of Christian faith to our visitors.

Vestments are worn during Cathedral worship by clergy, choir and servers: choir dress (cassock with or without surplice) for offices and cassock alb with rope cincture or stole for sacramental worship. The Eucharistic president wears a chasuble. Copes are worn by the clergy at festivals and celebrations. Volunteer Chaplains wear cassocks. Lay Canons have a simple stole-type garment that reveals their lay clothes beneath. We recognise that well chosen vestments enhance the aesthetics of worship and assist in supporting reverence. Vestments also emphasise the ecclesiological role that is being carried out by those who lead worship. Wearing Cathedral vestments helps to engender team spirit among those who willingly wear vestments that cover (subsume) their normal day-wear and the self-expression with which it is chosen. Vestments can thus indicate humility and obedience. The Cathedral has a limited range of vestments and altar frontals.

We need, therefore, to give consideration to how we signal the importance of our key furnishings (and improving them). We need to be constant in promoting anything which demonstrates that Christianity is a living faith and local Christians are living it. We need to be vigilant in being as welcoming and inclusive as possible.

We need to review how people know we have large print Orders of Service, gluten-free wafers, a Hearing loop system, bags for children, a ramp to access the chancel (and provide part of the service to be brailled with advance notice.)

17 (Demott Nancy et. al, Holy Places, p63 & 64)
18 (Morisey A. Sacred Space in the City, Cairn 3 in North P & J)
Fashions in vestments change but key principles are that they should be made of the best fabrics that can be afforded and be designed to be seen on the move and against the glorious but complex backgrounds compliment the surroundings help distinguish between plot and sub-plot fit a variety of sizes not impede liturgical movement.

A set specially commissioned and designed for the Cathedral by Yvonne Bell, though very fine in concept, has not all performed well in use due to incorrect care instructions. The colours have faded and parts of the design have rubbed off/washed out. Some of the altar cloths are now past useful life and an all-seasons Laudian throw has been purchased to provide a substitute.

New art, sculpture and craft can play an important role in worship, devotion and in mission. Contemporary art, of the highest standard, can make visible our contemporary response to our ancient faith and demonstrate that God’s creative presence is active here and now. They can demonstrate a living faith.

We note that Christian Art has historically been dominated by European images of Biblical scenes so we acknowledge that we need to be sensitive to multicultural issues whenever we commission or exhibit works of art.

Furthermore, God has created his people with five senses and the more these can be engaged in liturgy or in response to Him, the fuller the experience for the worshipper. We cater well for sight and sound but what of the other senses? The use of incense raises mixed responses so we tend to restrict its use to evening Festive services but occasionally have used it before a service so we experience the odour without the smoke and it helps set the scene.

Our liturgy is tactile – we receive the bread of life into our hands. We touch it before we taste it. We share the cup and no longer discourage people from touching it. We share the Peace, we anoint in healing services and in baptism & confirmation. When some of our exhibitions encourage people to touch the pieces of art work the thrill is palpable.

Taste….. well, we do serve ‘proper coffee’ after the main Sunday Eucharist but we also drink the blood of Christ. Do we need to review the quality, the taste and the ethics (fair-trade) of either?

We aspire to find (and fund) the right artists to create work that is in creative dialogue with the Christian faith, our building and its existing art and speaks to our contemporary, preferably Birmingham, context. We are currently in the process of commissioning a new nativity set.
8.3 Understanding our place: an adaptable space

With the exception of the choir stalls, all the Cathedral furniture is movable. Whilst the symbolism of fixed sacred furniture may be desirable – to convey the sense of majesty and dignity, for example - the practicalities of our corporate life require everything to be moveable because flexible use of space is at a premium.

This adaptability is also very helpful liturgically. Whilst we would not wish to change the lay-out of the cathedral too often, a change of layout can signal that something very special is about to take place. Furthermore, it can help conserve the memory of the occasion e.g. the Ordinations of Deacons and Priests are both held in the cathedral. In order to help make the services distinctive to the congregations we alternative between tradition and collegiate layouts. It is also highly useful in making those in wheelchairs, with pushchairs or walking frames feel welcome as we can easily more chairs and make room for them in the body of the congregation.

Also, the regular movement of furniture adds to the wear and tear on the furniture, the building and the bodies of those who have to move it. We need to take all these things into consideration in our planning both short and long-term.

We value the adaptability of our space but need to be conscious of the drawbacks and work to minimise these.

8.4 Understanding our global environment

We are privileged to be ministering in a country and city of abundance. Good stewardship is part of our response to God. We therefore have a duty to monitor our use of creation’s resources in all areas of the cathedral’s life, not least in its liturgical life.

