

WORCESTER

CATHEDRAL

Draft Liturgical Plan

January 2021



Figure 1: gathering in Cathedral Square before the Palm Sunday procession, 2018

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Preface

What is a cathedral for? How is it used by those who visit it? And how do those who are responsible for it understand it and intend it to be used in the future? These are some of the questions that this liturgical plan attempts to answer.

The cathedral exists, of course, for ‘the glory of God’; yet the glory of God is diffuse, in the sense that many different things, liturgy included, contribute to it. Inspired by the cathedral’s Benedictine heritage, the strategic plan for the cathedral for 2021–2025 envisions the building as a place of prayer, nurture and mission, implicitly modelled on an organic metaphor of interrelated rootedness, growth and outreach. That is to say, the liturgy that goes on in the building can neither be isolated from the events which seek to build up the cathedral community in faith, hope and love, nor be isolated from the welcome, hospitality and outward focus that the cathedral provides for those who visit it. Hence a liturgical plan cannot be viewed apart from a plan for cathedral events or a plan for cathedral visitors (particularly the way in which entrance to the cathedral for visitors and worshippers is managed) – both of which, at Worcester, are works in progress, and so this liturgical plan needs to be read in conjunction with those two parallel reports.

The liturgical use of the building is also conditioned by history, by the ways in which the architecture, furnishings and forms of worship have been handed on to us by previous generations. This plan thus begins with an historical introduction (work for which Worcester is well-known).¹ Thereafter, it outlines the shape of the liturgy as currently undertaken at Worcester; it describes the different spaces of the building, including that often neglected place of contribution to the liturgy, the bell-tower; and it acknowledges other uses of the building by way of reference to events and visitors.

Just as the liturgical use of the building is conditioned by history, so too does it constantly evolve. This plan therefore concludes by delineating eight areas in which the chapter would like further to develop the liturgical use of the building; and the chapter recognises that such proposals will be refined and augmented over time. The present document is accordingly no more than a snapshot of the chapter’s current intentions, and the chapter will update the plan on a yearly to biennial basis.

The construction of a liturgical plan is a significant piece of work that involves consultation and discussion over many years. I am most grateful to the chapter, particularly the dean, for his wisdom, help and guidance; to the surveyor of the fabric, Camilla Finlay, for her enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and expertise; to the head verger, James Prior, and the director of music, Samuel Hudson, for their kind support; to Mark Regan, captain of the tower, for so readily contributing; and to the cathedral’s Fabric Advisory Committee (especially its chair Jennie Page) and the liturgical committee of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England for their extremely helpful comments.

Michael Brierley, precentor
28 January 2021

¹ Peter G. Atkinson, ‘Cathedrals at Prayer’, in Stephen G. Platten, ed., *Holy Ground: Cathedrals in the Twenty-First Century* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2017), pp. 123-37; cf. General Synod of the Church of England, *Cathedrals Working Group: Final Report*, GS2101a (2018), p. 22.



Figure 2: plan of Worcester Cathedral

1 Historical Introduction²

English cathedrals have passed through many stages in their long and turbulent history. They bear the scars of ancient conflicts – the Norman Conquest, the Reformation, the Civil War, the First and Second World Wars. They bear witness to developments and fashions in architecture – Saxon and Norman, Gothic and Renaissance, Georgian and Victorian, the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. They also reveal different conceptions, at different periods of their history, of what a cathedral is. Each phase has left its mark on the building, not only as historic damage or architectural development, but also as the cathedral *in use*. What is fascinating, however, is not that each period has simply obliterated what went before, but that what went before survives as a kind of lower layer of skin; or what elsewhere has been described as a palimpsest.³

To take an obvious example, at the dissolution of the monasteries, those cathedrals (including Worcester) which had hitherto been served by a community of monks were transformed into communities ('collegiate foundations') served by canons.⁴ This was a radical change in the life of the cathedral community, even though in fact the cathedral prior was often (as at Worcester) re-appointed as the first dean, and a number of former monks appointed to the new canonries. The dean and canons, the lay clerks and the choristers and scholars – all the members of the new collegiate body – continued to meet for daily worship (at first still in Latin) in the monks' quire. They made use of the chapter house and the cloisters, and they turned the monks' refectory into their college hall. So notwithstanding the 'dissolution' of the monastic foundation, it was not obliterated; just written over, which is what a palimpsest is, the lineaments of the earlier community still showing through.

It has been argued that in a cathedral such as Worcester, at least six of these cathedral identities can be discerned. The earliest is that of a cathedral church as not only the official 'seat' of the bishop, but as the bishop's actual church, the church in which the bishop presided as the pastor of the local Christian community and in which he was the normal president of the liturgy. This is a pattern familiar from the history of the Church in the early centuries, based on the small-city culture of the Mediterranean. This pattern was drastically modified when the Church moved to the tribe-based culture of northern Europe, and the territory of a diocese became much larger. The cathedrals of Saxon England, however, as far as we can reconstruct them, still preserved a sense that here was where the bishop presided. This is most evident today at Norwich, where the old Saxon episcopal

² For an introduction to the history of Worcester Cathedral, see Philip A. Barker and Christopher Romain, *Worcester Cathedral: A Short History* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2001), and the current guidebook written by the dean, *Worcester Cathedral* (Norwich: Jigsaw Design and Publishing, 2016), as well as the series of pocket guides published by the dean and chapter and available in the cathedral shop.

³ 'Each identity is a palimpsest, superimposed on the previous ones, modifying them but not effacing them' (Atkinson, 'Cathedrals at Prayer', p. 135).

⁴ Cathedrals which had been monastic foundations and which were given a new 'collegiate' foundation after the dissolution of the monasteries are called 'cathedrals of the new foundation', notwithstanding the fact that their original foundation as cathedrals may be very ancient. These are: Canterbury, Rochester, Winchester, Norwich, Worcester, Durham and Carlisle. To these may be added the great abbeys which Henry VIII made cathedrals of new dioceses: Westminster (which had a very short post-Reformation existence as a cathedral), Oxford, Peterborough, Gloucester, Bristol and Chester. Cathedrals which before the dissolution were served by canons are therefore called 'cathedrals of the old foundation' (that is to say, their foundation was not significantly modified by the Reformation). These are London, Chichester, Salisbury, Wells, Exeter, Lincoln, Hereford, Lichfield and York.

throne was conveyed from the pre-Conquest cathedral at Thetford, and re-erected in the new Norman cathedral in a strikingly 'presidential' position, loftily central behind the high altar.⁵ The so-called 'Chair of St Augustine' at Canterbury (actually twelfth-century) has in recent years been given a similarly 'primatial' central place. While little may survive in most cathedrals in physical terms of that early conception of a cathedral as the place where the bishop presides, it still of course comes alive in the liturgy on the great occasions of the year: Easter and Christmas, ordinations and services of baptism and confirmation. On these occasions, while it may not be practical for the bishop to preside from 'the' throne (see below), there is usually a chair, reserved for his use, which is placed in that ancient presidential position.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw profound changes in the theology and spirituality of the Latin-speaking church of western Europe. Three trends were especially significant: first, a growing sense of the church as an institution, or a series of institutions, which could be defined by law; secondly, a move to demarcate more sharply the 'spiritual' (that is to say, the ecclesiastical) sphere from the temporal or the secular; and thirdly, the growing definition of a clerical order, focussed on the priesthood but consciously modelling itself on monastic ideals. Instead of the ancient conception of the bishop as the 'normal' president of the eucharist, the eucharist came increasingly to be seen as the province of the *priest*. It was increasingly important for the priest to preside at 'his' mass every day, and – influenced here by another great shift in devotional sensibility at the time – the more daily masses there were, the better; each daily mass having its own altar and as far as possible its own chapel. This is the period which left our great churches with a multiplicity of altars and side-chapels. Lay people attended mass – in England, they came to mass in great numbers – but they were not active participants in what had become the priest's mass; laypeople developed their own pattern of devotions designed to occupy their minds while the priestly liturgy was taking place at the altar.

Not only were laypeople sidelined; so too was the bishop. Grand as medieval bishops were, great officers of state and commanders of armies, liturgically they were sidelined, no longer expected to preside (much) at mass, and certainly not from a throne that proclaimed them as the president of the liturgy. And so it is that in virtually every English cathedral, the 'throne', the *cathedra* that makes a cathedral what it is, is just a large stall in quire, disconnected from the altar, and very definitely designed to *prevent* the bishop from presiding at the eucharist.