We currently print a lot of single use Orders of Service and could be accused of profligacy. However, this has huge advantages: it enables the liturgy to flow, is easier for the congregation and especially visitors, allows hymns to be chosen from a wide-range of sources, is ‘give-away’ enabling study and prayer linked to the service to continue at home. We aim to use the lightest weight of paper which still maintains dignity and to recycle Orders of Service after use but we are dependent on active lay people to do this.

It is not easy to worship a God we proclaim to be light and who has been revealed in the Bible as fire in the dark and cold. Heat and light are vitally important but need to used efficiently and effectively. The new lighting scheme should help but the heating controls are in an awkward place in the undercroft and the settings are not as flexible as they could be to achieve this goal.

We therefore need to continue to monitor our use of resources aiming for a high level of efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint.
9 In Summary

The Cathedral Chapter is seeking to keep faith with the Cathedral’s vocation as a house of prayer in the city, a sacred place that may be a gateway to heaven for both regular and occasional worshippers and visitors. We seek to fulfil the role of Mother Church in the diocese, supporting parishes, praying for them daily and sometimes providing an example of excellence in worship and ‘apt liturgies’ in response to major events. We seek to be a lively and compelling Christian witness in our complex contemporary city and to listen and speak into our post-modern context. We seek to be open to the city and, as confident humble Christians, be open-hearted to the city becoming a ‘crossing place’ in which reconciliation and meeting take place that help to shape the life of city.

Some aspirations, outcomes and challenges are outlined below. It is recognised that there is a gap between our high sense of aspiration and calling and some of our current reality. It is intended that naming our aspirations here will facilitate further consultation and enable us to find supporters with whom we can plan to make progress fulfilling our vision.

10 The Liturgical Plan: naming aspirations

Chapter considered these in October 2014 and scored them according to their significance, urgency and achievability. They are now ranked according to their score

1 Missional moments and apt liturgies: we aspire to continue to improve in our provision of beautiful, credible and helpful liturgies at times of joy and sorrow, both planned and those that come as a result of sudden events. We will become better equipped to respond quickly and appropriately to events in society. A pack of how to respond in the event of the death of a Royal or significant person, has been compiled (almost) and the south aisle altar regularly hosts prayers for world events and tragedies. (5,5,5)

2 Threshold and journey. The Chapter is keenly aware that the Cathedral is poorly sign-posted outside and inside. The Christian journey is excellently explained and demonstrated in person by our volunteer Chaplains and education team members, but when they are not present our written and interactive resources are poor. The Chapter aspires to enable better signage as soon as possible and to explore ways that the sacred threshold might be more explicit. This could include architectural modification to the entrance, as heritage concerns and finances would allow. This could further include the use of sound and smell.

Interpretation of a cathedral is increasingly required as fewer people in society know the tenets of the Christian faith. Simple labelling, leaflets and audio guides offering both spiritual and historical tours are to be commended. However, all of this raises challenges of capacity for overstretched staff, plus costs of publication, updating and keeping stocked and tidy. (5,5,5)
Lighting can significantly enhance the mystery and mood of both the liturgy and the space. It can very much help identify the rhythm of the place. Our lighting is now our most urgent problem; the electrics are in need of renewal, high-level light bulbs blow regularly and are very expensive to change. The box which enabled the lights to be dimmed and programmed is now obsolete and has had to be bypassed in order to achieve a very basic lighting of the cathedral. Temporary theatre style lighting is being increasingly used and much has been learnt from experimenting with it. A new lighting system which sympathetically lights the key features and people at the right time, enables light to build up and fade appropriately and is suitable for wider uses, is urgent. A working party has done much preliminary work and a lighting consultant has now been appointed. A programme for installation of new lighting, wiring and the subsequent re-decoration is being devised. Care will need to be exercised in relation to the well-being of the organ through this work. (5,5,5)

Tercentenary celebration. We aspire to celebrate the tercentenary with meaningful and inspirational worship for the people of the city and region and the parishes of the diocese. Work has started on this. (5,5,5)

Please be seated? Chapter is aware that our nave chairs, though very comfortable, are past their best in appearance and that we should plan to have them refurbished or replaced. The metal frame chairs in the nave aisles are gradually being taken out of use as they are becoming unsafe. They should be replaced as soon as possible. It may be possible to borrow chairs in the short term. (5,5,3)