The shape of Worcester Cathedral as we see it today is fundamentally monastic. The high altar and quire are in their monastic positions. At times the nave is cleared of furniture, as it would usually have been in the middle ages. The nave was never designed for large congregational services, but as a space for side-altars, processions (the English loved processions and made their naves as long as they could, the longest in Europe) and general gatherings of the populace, sometimes for sermons, sometimes for trade. The cloisters, now open to everyone, still combine two essential functions of the monastic community: pausing and moving on. The cloister was how one got from one building to another within the monastery without getting wet; it was also a place of lingering, especially for reading and teaching. The chapter house continues today to function as a community meeting place. While the refectory (college hall) has changed its essential function from dining to meeting, it is still in use by one part of the cathedral community. The enormous (and damaged) thirteenth-century

⁵ See further, Peter M. Doll, 'The Subversive *Cathedra*: A Theology of the Cathedral Building', *Theology* 122 (2019), pp. 252-59.

sculpture of Christ in Majesty surrounded by angels and saints now looks down on school assemblies, as it once looked down on monastic feasts.⁶

Alongside the monastic community of Worcester, a different kind of ‘ecclesial identity’ flourished in the later middle ages: that of a ‘shrine church’. As with many other churches, large and small, Worcester treasured the bones of its local saints, Oswald and Wulfstan, and displayed their ‘feretories’ (the coffin-like boxes in which the bones lay) as objects of devotion. The precise location of the shrines in relation to the high altar is still a matter of conjecture, but the conjectures of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, as shown in our touch-screen exhibition (see figure 3), are plausible. The cathedral was therefore a place for pilgrims as well as monks; and that is reflected in the great north door (the approach from the city) and the strong directionality of the north and south aisles which took pilgrims as close as they could get to the saints, and back again. There was, however, towards the end of the middle ages, an even greater attraction in the majestic image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Lady chapel. ‘Our Lady of Worcester’ was not the principal Marian shrine in England, but it was significant enough, and probably more pilgrims were interested in securing her intercession and protection than those of the two saintly bishops. Even without the (allegedly) 15-foot image of Our Lady, the thirteenth-century Lady chapel still proclaims itself the architectural conclusion of the cathedral – this, not the altar, not the throne, not the shrines of Oswald and Wulfstan, is where the pilgrim’s journey ends. This is not to say that the high altar with its elevation (accentuated by the Victorian reredos and the Hardman ceiling) is not the building’s architectural *focus* and the locus of redemption and transformation;⁷ it is to say that pilgrims come to see the saints more than they come to attend mass.



Figure 3: digital reconstruction by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture of the location of the shrines of St Wulfstan and St Oswald, c. 1250

⁶ The sculpture is to be further researched, conserved and interpreted as part of the Undercroft Project. Did it inspire Gilbert Scott’s design of the high altar reredos? Did it inspire Sutherland’s tapestry at Coventry?

⁷ Cf. David S. Stancliffe, *God’s Pattern: Shaping Our Worship, Ministry and Life* (London: SPCK, 2003).

The cathedral has its pilgrims today: at any rate, it has its visitors, and we hope that they will catch something of the spirit of medieval pilgrimage. It is worth asking, however, whether we work sufficiently with the strong eastward directionality of the building? Or do we just think of it as a building which you just walk *round*?

We have already seen that the replacement of the monastic community with a 'collegiate' one (dean and chapter, lay clerks and choristers, schoolmasters and scholars) left the cathedral church fundamentally unaltered its basic use and layout.⁸ It was in the precinct that the shift from a monastic community to a collegiate one was strikingly obvious. As the clergy were free to marry, the monastic dormitory fell into disuse and ruin, and canons' houses appeared in what we now call College Green. Hitherto only the bishop and the cathedral prior had had their own houses, which of course continued, for the bishop and the dean respectively.

College Green in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Worcester must have breathed an air of ample clerical comfort. It was a comfort against which many began to agitate, and Anthony Trollope wonderfully chronicles their agitation: secularist reformers who wanted to topple the church from its eminence, theological reformers (notably the Tractarians) who could see cathedrals with their libraries as a potential antidote to the secularisation of the universities, social reformers who wanted cathedral wealth poured into parishes and social projects. And there were those inside the cathedral world who had a vision of cathedrals as what we would call 'centres of mission'. We do not understand the great (and often maligned) restoration of cathedrals in the mid-nineteenth century if we see it as just the salvage of buildings in danger of collapse, which then gave the restorers the chance to indulge their own ideas of what a medieval building should be like. English cathedrals were restored in the nineteenth century to be places of worship for large congregations, in a way they had never been before. Cathedrals made a pitch for a population still willing to go to church, but evidently disconnected from (or not exclusively connected to) the parish churches. We do not understand the purpose of the vast organ in the south transept, unless we realise that it was built to serve the new Sunday evening congregation, led by the new Voluntary Choir, which packed the nave every Sunday evening from the 1870s on, with queues stretching down the high street. Nor do we get the point of Scott's design of the open quire screens unless we understand that this was his invitation (or that of the dean and chapter) to the general public to feel welcomed into the place which hitherto had been the enclosed preserve, first of the monks, and then of the collegiate body. This is not the tail-end of an age-old church-going culture; it is the beginning of a new purpose of cathedrals – to evangelise an increasingly unchurched population.

The emergence of a regular lay cathedral congregation took place gradually over the twentieth century. Friends' organisations, the use of volunteers as guides and stewards, the gradual appearance of various aspects of parish life such as stewardship schemes, congregational committees, lectures and discussion groups, all contributed to a sense of what was defined for the first time in the Cathedrals Measure 1999 as 'the cathedral community'. There are still ambiguities in this term, and sometimes a confused expectation in the minds of some that a cathedral is simply a large parish church. Large diocesan services – even ordinations – can still be resented by some 'regulars'. This is simply one of the many tensions which a modern cathedral has to hold as best it can in the multiplicity of its 'ecclesial identities'.

⁸ Of course, at another level there was considerable change, and indeed destruction: images, the shrines, stained glass, altars and vestments, and (at the time of the Civil War) the organ; but we are speaking here of the fundamental layout of the building, which survived relatively unaltered.

The mid- to late-twentieth century saw a profound recovery of the liturgy in the western Church. For the most part this was a Roman Catholic phenomenon (especially in France and Germany), but the Church of England was both heavily influenced by the 'Liturgical Movement', and made its own significant contribution to it, through scholars such as Dom Gregory Dix, Gabriel Hebert, and Walter Frere. The movement can be seen as a reaching back beyond the clericalising of the western Church which, as we have seen, took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was essentially a recovery of a sense of the liturgy as something offered by the whole people of God – not just offered by the clergy while the laity looked on. And with that recovered sense of the whole people of God came a recovered sense of the Church as a community united to its local bishop. Baptism, confirmation, the renewal of baptismal vows at Easter, ordination: all these were re-imagined as liturgies that engaged the whole Church, expressed most completely when the bishop of the diocese presides. Characteristic of the Liturgical Movement in the Roman Catholic Church was the introduction of the vernacular in the liturgy, which was paralleled in the Church of England by 'translating' a Tudor liturgy into contemporary English. Characteristic too of the Church of England's response to the Liturgical Movement was the 'parish communion', replacing choral matins and restoring the eucharist as the principal Sunday service. A sung eucharist, at which the laypeople regularly and normally received communion, was a phenomenon not seen in English cathedrals and parish churches for more than a thousand years.



Figure 4: the Bodley font

The Liturgical Movement has left its mark more on the furnishings of cathedrals than on their fabric. There is an expectation that the president of the eucharist will face the people rather than the altar: this requires sufficient room on the east side of the altar. There is also an expectation that baptism will be celebrated in view of the Sunday morning congregation (and not as a private family event on a Sunday afternoon): this requires a font fit for this purpose. Worcester's beautiful Bodley font (figure 4) is surely the least accessible font for a general congregation in the whole of Christendom. It is a mistake to see these changes in liturgical practice as a matter simply of fashion, taste or style. They reflect a certain understanding of the Church.

An English cathedral today holds all these 'ecclesial identities' in tension, and may pass through several of them in the course of a single day. At one moment it is primarily the bishop's church, with the bishop presiding over some diocesan service or event. At other times of the day, it will be primarily a place for visitors, as tourists stream in, walking in the footsteps of pilgrims. The memory of the nave as a general forum for gathering and even trading may be evoked by some community event, a schools visit, an exhibition, a play. A priest presiding at a eucharist at a side-altar with a handful of worshippers does what was done at that altar eight centuries ago. The sung eucharist on a Sunday morning has much of the familiar atmosphere of a parish church. At evensong, the 'collegiate foundation' of chapter, lay clerks and choristers discharge the duty of the *opus Dei*, using many of the texts and some of the music which St Oswald and his monks used a millennium before.

To make a cathedral fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, we must hold the multiplicities of this story in mind. It is the task of the chapter to hold a cathedral's multiple identities in balance, to acknowledge each, and to strive to allow the building to accommodate them all. The building is a powerful historic presence, and working *with* the building is generally more effective than working against it. The law of the land has a presumption against interventions in historic fabric (and that can also be seen as a Christian duty to our past) but it is not immutable, and with imagination and sensitivity we can still make the necessary changes to make the building fit for its contemporary purposes. Indeed, as one of the marks of Anglican mission is to 'strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth', we have, as well as a duty to our past, a Christian ecological duty to make the building fit for the future.

2 The Shape of the Liturgy

(a) The eucharist, baptism and other celebrations in the context of the eucharist

The eucharist (also called the Lord's supper, the holy communion, the divine liturgy or the mass) is the central act of Christian worship. It is the re-enactment of the 'paschal' (or Easter) mystery of the saving death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the foretaste of the heavenly feast at the end of time. While in the western tradition, the eucharist may be celebrated almost every day, in both east and west it specially marks the celebration of Sunday (the Lord's day, the day of resurrection) and the other great Christian festivals.

From the end of the first century, the pattern emerged of each local church being presided over by a bishop. The visible sign of the bishop's role in the church was for him to preach and preside at the eucharist. While the ministry of presiding at the eucharist has been shared with presbyters (priests) for many centuries, there is still a sense in which the diocesan bishop is the 'ordinary' president of the eucharist, especially in the bishop's own cathedral church.

At Worcester, the eucharist is celebrated daily at 8 am, with the exception, according to ancient tradition, of Maundy Thursday, when the eucharist is celebrated only in the evening, and Good Friday and Holy Saturday, when the eucharist is not celebrated at all. This is a said celebration ('low mass') in one of the chapels. The chapels are used in turn on a weekly rota. On Sundays at 8 am, the eucharist is said according to the *Book of Common Prayer*; for the rest of the week, *Common Worship* is used.

There are two other weekly celebrations of the eucharist for pastoral reasons: a lunchtime celebration on Wednesdays, usually in the nave, and an additional celebration according to the *Book of Common Prayer* on Fridays at 11.30 am. King's School holds one celebration of the eucharist in the crypt every week in term at 8.30 am.

On Sundays, the eucharist is sung at 10.30 am with the accompaniment of organ and choir. A member of the chapter usually presides, a sermon is preached, and the service is attended by the largest regular congregation of the week. There is a 'junior church' (or Sunday school), members of the congregation assist with the readings, the intercessions and the distribution of holy communion, refreshments are served after the service, and the occasion is comparable in many ways to a parish eucharist. The sung eucharist at 10.30 on Christmas morning follows the Sunday pattern. The diocesan bishop normally presides at the sung eucharist on Christmas morning and Easter morning. Incense is used at the sung eucharist on principal feasts throughout the year.

The only exception to the Sunday sung eucharist at 10.30 am is on Remembrance Sunday, when the timing of the act of remembrance dictates a different pattern. On this day, there is a sung eucharist at 6.30 pm.

A sung eucharist also marks the other great Christian festivals which do not fall on Sundays. These are usually celebrated at 5.30 pm or 7.30 pm, depending on the availability of the choir. The diocesan bishop has the right to preside at the eucharist on the feast of St Wulfstan (19 January), and the bishop of Dudley is invited to preside on the feast of St Oswald (29 or 28 February). The cathedral voluntary choir also sings an occasional sung eucharist as part of the pattern of 6.30 services on Sundays.

The diocesan bishop presides at the renewal of ordination vows and the blessing of the holy oils at the beginning of Holy Week. The bishop presides, baptises and confirms at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, and on the feasts of Pentecost (Whitsunday) and Christ the King (the Sunday next before Advent). The bishop usually ordains priests at a Saturday afternoon sung eucharist in the cathedral in Petertide, and deacons at the sung eucharist on the following Sunday morning.

As well as the three occasions just noted when the bishop baptises and confirms, there are other times when children are brought for baptism, as in any parish church. The practice of the cathedral is for the baptism of children normally to be during a Sunday sung eucharist, though for pastoral reasons children have been baptised at other times. Given the practical difficulties of using the font in the west end of the south aisle of the nave, baptisms are currently administered from a portable bowl placed on a table (figure 5). This stands at the west end of the nave, if the service is in the nave, or in front of the tomb of King John, if the service is in the quire. The issue of the font is discussed below.



Figure 5: bowl on table, currently used as a font

(b) The daily office

Second only to the celebration of the eucharist (and the other sacramental celebrations connected to it – baptism, confirmation, ordination) is the daily recitation of morning and evening prayer, also referred as the ‘divine office’ or ‘daily office’, or the ‘liturgy of the hours’, or (as in the rule of St Benedict) the ‘work of God’ (*opus Dei*). The monks were committed to the night office and the seven day offices, which took up a substantial part of the day and night. Henry VIII’s new statutes for the cathedral, following the dissolution of the monastery and the establishment of the dean and chapter, relieved the community of the night office, but still required the celebration of the seven-fold day office – in Latin, of course. The English liturgy, in the shape of the *Book of Common Prayer*, in which the seven-fold office was re-modelled as the two-fold office of morning and evening prayer, was not introduced until the reign of Edward VI. But it was really Elizabeth I, with her preference for beautiful worship, her love of church music, and her refusal to ‘open windows into men’s souls’, who opened the way to the recognisable English cathedral tradition of music and liturgy, expressed most conspicuously today in choral evensong.

At Worcester, in accordance with the statutes and with ecclesiastical law, morning and evening prayer are recited daily. Morning prayer is said each day at 7.30, either in the crypt or in the chapel to the south of the Lady chapel (currently referred to as the ‘chapel of prayer’). Morning prayer is said according to *Common Worship*. Evensong or evening prayer (whether sung or said) is recited at 4 pm on Sundays and at 5.30 pm on weekdays, though there may be variations to this pattern. This

is choral evensong, sung by the cathedral choir on Sundays, and five weekdays during the school term. At other times, the service may be sung by the cathedral voluntary choir, the cathedral chamber choir, or a visiting choir (sometimes from abroad). If there is a sung eucharist at 5.30 on a weekday evening to mark some festival, then evening prayer will be said quietly in the crypt at 5 pm.

The cathedral voluntary choir also sing a service at 6.30 pm on Sundays during term, and this is usually evensong.

The quire is the proper place for choral evensong. The number of lay clerks and choristers, the practice of antiphonal singing, and the proximity of the organ all show a symbiosis of liturgy and architectural setting. Evensong is only sung in the nave when it is combined with some other event (for example, a civic service or an installation of canons) and there is a large congregation in attendance. A custom has grown up in recent years for evensong to be sung unaccompanied in the Lady chapel on Fridays in Advent and Lent. This is a singularly evocative reminder that the Lady chapel was designed for its own routine of daily sung mass and office in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Compline is also sung in the Lady chapel in Holy Week.

The choir rehearses in the Song School, and assembles in processional order in the west cloister, from where it proceeds into the cathedral.

(c) Times and seasons

The richness and variety of the Christian year give rise to many other occasional liturgies, some of which attract very large congregations. While these may be enhanced musically, dramatically, with the use of candlelight and incense, and with the choir and/or congregation moving from one part of the cathedral to another, the basic use of the building is the same as for the eucharist and the daily office. However, it is useful to note the most significant of these occasions.

- **The Advent Procession** – a candlelit service of music and readings, involving the cathedral choir and the voluntary choir, and attended by a large congregation in the nave. The cathedral and voluntary choirs are used in combination, singing both separately and together, and moving to different areas of the cathedral. The effect is of choral sound approaching from different directions, evoking the ‘longing’ quality of Advent, and made the more mysterious by the use of candles.
- **Carol Services** – held on most days throughout Advent for schools and community groups, culminating in three services held on 21, 22 and 23 December, sung by the cathedral choir, each attracting a congregation in excess of 1000. More recently an informal service, sung by an ad hoc choir of ex-choristers, has been introduced at 5.30 on Christmas Eve, now also attracting 1000 people. These services are all held in the nave, after the removal of tiered seating on the crossing for two big concerts performed at the beginning and end of Advent by the Worcester Festival Choral Society.
- **The Crib Service** – at 1 pm and 3 pm on Christmas Eve in the nave, with a large-sized stable and crib built on the quire steps. The stable remains in place throughout the Christmas octave. Members of the cathedral staff are press-ganged into being the holy family, innkeeper, angels, etc, and there are live sheep and a donkey.