Noise and silence. We recognise that there is a tension between activity and silence. We seek to make the Cathedral available for positive community use that fosters partnerships, our vocation to serve and our role as a ‘crossing place’ and also, sometimes, the need to generate income. Yet we seek to preserve the Cathedral as a place of quiet prayer and since 2011 the situation has improved. The Chapter will continue to monitor this balance closely. (5,3,5)

Supporting personal prayer. In addition to improving signage and support for the Christian journey of visitors we aspire to improve support for personal prayer and devotion. We currently offer basic prayer request slips and box to receive them close to the north aisle side altar. The vergers regularly refill these but sabotage is not unusual so sometimes there are no slips. There is no provision for people to kneel here. Resources for prayer are required, perhaps interactive displays or provision of a range of simple prayers. There is a small amount of restrictive funding which could help provide an artist-in-residence. Further thought needs to be given to how we incorporate the prayer requests in our daily liturgy and the use of new technology to be receptive and responsive to prayer requests/needs. (5,3,3)

Order and beauty and our sacred place: we intend to continue to improve the appearance of our Cathedral to visibly honour Christ and promote the sense of being in the presence of divine beauty. Practical challenges include:
the continued development of the programme of cleaning in the Cathedral - the layout of furniture. Furniture can be moved for pragmatic rather than liturgical reasons and the chancel and nave have become rather ‘cluttered’ with chairs. This area needs a clear rationale and then rationalising. Moving furniture can cause damage and so this too needs clear protocols. Much progress has been made since 2011 but it is an ongoing challenge. (5,3,2)

**Range of liturgical expression.** There are gaps in our provision including modern, charismatic worship, worship aimed at young people and fresh expressions. We would be struggling to provide these with our current staff and staffing levels but we aspire to work in partnership with churches and groups which could provide the expertise and excellence. Although we provide a “children’s church,” alongside the main Sunday eucharist the space we have is very limited and means we cannot expand this ministry. (5,2,2)

**Music and liturgy.** The ability to both maintain the cathedral choral tradition and its repertoire, while becoming more flexible and responsive is a great challenge but we take seriously our call to both sing and speak afresh to new generations. The use of modern technology may help further these aims. (5,2,1)

**The sound system** has recently been improved and updated with the movement of a sound desk to the west end, which enables the monitoring of the sound level in the nave. A team of desk operators has been recruited and trained but this is a continual process. (5,2,4)

**Verger and Choir Robes.** Several vergers need new cassocks and the boys and men of the choir need new cassocks and surplices. The choir robes echo the blue and cream of the windows but we have noticed that cream surplices tend to shade variance over time. We hope to renew these all by end of 2015. (4,5,5)

**Cathedral Square.** We aspire to hold more worship outside to herald the primary purpose of the building, reach out to passers-by and help reclaim space of the churchyard. For this to have any real impact, sound relay would be required. We need to continually ask the question, ‘How can we be more visible outside?’ (4,3,3)

**Vestments:** we recognise that, as funds permit, we need to commission new vestments to supplement and replace the current set as this becomes increasingly worn. Ideally, this will once again be unique to Birmingham Cathedral and the fabric and design will allow appropriate laundry/cleaning. We aim to reconsider this issue in 2017. (4,2,3)

**We seek to commission a new crib-set.** A decision by a previous Canon Liturgist to display the crib on the floor of the nave directly in front of the chancel step from a few days before Christmas through to Candlemas was a master stroke. It dominates and, to a certain extent, disrupts the Cathedral –
embodies the demands of the incarnation. The original crib set is rather small and is now old and past its best. For the last two years a larger contemporary set made of rough brown plaster has been borrowed from Lichfield Cathedral. This is of a better scale, but lack finesse. The Chapter aspires to commission a large crib set designed and made for our Cathedral to inspire worshippers and our many Christmas visitors alike. Work has started on this process and for 2015 we hope to commission a temporary set for the Tercentenary Year. (3,5,4)

16 **Pastoral offices.** Confession is offered occasionally. This ministry should be sign-posted and then hosted confidently. (3,3,5)

17 **Lighting candles.** Birmingham Cathedral is in liturgical use for virtually every hour that it is open. At the heart of this city, people constantly drop in to pray. Candle lighting is popular. We have two basic votive candle stands. We seek to commission two new beautiful candle stands as signs of the sacramental significance of lighting candles. One stand to be of a ‘box-type’ style that could be brought forward for use centrally during services, such as memorial services. One to be in a ‘tree-style’ to indicate the life-giving/unifying aspects of prayer. Both should be moveable (though not when candles are lit!). Both should be made to be in harmony/dialogue with our building and its existing art and context. (3,2,4)