- **The Epiphany Carol Service** – a service of music and readings sung by the cathedral choir at 6.30 pm usually on the Sunday after the Epiphany.
- **The Feast of St Wulfstan** The principal feast of St Wulfstan on 19 January is marked by a sung eucharist at 5.30 pm in the quire (if a weekday) or at 10.30 am in the nave (if a Sunday), celebrated (as of right) by the bishop of the diocese. On this occasion, the bishop awards the 'Cross of St Wulfstan' to one layperson each year for conspicuous service to the diocese. The 8 am eucharist is held in the crypt. On the nearest Friday evening, members of the staffs of the cathedral and the King's School, chorister parents, and the King's and Queen's Scholars and their parents are all invited to a festival evensong, followed by a communal dinner with the choir and chapter.
- **The Feast of St Oswald** The principal feast of St Oswald on 29 (or 28) February is marked by a sung eucharist at 5.30 pm in the quire (if a weekday) or at 10.30 am in the nave (if a Sunday). By custom, the bishop of Dudley is invited to preside. The 8 am eucharist is held in the crypt.
- **Candlemas** – a sung eucharist in the quire, with the blessing of candles for the congregation, ending with a procession to the font for the 'foreshadowing' of the approach of Lent.
- **Ash Wednesday** – a sung eucharist in the quire, with the imposition of ashes for the congregation.
- **Palm Sunday** – the Sunday sung eucharist, beginning with the blessing and distribution of palms for the congregation and a procession (following a donkey) into the nave. Since the opening of Cathedral Square in the summer of 2017, the procession has begun from there (figures 1 and 6).
- **The Chrism Eucharist** Traditionally held on the morning of Maundy Thursday, this is now held on Monday of Holy Week to enable the present diocesan bishop to discharge his Maundy Thursday duties as lord high almoner: a sung eucharist, well attended by the clergy and lay ministers of the diocese, and others. The clergy and ministers robe in the chapter house, proceed into the nave by the prior's door, and are seated in the body of the nave. The holy oils, for anointing the sick, and for use at baptism, confirmation and ordination, are processed, blessed and distributed to parishes afterwards.
- **Morning and Evening Prayer in Holy Week** According to ancient practice, there is no morning celebration of the eucharist on Maundy Thursday, and none at all on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. On these days, morning prayer is said at 8 in the crypt, and evening prayer is said at the usual time, also in the crypt. The crypt thus becomes the 'home' for the recital of the daily office throughout the 'triduum' (the final three days of Holy Week).
- **The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday** The evening celebration of the Lord's Supper, commemorating the events of Maundy Thursday night, including the washing of feet, is held in the nave, moving to the high altar for the conclusion of the liturgy and the beginning of a watch of prayer in front of the high altar, until midnight, during which time the cathedral remains open.



Figure 6: processional route from Cathedral Square on Palm Sunday

- **The Liturgy of Good Friday** From 12 noon to 1.30 pm, there is a pattern of readings, hymns, prayers and meditations, conducted from the pulpit in the nave. At 1.45 pm, the choral liturgy of Good Friday begins, with the solemn singing of the passion reading, the veneration of the cross, and the giving of holy communion. In the course of the liturgy the large wooden cross is set up on the quire steps, where it remains for the rest of the day.

- **The Liturgy of the Easter Vigil** The liturgy begins in the dark in the chapter house, for the readings and the blessing of the Easter candle, moving by candlelight the long route around the cloisters into the nave for the remainder of the eucharist, baptism and confirmation.
- **Pentecost** In recent years, excepting 2019 when the occasion was so large that it had to be accommodated at the University of Worcester arena, and 2020 when public worship was suspended on account of the coronavirus pandemic, Pentecost has been appropriately marked by a very large evening gathering of Christians across the city and county, from all denominations, as part of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative of the archbishops of York and Canterbury. The co-operation fostered for these services has led to the founding of the Worcester School of Theology, an ecumenical teaching initiative for laypeople to grow in faith.
- **The Dedication Festival** The liturgical feast of dedication on 7 June, which is also the feast of the translation of St Wulfstan, is marked by a sung eucharist at 5.30 pm (if a weekday) in the quire. On the following Sunday, evensong at 4 pm is a service to which donors and benefactors are specially invited.
- **The Patronal Festival** Following the precedent of the Worcester Antiphoner, the principal feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on 8 September rather than 15 August. Given the pattern of the choir year, this means that the cathedral choir returns from holiday in time to sing this service.
- **Festivals** All other festivals in the Church of England lectionary, if they fall on days when evensong is sung, are marked by an office hymn, and the wearing of copes by the clergy. St Dunstan's day is included as a festival.
- **Lesser Festivals and Commemorations** Days with a particular reference to Worcester names (St Richard of Wych, Bishop Hugh Latimer, Richard Baxter, Bishop Charles Gore, and Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy) are marked in the course of the daily services.⁹
- **Occasional commemorations** Significant anniversaries have been marked in recent years. The 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Arthur in 2002 was marked by a spectacular re-enactment of his funeral procession. The 800th anniversary of the death of King John in 2016 was marked by a major service which included the laying of lilies on the steps to the high altar. Flowers were placed at the tomb of Stanley Baldwin to mark the 150th anniversary of his birth in 2017, and the Francis Brett Young Society marked a significant anniversary in 2019 by laying a wreath at his memorial. Each year, the Elgar Society attend evensong to mark Elgar's birthday, and lay a wreath at his memorial; and an annual Elgar music festival in the city has been inaugurated. During the years 2014–2018, the death-centenary of each serviceman commemorated in the cloister windows was marked for an octave with a poppy, and their name mentioned at evensong. As mentioned

⁹ For Studdert Kennedy, see further the book of essays by ministers of Worcester Cathedral: Michael W. Brierley and Georgina A. Byrne, eds., *Life after Tragedy: Essays on Faith and the First World War Evoked by Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017).

below, wreaths are laid in St George's chapel on Remembrance Sunday, and an annual service is held to mark the Battle of Qatia (23 April 1916). The educationalist Alice Ottley is commemorated annually by flowers laid at her window in the cloister. On one occasion, the duke of Hamilton made a private visit to his ancestor, mortally wounded at the (second) battle of Worcester, and laid a wreath at his memorial.

- **Harvest Thanksgiving** The regular Sunday congregation celebrate the harvest as part of the morning sung eucharist on the first Sunday in October. Harvest gifts are auctioned off in aid of a local homelessness charity over a community lunch afterwards. A county harvest service is held in the nave on the same evening in connection with the Young Farmers and the diocesan chaplaincy for rural life.
- **Remembrance Sunday** A civic service for a large congregation is held in the nave at 10 am, in the course of which wreaths are laid in St George's chapel. The civic dignitaries, choir and congregation then move to the war memorial outside the cathedral for the act of remembrance at 11 am. The creation of Cathedral Square has greatly facilitated this occasion, which is attended by thousands. At 6.30 pm, the cathedral choir sing a requiem eucharist.
- **All Souls' Day** There is an evening requiem eucharist sung by the cathedral choir or another choir (this often falls during half term).

(d) Other pastoral and liturgical celebrations

- **Marriage** Marriages may be solemnised in the cathedral by banns (for those resident in the cathedral precinct) or, more usually, by special licence (for those with employment or worshipping connection to the cathedral). There is no legal restriction as to where in the cathedral a marriage may take place, and the quire, the nave, the Lady chapel and the crypt have all (in their different ways, very beautifully) been used for this purpose.

The renewal of marriage vows is requested from time to time, and would usually take place in the crypt or one of the chapels, depending on the number of people attending.

- **Liturgy for the sick** As has been noted, the oil for the anointing of the sick is blessed at the chrism eucharist in Holy Week. Thereafter, the cathedral keeps a supply of the oils (in their respective containers) for pastoral use within the cathedral congregation, for the big diocesan celebrations at Easter, Pentecost and Christ the King, and as a reserve for parishes which may need to replenish their own stocks. At present, the oils are kept in the safe in the parlour (vestry) but properly they should have a more public and respectful place of storage, a visible witness to the church's ministry to the sick. The crypt (where the blessed sacrament is at present reserved) would be one suitable place.

The bishop arranges a day (of teaching, workshops and worship) each year to affirm the church's ministry to the sick. Members of the cathedral community who are in hospital or housebound are looked after and visited by members of the cathedral clergy and the lay pastoral care group. Day chaplains exercise a ministry to visitors who may seek prayer, counselling or the laying on of hands. Day chaplains say prayers on the hour throughout the middle part of the day (11 to 3). Pastoral encounters are generally conducted in areas with

plenty of space around them, such as the nave, in the interests of both visibility and discretion.

- **Liturgy of reconciliation (confession)** The Church of England offers the ministry of absolution following confession to those individuals who seek it. Cathedral clergy and those day chaplains who are in priest's orders may respond to these requests. Confessions need to be heard in a place which is quiet, discreet, but not too secluded. When publicly advertised before Christmas and Easter, the Lady chapel is used.
- **Liturgy of the dead (funerals, interment of ashes, memorial services)** The cathedral holds a small number of funerals in the course of the year, usually for a member of the regular congregation, sometimes for a public figure, or when the family's parish church may be too small to hold the congregation.

A funeral may be held, according to the practical requirements, in the nave, the quire or the Lady chapel. The coffin (which is sometimes brought in the night before) enters by the north door or the Friends' door.

Ashes are interred in the cloister garth, usually without a commemorative stone (though exceptions are made to this rule). The place of interment is in any case recorded on a chart.

Memorial services are a more frequent occurrence than funerals. These may be held in the quire or, more usually, the nave.

(e) Institutions and installations

- **Admissions and valedictions of choristers etc** Choristers, choral and organ scholars, lay clerks and organists are admitted to office (and in the case of choristers, 'surpliced') and also 'valedicted' in brief ceremonies, usually conducted by the dean, which combine formality and informality, at evensong or the sung eucharist.
- **Admission of other chapter officers** The Steward (Chief Operating Officer) and the vergers are admitted to office by the dean at evensong or the sung eucharist.
- **King's School** A new head or deputy head of the King's School, and those pupils who are made King's or Queen's Scholars are admitted to office at evensong. The head and the scholars wear surplices. The admission formula for the scholars is in Latin.
- **Installation of canons** Residentiary and honorary canons are collated or instituted by the bishop, normally at evensong. Oaths and declarations are made in a convenient side-chapel before the service begins. As there is usually a large congregation, this service is held in the nave. In the entrance procession, the choir move to their stalls in the nave, members of the college of canons move on to their stalls in the quire, the dean and chapter assemble on the quire steps, and the bishop takes his seat before the nave altar. The bishop conducts the institution or collation before the nave altar, and then hands the mandate to the new canon, who is conducted to the dean on the quire steps. The dean installs the new canon, and then

dean and chapter, the new canon and the other members of the college of canons proceed to seats in the nave, where evensong is then sung.

The installation of a new archdeacon or a new bishop of Dudley follows the same order as an honorary canon, with the addition of bestowing the crozier of the see of Dudley to the bishop of Dudley.

- **Enthronement of the bishop and installation of the dean** These services are likely to be recreated afresh for each occasion. The present dean was installed at evensong much as is described above for canons. The present bishop was enthroned with a liturgy devised for the occasion.

(f) Art and liturgy

In 2016, the Friends of Worcester Cathedral generously donated two sets of new copes to the cathedral, one white with ‘tapestry’ ophreys for use at festivals, the other gold with red orphreys for use at principal feasts. A matching gold frontal for the high altar was given by a private donor in 2020 for use from Christmas Eve to Candlemas and from Easter Eve to Pentecost, and the bishops of Worcester and Dudley have procured episcopal gold copes to match.

For suggestions about the re-location of existing art in the cathedral for liturgical use, see further about the Glynn Williams *Pietà* below, and for the commissioning of new art in the cathedral for liturgical use, see further below about the representation of Our Lady in the Lady chapel, and places of memory in the crypt for the shrines of St Wulfstan and St Oswald.

3 The Chapels

Ute Engel’s great study of the architectural history of the cathedral lists some fifteen altars in the cathedral prior to the Reformation, and allocates dedications (in some cases, tentatively) to them all. About half of these sites have an altar today, in several cases bearing a quite different dedication from the medieval ones.

- **Lady chapel** – a glorious space, and as has been noted, the journey’s end for pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Worcester. Today an icon marks the site of the pre-Reformation image, tragically removed and burnt in 1537 by Bishop Latimer. The east windows were gloriously restored and rededicated in 2016 (figure 19). The eucharist is celebrated here at 8 am on Sundays and on feasts of Our Lady, and the chapel is often in use for other small occasional services. The chapel would benefit from more colour (see further below). The presence of ‘Our Lady of Worcester’ could be accentuated, especially in collaboration with the cathedral’s ecumenical partners.
- **St Andrew’s chapel** – the chapel to the north of the Lady chapel. This, and the chapel opposite, were originally the chapels of St Philip and St James, and St Simon and St Jude, but Engel cannot identify which was which. The dedication to St Andrew (the patron of missions) appears to date from the early twentieth century, when many cathedrals set aside a chapel for prayer for the church’s missionary work. From some records, the name seems

to have been attached to the southward chapel, and later moved, for a reason that is unclear, to the north. This chapel is used for the 8 am eucharist on Tuesdays.

- **The chapel of prayer** – the chapel to the south of the Lady chapel. The present name was a temporary designation to identify an otherwise nameless chapel. This is where morning prayer is said from Mondays to Fridays, and the 8 am eucharist on Wednesdays. The altar belongs to the 1970s ensemble of nave sanctuary furniture, and was the gift of the cathedral voluntary choir.
- **St George's chapel** – the north-east transept. Engel identifies this from surviving sculpture as originally the chapel of St John the Baptist. Later it was called the 'bishop's chapel'. In 1936 it was furnished as the regimental chapel of the Worcestershire Regiment and dedicated to St George. It has many military memorials, decaying flags, and furniture given with military associations. It has the cathedral's memorial to Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy ('Woodbine Willie'), and a Coventry cross. Books of prayers and reflections help to focus the visitor's thoughts more on peace than on military glory. There is the opportunity for visitors to place poppies on the altar. The two Friday eucharists, at 8 am and 11.30 am, are both celebrated here.
- **The Dean's chapel** – the south-east transept, identified by Engel as originally the chapel of St John the Evangelist; probably called the Dean's chapel on account of the door (now to the works yard) which would have led to the original deanery (the old prior's lodging adjacent to the Guesten hall). Never restored for liturgical use, which would be difficult on account of the tomb of Sir Gruffydd ap Rhys, a member of the household of Prince Arthur, it nonetheless has a splendid window (1937) dedicated to the Benedictine saints. It is one of the most sunlit parts of the cathedral, and works well for small-scale exhibitions.
- **St John's chapel** – to the south of the quire, identified by Engel as the original sacristy, restored and furnished in the early twentieth-century and dedicated to St John the Baptist. The particular and unresolved tangle of issues surrounding the use of this space is considered below.
- **The Jesus chapel** Identified by Engel as the chantry chapel of Bishop Cobham, the origin of the present name is unclear. It was restored to liturgical use, separated from the nave by the present stone screen, and furnished with the magnificent wooden altar-piece in 1899. It now serves as a place of quiet prayer, less effectively when the nave is in use for some major event. The 8 am eucharist is celebrated here on Mondays.
- **The Crypt** – one of the glories of the cathedral, officially set aside for quiet prayer but much visited by tourists (and rightly so). The numinous quality of the crypt usually, but not always, wins in the competition with the various events that take place here: there is sometimes a tension between stillness and movement. The unique architectural history of the space has been explored by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York, and the fruits of their study may be seen in the touch-screen display at the foot of the steps. The crypt currently houses the blessed sacrament (discussed below), and a remarkable pietà of 1991 by Glynn Williams (figure 20). There is also a reproduction of the head of St Maurice, the gift of Worcester's partner-cathedral in Magdeburg, the original statue being the oldest existing representation of a sub-Saharan African, at any rate

in northern Europe. The crypt is used for morning prayer on Saturdays and Sundays, for the 8 am eucharist on Thursdays and Saturdays, for a school eucharist each week, and for many small services, being specially popular with visiting parish groups.

- **Prince Arthur's chantry** There is an altar in the chantry; it is a place of worship. Given the practical difficulty of accommodating a congregation, there is one eucharist celebrated here a year, a requiem on Prince Arthur's obit day (2 April).
- **The chapter house** The chapter house is used for its ancient purpose of the election of the bishop. The college of canons assembles here for the election, before proceeding into the cathedral for evensong. The chapter house is used liturgically for the vigil on Easter Eve. It is used for robing for large services such as the chrism eucharist. It is the place for refreshments and receptions after services, and for many other community functions. It is generally open to visitors when it is not otherwise in use.

4 The Bells

Early cathedral accounts record a sacristan ringing a bell for services in the fourteenth century. New bells were cast when the tower was completed in 1374 and there were probably eight ringing bells in the central tower in the 1600s. They were rung by order of the dean to mark important events, for example, 5 November, the restoration of Charles II, the siege of Vienna in 1683, during the Napoleonic Wars (often), and for the death of Lord Nelson at Trafalgar. These bells were sold in 1865 and replaced by a large ring of 15 bells in 1869 under the direction of Canon Cattley and Edmund Becket Dennison (later Lord Grimthorpe).

The cathedral's present bells were cast at Taylor's of Loughborough in 1928 under the direction of the then dean, William Moore Ede. They are the fifth heaviest ringing peal in the world. Largely financed by clergy who had lost their sons in the war, they were intended as a First World War memorial, and first rung on Armistice Day 1928. The 80cwt bourdon bell, cast in 1869 and used as the clock's hour bell, was re-tuned in 1928.