18 **New technology.** Birmingham Cathedral Chapter wishes to embrace and exploit, appropriately, the new communication technologies. We have made considerable strides in this direction; we were the first Cathedral to launch a free iphone app, and now distribute sermons and Tuesday talks via podcasts. We aspire to continue to use new technologies and social media to promote our music and liturgies to wider audiences. Use of audio guides (with headphones) may also help reduce the noise level in the cathedral. (3,3,3)

However, there are no immediate plans to re-order the sanctuary area (in the past there has been a discussion of moving pillars and canons pews). There is no immediate intention to revive plans to open up a new entrance in the west end.
Appendix 1: (from top)
Cathedral interior;
ready for Deans Dinner (2011);
Cathedral exterior and its city context;
ordination service.
Appendix 2: some events during 2013-14

Most years approaching 1,000 acts of worship take place in the Cathedral. Noted below are some examples of services and events during 2013-14, in addition to the daily offices and Sunday services.

Supporting Cathedral life: Corporate Communion services for cathedral volunteers; College of Canons Eucharist; Cathedral Community Day; Barn Dance.

Pastoral and Sacramental: Funeral Services; Memorial Services; Weddings; Baptisms; Prayers for Healing; Eucharists with healing ministry.

Festival Services: Evening Choral Eucharist: Epiphany; Candlemas; Ash Wed; Corpus Christi; Christ the King;

Worship for the National Liturgy Conference and for a multi-faith women’s conference

Holy week and Easter: Passiontide Meditation; Stations of the Cross (inside and out); Good Friday three hours ; Tenebrae; Easter Liturgy on Easter Eve and Easter Day.
Part of a Passion Play (in conjunction with the the Old Join Stock Theatre Company

Advent and Christmas: Advent procession; Schola meditation; Nine lessons and Carols x2; Mid-night Mass and Christmas Eucharists; Ceremony of Carols; Christmas carol services and concerts for c20 outside organisations including local businesses, charities and hospitals and BBC WM.

Diocesan: Ordinations of Priests and Deacons; Readers’ Licensing Service; Catalyst Youth events and services; MU annual Festival Service; Maundy Thursday Eucharist with renewal of vows and blessing of oils; Eucharist with retired clergy; Church Schools Leavers services x8; 3D closing and opening services; RSCM Annual Festival Service.

Concerts: Cathedral chorus concerts; London Concert Orchestra; Concert with Cathedral choir and Orchestra of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia; Conservatoire student concerts

Lectures: Bishop’s Study Days for clergy, Urban Sermon

Other community services and events: ‘Restore’ multi-cultural worship; Evensong with Thanksgiving for Rotary Charter; ’ EFM annual conference; annual Justice service; Birmingham Book Festival lecture; Re-launch of Birmingham Council Faith Map (interfaith gathering); November 11 short Act of Remembrance at 11.00am; Heritage Open Days, Civic service and vigil to mark the Commemoration of start of WW1, National Harvest Service.

Schools: Blue Coat School Founders’ Service;

Ecumenical: Good Friday walk of witness prayers in Cathedral.

Lots of school visits and tours for groups!
Appendix 3: further liturgical history of Birmingham Cathedral.

Extract of paper from Canon Dr T Slater, Chair of FAC, 2011.

History: Three Hundred Years of Liturgy and Architecture

(i) A preaching box

Birmingham Cathedral was built as Birmingham’s second parish church and consecrated in 1715. Its London-based architect and innovative Baroque architecture reflect the liturgical requirements of the late-17th and early-18th centuries with the Laudian pattern found in London’s grander estate churches. Laud’s reforms of liturgy in the 1630s had seen the altar put back against the east wall of the chancel, with a reredos behind, usually with Lord’s Prayer and Commandments inscribed on either side. The altar was railed in, the floor well paved and there were usually candlesticks on the altar. Sir Christopher Wren’s post-‘Great Fire’ London churches were the other major influence liturgically in demonstrating that the ‘place of gathering’ and the ‘place of Eucharist’ could be united into a single space by using compact floor plans and galleries.