The 16 ringing bells hang in the tower, each varying from 7 cwt to 48 cwt, and weighing over 180 cwt (9 tonnes) in total. They provide a ring of twelve in B; a ring of ten in C#; three rings of eight in F#, E and C#; and several rings of five and six bells – all in a major key. A new bell was given in 2018 by cathedral ringer Bernard Taylor in memory of his sister, the Reverend Clare Pipe-Wolferstan, the first to be cast by Westley's, which took over bell-founding from the historic Whitechapel Bellfoundry.

The cathedral Guild of Bellringers was founded in 1894, replacing previous ringing groups, a consequence of the Belfry Reform Movement. The Guild comprises forty members and ten regular visitors who number among the cathedral's many volunteers. Practice takes place on Monday evenings between 6.30 pm and 9.15 pm.

The Guild rings the bells between 9.30 am and 10.30 am every Sunday morning and on Christmas Day, and approximately once a month for evensong or other special services such as the city and county Civic Services, and the Judges' Service. The type or length of ringing varies, depending on the service or event. On Sunday mornings, the bells are rung for short touches. On Sunday afternoons,

quarter peals are rung, which last for about an hour. Twelve times a year, full peals are rung, as agreed in advance with the chapter: these peals take up to four hours, and mark the liturgical year and national and local events, such as St Wulfstan's day; St Oswald's day; Easter; Advent; Christmas; landmarks in the reign of the Sovereign; the City Festival; the battle of Worcester which brought to an end the English Civil War; and Oak Apple Day, which marks the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

The cathedral is the only church in the world to have a ring of ten bells in a harmonic minor key. These are rung half-muffled for special days or events: for example, Good Friday, the Armistice, Remembrance Sunday and New Year's Eve. Occasionally they are rung for funerals or before a requiem concert. Half-muffled bells remind the living of their mortality and represent a call to remember the departed.

The ringing chamber is a popular venue for the National Twelve Bell Contest, the National Young Ringers Contest and the national meetings of the world's oldest ringing society, the Ancient Society of College Youths. In 2008, at a cost of £35,000, the cathedral built the world's first teaching centre for bellringing. This consists of dumbbells, linked to computers, which create an ideal physical ringing environment for pupils. The centre has proved to be a diocesan, national and international resource, changing the tuition of ringing, and inspiring the development and installation of teaching centres at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich and Adelaide Cathedral. The first hour of practice evenings is spent in the centre.

The Guild is served by committee which oversees maintenance of the bells, typically taking a day per week. Since 2008, considerable improvements have been made, including to the ropes and metalwork; for example, the painting of headstocks, clappers, nuts and bolts. Two of the bells have been moved within the frame, one of which required new framework. Safety rope boards have been installed in the room between the bells and the ringers; redundant carillon hammers and their rods and wires have been removed. Future considerations include defrassing the internal stonework, improving the lighting, and consideration of ringers' toilet facilities within one of the roof spaces.

5 Events

The cathedral hosts a large number of community events every year. It is Worcestershire's largest and most 'iconic' building. It is the city's only large concert venue. It was inevitable that in the year of the Diamond Jubilee, the cathedral should be asked both to host and to devise a programme to celebrate the history and heritage of Worcestershire in the presence of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. The magnificence and prestige of the building mean that we have more requests for events every year than we can accommodate.

Part of the task of timetabling events is to keep a balance between the busyness of events and the atmosphere of a place of prayer. We do not, in this case, adhere to the rule of St Benedict that nothing should happen in the 'oratory' other than prayer. We do recall the genial medieval use of churches, in which the 'parish ale' might well take place in the nave. We get it right when members of the wider community are overwhelmed at being allowed to do something cheerful in such a setting. We get it wrong when members of the wider community assume that the cathedral is

simply available for hire for any purpose whatever. When we have a difficult call to make, we try to err on the side of cheerfulness.

- **The Three Choirs Festival** The cathedral hosts the oldest continuing choral festival in the world every three years. In 2017, the chapter and the TCF association took the controversial step of reversing the practice of the previous hundred years and holding the concerts facing east. Factors contributing to this decision included the unsightly scaffolding and clear glass involved in the work then taking place on the west window, and the advice that for the numbers present in the building the west doors should be accessible. Some people predicted that it would be an acoustic disaster: it wasn't. General opinion was somewhat divided, but critical opinion seemed to be satisfied. The arrangement enormously enhanced the liturgical aspect of the festival, and the eastward-facing arrangement made it possible to include the quire organ in the programme. It is intended to repeat this in 2021, and all other concerts in the cathedral have followed suit.
- **Concerts** The Worcester Festival Choral Society is based in the cathedral and has a programme of three major concerts a year. There are many other occasional choral or orchestral concerts during the year. We have tried and tested routines for marketing, ticketing, seating, rehearsing and staging such events.
- **Recitals** There is a wide-ranging programme of evening or lunchtime recitals (organ, choir, piano, orchestra) which may be held in the quire, the nave or the Lady chapel.
- **Drama** The cathedral has hosted drama from time to time. In 2012, Worcester became the only English cathedral to host an *annual* Shakespeare performance. Given Shakespeare's connection to the cathedral, this is as it should be (it was the cathedral of the diocese in which he lived; it was here that he came to obtain his marriage licence). The performance of *King John*, in front of the tomb, on the exact 800th anniversary of the king's death, was a spine-tingling experience which no one who was present will ever forget.

For the first two years, the play was performed in the Lady chapel, but the acoustic problems were severe. The nave and crossing had already been discounted for acoustic reasons. For the third year, the play was moved to the high altar sanctuary, and this is now considered to be the most effective space from an acoustic point of view, the vast marble reredos acting as an excellent sounding-board.

'Shakespeare in the Cathedral' now has a tried and tested routine. The technical rehearsal, dress rehearsal and up to eight performances, with complete de-rigging at the end, can be done within a week without impinging on any Sunday service, or indeed on choral evensong throughout the week.

- **Dance and Opera** There have in recent years been two public lectures on dance, accompanied by dance. For several years, Pavilion Opera performed at the west end of the nave.
- **Lectures** The cathedral has an extensive lecture programme. Most lectures take place in the Hickes Room with an audience of up to 30. The only public lecture regularly held in the nave is the 'Worcester Lecture', sponsored jointly by the cathedral and the University of

Worcester. Speakers have included Baroness Kennedy and Sir Keir Starmer. Speakers on other occasions have included Alexander MacCall Smith. Some lecturers and speakers struggle to deliver what they have to say in an acoustic with which they are unfamiliar.

- **Graduation ceremonies** The cathedral hosts the University of Worcester graduation ceremonies for a week every autumn, as well as single occasions for the Heart of Worcestershire College and some schools. These require much careful planning, but none presents unusual difficulties.
- **Dinners in the Nave** Worcester has not ventured down this road as much as some other cathedrals. But we have enough experience to weigh the social and financial advantages against the negative impact on visitors and the prayerful atmosphere of the cathedral. Dinners happen occasionally, when there is a clear alignment of the event with the mission of the cathedral.
- **Exhibitions and displays** There is a programme of small exhibitions (pictures, sculpture, ceramics, photography) in the Dean's chapel throughout the year. Larger-scale exhibitions have been held in the quire aisles, the transepts, the nave and the chapter house. A display of up to 100 Christmas trees in the cloisters, sponsored and competitively decorated by community groups, attracts thousands of visitors every year.

During an ordinary day, visitors are admitted to as much of the cathedral as is practicable. If there is a service or event in the nave, of the kind that we judge should not be disturbed by the movement of visitors, we are almost always able to admit them (via the Friends' door) to the east half of the cathedral. If there is a service or event in the quire, they are admitted to the nave (via the north door as usual). In both cases, visitors can reach the cloister, the café and the shop. Thus when choral evensong is being sung in the quire, and those who wish to attend are able to sit in the quire, there will often be others who are content to sit quietly in the nave and listen.

On Sundays, when the sung eucharist is in the nave, while we do not permit general tourism, we welcome visitors to come in if they wish to visit the candle-stand. We see that as an augmentation of the prayer of the congregation, not a distraction from it.

There are events with a particular safeguarding aspect, such as school visits, which have to be managed carefully in relation to visitors; but the aim is to give as much freedom as we can to both groups of users. Visitors generally enjoy watching schoolchildren enjoying their visit.

Each visitor is a child of God and should be welcomed as such. St Benedict reminds us that every guest is to be received as Christ himself. Each person matters to God and is loved by God, and this needs to be communicated in all of our dealings with visitors, whether through personal encounter or in our literature. We should offer the best we are able to those who come into the building: in presentation, in cleanliness, in efficiency.

6 Areas for Development

(a) Disability access

Disability access is a key part of the aims for social justice prioritised in the chapter's strategic plan. The miserrimus door, the parlour and the crypt are all parts of the cathedral that are currently used by staff or worshippers where disability access is not yet possible. Access to the crypt is under active consideration; the issue of access to the John chapel is considered below.

(b) How to furnish the quire?

The cathedral follows the standard architectural plan of any great church of late antiquity or the middle ages, in being oriented on an east-west axis and with the 'high' or principal altar at the east end. And following the pattern of monastic or other 'choral' churches, the high altar is enclosed within the quire, and separate from the nave. This plan presupposes a celebration of a sung eucharist (or 'high mass') in the presence of a congregation in the quire and not in the nave. That of course was the daily routine in the cathedral monastery when the monastic community assembled in the quire for the daily high mass.

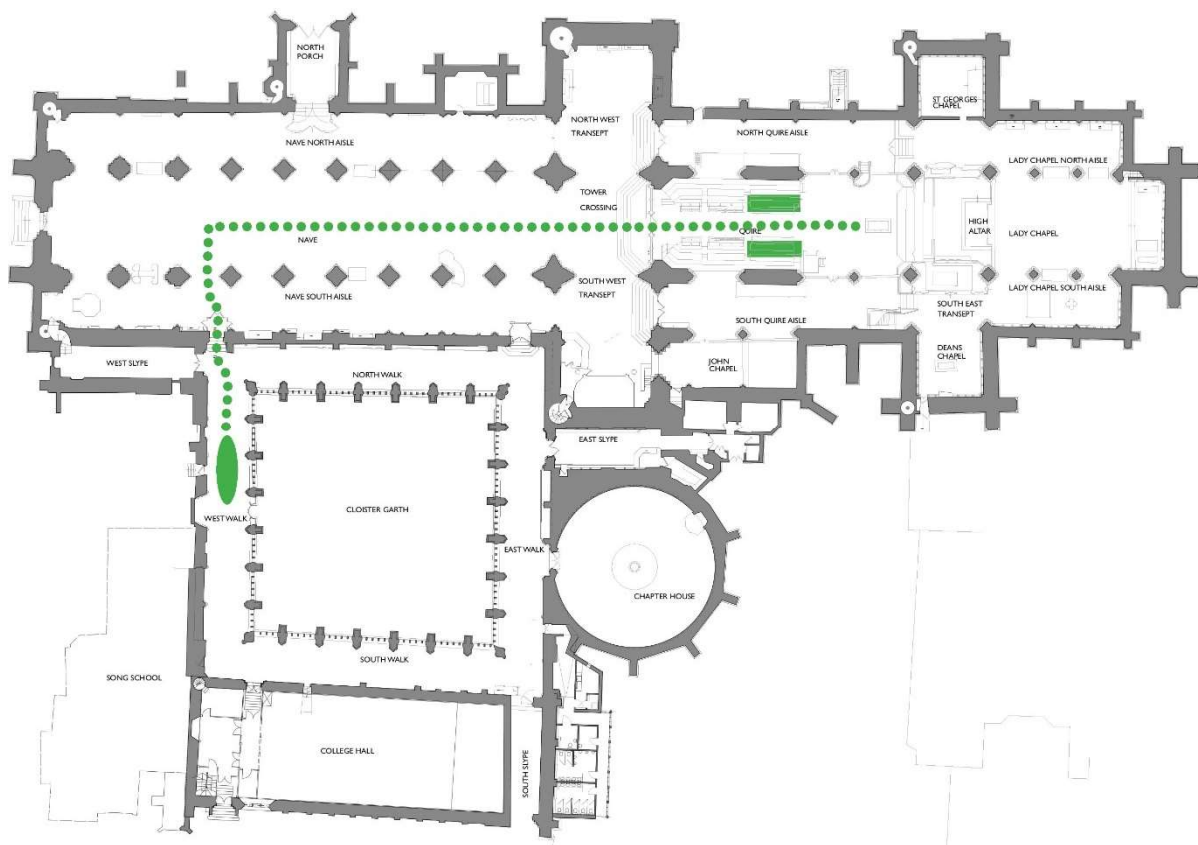


Figure 7: processional route from the cloisters for services in the quire

Today both the quire and the nave are used, on different occasions, for the sung eucharist. The current pattern is for the sung eucharist in Advent, Lent, and August, together with all weekday sung eucharists, to be in the quire. The choir and ministers proceed through the (empty) nave from

their usual assembly point in the cloisters (figure 7). On Sundays in Lent, the litany is sung during this procession. The three principal minsters are seated in front (west) of King John for the liturgy of the word, and move to the sanctuary for the liturgy of the eucharist. The quire lectern is used for the readings and the intercessions, and the quire pulpit for the sermon. The congregation fills up those stalls in the quire which are not required by the singers, and the pews in the presbytery. The Victorian altar rails (figure 8) are not now used, as they entail a perilous navigation of marble steps for communicants, so movable wooden rails are placed at a lower step (figure 9).



Figure 8: brass quire altar rails

The practical and pastoral advantages of the quire are the close proximity of choir, congregation and organ, as well as the historic appropriateness of using the high altar for the 'high mass'. The disadvantages are the difficult sight-lines to lectern, presidential chair and pulpit, and the congestion around the tomb of King John at the administration of communion.

On all other Sundays, the sung eucharist is in the nave. The choir and minsters enter the nave from their usual assembly point in the cloisters, while the opening hymn is sung (figure 10). The three principal minsters are seated behind (east of) the nave altar and in front of the choir, who are seated in a chevron-formation behind them. The nave lectern is used for the readings and the intercessions, and the nave pulpit for the sermon.

The practical and pastoral advantages of the nave are the accommodation of greater numbers (the quire has a limit of 200) and the possibility for visitors and 'enquirers' to hover anonymously on the fringe of the event, which is easier in the larger space of the nave. There are times when the nave must be set up for a concert or other large event, or when it is cleared of seats (every August) and on those occasions, at least, it is necessary to use the quire. It is very likely that both nave and quire will continue to be used for the sung eucharist on different occasions.

In the quire, the most pressing difficulty to be resolved is the placing of the communion rails. The existing brass rails at the top of the steps are no longer in use, as communicants have to negotiate a

flight of marble steps – there have been accidents. Temporary rails placed at the foot of the steps solve that problem, but cause the congestion around King John already noted. Some imaginative design is needed that minimises the practical difficulties without doing too much violence to the integrity of the Scott furnishings.



Figure 9: wooden altar rails used in the quire

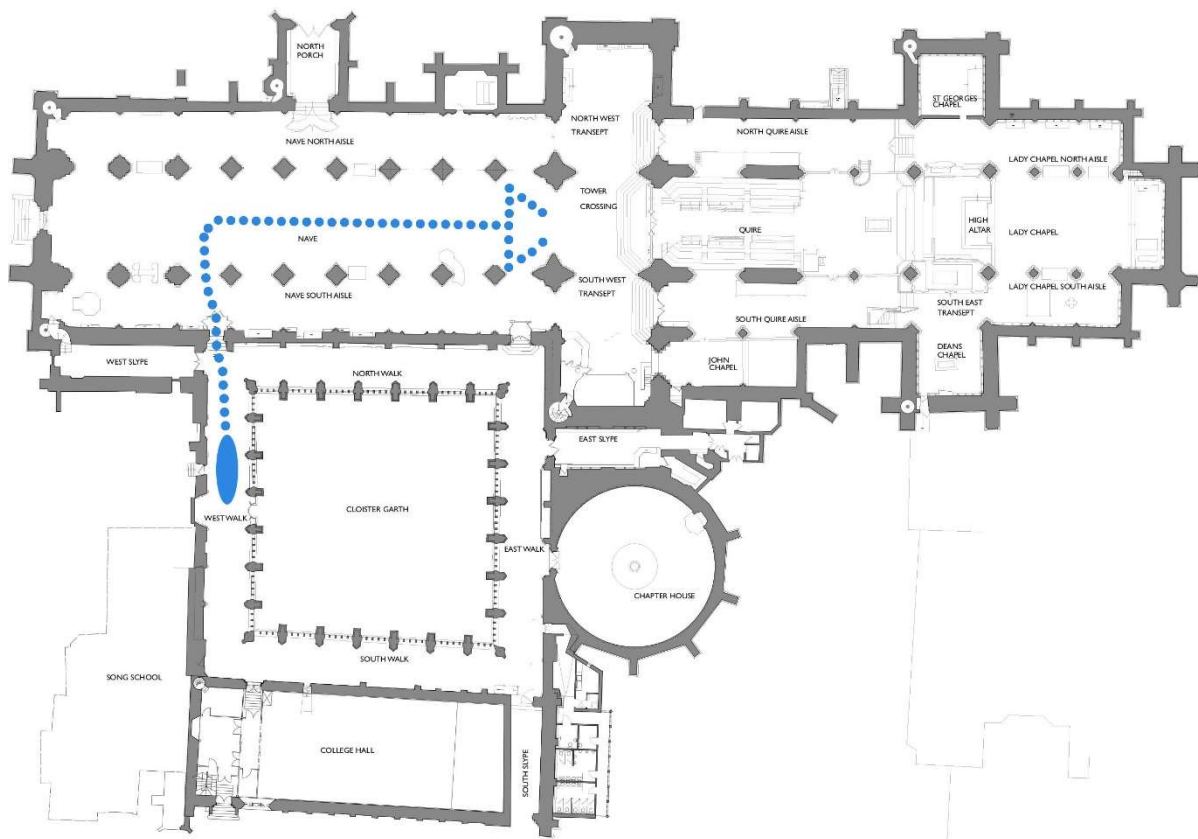


Figure 10: processional route from the cloisters for services in the nave

(c) How to furnish the nave?