St Philip’s was known as the ‘high church’ in 18th-century Birmingham, both because of its topographical relationship with St Martins-in-the-Bull-Ring but, more significantly, because of its Laudian high churchmanship compared with the evangelicalism of St Martin’s. St Philip’s, as originally built by Thomas Archer, consisted of a single rectangular ‘room’ with a shallow eastern apse for the altar with timber reredos behind. The apse was enclosed with a fine wrought iron rail. The other three sides of the church were galleried and the floor was filled with eastward facing boxed pews divided by a central aisle and two side aisles. The dominating structure was a three-decker pulpit for the preaching of the word, located facing the central aisle from which the preacher would have been visible to the whole congregation. The main services would have been the offices of matins, litany and sermon, and evensong. From the beginning, St Philip’s had an organ, located under the tower on the west gallery, so parts of these services must have contained music. From 1768 until the 1830s, the church hosted part of the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival for the benefit of the General Hospital, usually consisting of an oratorio repeated over four weekdays. The font was located at the west end, under the organ gallery and enclosed by more wrought-iron railings.

(ii) Choirs and singing

In the early 19th century the ecclesiological movement in Cambridge and the theology of the Tractarians in Oxford, combined to remove three-decker pulpits and box pews and replace them with smaller pulpits and lecterns on either side of the sanctuary enclosure so that the liturgy of the word and the Eucharist were more in balance. Celebrations of the Eucharist gradually increased in frequency, but matins and evensong remained the staple fare of most congregations. At St Philip’s the liturgy probably evolved gradually in this way but its architectural expression had to wait until the 1884-88 reordering and extension of the east end of the church by JA Chatwin. This was clearly liturgically driven since the intention was to provide a chancel where a choir, collegially seated, could be provided for and where the Eucharist could be celebrated with more dignity. The east end was extended by 15 feet and the chancel was defined by six giant Corinthian columns extending into the original ‘room’ of the nave, together with a raised floor (two steps high) and careful definition of the ceiling. The original wrought iron altar rail became the chancel rail. New choir stalls were carved in a renaissance style with matching clergy pews and the east end altar was raised a further three
steps to demarcate a sanctuary with a new reredos and a brass altar rail. All these works had the liturgical effect of bringing back into prominence the medieval separation of priest from people and the hierarchical ordering of the liturgy (though there was never a chancel arch or rood screen at St Philip’s). A new pulpit (on the north side of the nave) was provided and an eagle lectern stood, centred, at the east end of the nave aisle (these were removed in 1963). The organ was removed from the west gallery into the easternmost bay of the north aisle within the new ‘chancel’ with a vestry behind. The west gallery and vestry were removed and refashioned as a baptistery since, from the later 18th century, baptism had become a semi-private family affair taking place in the afternoon, rather than in public worship. Installation of the Burne-Jones windows in the three chancel lights and in the west window under the tower also dates from this reordering. In the nave, the box pews had been replaced with bench pews earlier in the century.

The next reordering of the interior followed the elevation of St Philip’s to be Birmingham’s new cathedral in 1905. It saw the replacement of the pews with chairs (many of the pews went into the galleries); the enlargement of the vestries under the galleries; the installation of stalls for canons and archdeacons behind the choir stalls; a new bishop’s throne, and a new altar. Liturgically, this can never have been satisfactory since the bishop’s throne is between two of the giant pillars and so can be seen by almost no-one, whilst the canon’s stalls are limited in number and again are barely visible. There was insufficient room for the dignified seating of the full cathedral hierarchy in the chancel and the opportunity for spectacle was limited.

There were a number of plans devised in the first half of the 20th century which would have provided more extensive vestries, a large parish hall on the north side of the cathedral, and the extension of the cathedral eastwards into a cruciform building with transepts, lengthy chancel and a dome over the crossing. There was even a plan for an underground car-park under the churchyard (see Conservation Plan) but none of these schemes were effected.

(iii) Regular Eucharistic services

The liturgical frustration at the lack of opportunity for spectacle, together with the outworking of the liturgical movement, eventually led to another reordering in 1980-82. The liturgical movement had seen the gradual increase in the liturgy of parish communion through the 20th century, celebrated every Sunday morning, particularly from the 1960s onwards. It also had a social and democratic thrust to challenge the hierarchical culture of the Victorians and emphasise that the participation of the laity was essential in the liturgy of the Eucharist. The practical outworking of these themes led to the construction of nave altars, especially after the Second Vatican Council had brought immediate change of this kind to Roman Catholic churches. In Birmingham Cathedral the chancel floor was extended further into the nave, the columns were marbled to enhance their prominence, new altar rails provided, and the altar was brought forward onto a raised platform in front of the choir stalls, so that the action of the Eucharist could be seen clearly by the congregation, and the congregational seating was replaced. The other notable feature of the late 20th century has been the replacement of fixed furnishings in the cathedral with movable ones. This has included, most notably, the pulpit, the lectern, and the font.