In the nave, the choir stalls and sanctuary furniture must necessarily be movable. The present muddled assemblage of altar, lectern, ministers' seats, choir stalls, organ console, communion rails and platforms (figure 11), is urgently in need of a re-designed, integrated approach in the interests of flexibility, movability, beauty and disabled access. The precentor, head verger and surveyor of the fabric have given thought to an extensive area of wooden platforming, at the height of one step, covering as much as the first two bays west of the crossing and incorporating the necessary components.

Acoustic tests have demonstrated that the best configuration of choir stalls is at a slight height behind the nave altar in the first bay west of the crossing, angled inwards, and facing westwards down the nave. The place of the current nave altar (presented to the cathedral by Stanley Baldwin and his wife during the Second World War) in such a flexible and movable approach requires further consideration. The one immovable piece of furniture in the nave is the enormous pulpit (figure 12). While there are occasions, liturgical and otherwise, when it is not quite where one would wish it to be, there is no serious proposal to dispose of it, and therefore other furnishings must take it into account.

About 300 people can be seated in the nave in the pews. There enough chairs to seat another 700 people in the nave and side aisles. This is sufficient for almost all services. The pews can be moved out of the central area of the nave to create a wonderful sense of space, or they can be re-arranged

for different liturgical configurations. While some argue that the pews should be disposed of and only the chairs used, there is much to be said for the pews, not least that they are more durable than the most durable design of chair.



Figure 11: assemblage of nave altar, choir stalls, ministers' seats and platforms at Epiphanytide



Figure 12: the pulpit



Figure 13: the transept organ

(d) How can the organs best serve the whole cathedral?

The chapter's policy with regard to the provision of organ music in the cathedral has been reached after much discussion. This is significantly different from the thinking behind the earlier 'Music and Light Appeal', which proposed the moving of the organ to the north transept, and the building of a new organ in the triforium of the nave. These issues are comprehensively addressed in 'Worcester Cathedral: Organ Options Appraisal', produced in May 2017 by the chapter's organ adviser, William McVicker, and included in the chapter's strategy document for 2021–2025.

The chapter now envisages a scheme in the general direction outlined in the McVicker report: namely, to restore the transept organ (figure 13) *in situ*, both to be played in conjunction with the quire organ, and also to serve the requirements of the nave (assisted by transmission of sound by means of a sensitive and sophisticated sound system). The provision of a new organ console in the nave should be co-ordinated with plans for new sanctuary furniture in the nave, as well as for platforming and seating for concerts.

There are many complaints about the audibility of speakers in the cathedral. While much of this is to do with poor delivery, the restoration of the transept organ would also be an opportunity for an overhaul of the sound system.

(e) The font: flexible or fixed?

To begin with the throne: there is a sense in which the diocesan bishop is the 'normal' president of the eucharist, especially in the bishop's cathedral church. The cathedral church comes into its own in a particularly visible way when the diocesan bishop presides, as he does on Christmas and Easter mornings, on the feast of St Wulfstan, and at the celebrations of baptism, confirmation and the ordination of priests and deacons noted above.

The cathedra (or throne), which gives a cathedral its title, was generally placed in a central position behind the altar, from which the bishop could both preach and preside at the eucharist. The late medieval arrangement of a 'quire throne', followed by Gilbert Scott in the 1870s restoration, means that the bishop cannot practically use it to preside at the eucharist, even when the eucharist is in the quire. The current arrangement is for a finely carved chair, reserved for the bishop, to be used instead of the ordinary president's chair, whether the eucharist is in the quire or the nave. While this lacks the quality of permanence, in every other respect this expresses the bishop's role as the president of the eucharist.

The quire throne remains the actual 'cathedra' of the cathedral church, the throne in which the bishop is enthroned. It has thus a continuing significance, and is a visible reminder of the bishop's ministry in the diocese and in the cathedral.

The magnificent canopied font, designed by Bodley, is not currently used. Both its position and its design (the only access to the bowl of the font being through a small door in the west side of the base of the canopy – see figure 14) mean that baptism cannot be celebrated in the 'face of the congregation' as envisaged both in the *Book of Common Prayer* and in the contemporary rites of *Common Worship*. It fails the requirement of ecclesiastical law that the font shall 'stand as near to the principal entrance as conveniently may be' and that it shall be 'set in as spacious and well-ordered surroundings as possible'.



Figure 14: access to the bowl of the Bodley font

Alternatives have been canvassed, and the discussion is not concluded. There is a case for a fixed font in a more visible relation to the west door and/or the north door (either might be deemed the 'principal entrance'). There is a case for a font that allows for immersion (as envisaged in the *Book of Common Prayer*) for adults as well as children. There is a case *against* the installation of any more fixed furnishings in the nave. There is also a case *for* a movable font, for the occasions when baptism is celebrated in the quire or elsewhere. There is a strong, but not unvarying, tradition that a church should have only one font (but the same has been said of the altar, the throne and the reservation of the blessed sacrament). No case could be made for the removal of the present font until there was a clear and agreed plan for its replacement.

Of the alternatives outlined above, all of which have force, the chapter's view is that does not wish to embark on the long business of either relocating or replacing the Bodley font. The chapter wishes to include the design of a movable font in a general scheme of new liturgical furniture for the nave, a font which could then be used for baptisms in any part of the cathedral, depending on the pastoral circumstances. The Bodley font would remain in position. Just as the Gilbert Scott throne, though rarely used, still signifies the ministry of the bishop, so the Bodley font, though rarely used, would still signify the ministry of baptism. This is a pragmatic and far from ideal conclusion, but it will be left to a later generation to look for a more adventurous solution.



Figure 15: candle-stand outside the Jesus chapel

(f) How can we enable visitors to pray?

There are a number of issues with the current set-up for visitors leaving prayer-requests and lighting candles.

The candle-stand by the north door has no obvious devotional 'focus' (figure 15). Its proximity to the south wall of the Jesus Chapel is causing the wall to be splashed with wax. And the suspended light above the stand (figure 16) implies (erroneously) that the reserved sacrament is kept nearby.



Figure 16: red light outside the Jesus chapel

The candle-stand in the chapel of prayer similarly has an inappropriate devotional focus, namely a memorial to a former bishop of St David's (figure 17). The way in which this elegant stand is constructed leads to significant dripping of wax on (and potential damage to) the cathedral floor.

It is also desirable to have facilities for prayer-requests in each location, both from the evidence of current usage, and also on the basis that it helps visitors who wish to articulate their prayers to do so.



Figure 17: candle-stand outside the chapel of prayer

Prayer-requests at the former candle-stand are collected in a book balanced on an old prayer-desk, and nothing happens to them. The day chaplains are asked to 'pray through' them, but this is private prayer, and there is no way of ascertaining whether or not this in fact happens.

Prayer-requests at the latter candle-stand are placed on an unsightly noticeboard, and used to be 'prayed through' at the Monday 1.05 pm service of 'Prayers for Healing', a service which was discontinued during the pandemic of 2020–2021 and which will not be resurrected.

There is a third candle-stand, in the Lady chapel, by a pillar, beside a poor-quality icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary (figure 18), as the place where the sizeable medieval statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary once stood. There are no facilities here for leaving prayer requests.



Figure 18: candle-stand and icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Lady chapel

The facilities for lighting candles and leaving prayers need to be integrated into the principles of this plan, which envisages the Lady chapel as the 'climax' to pilgrimage to the cathedral (figure 19). It is desirable to have a quiet candle-stand in this 'deep' part of the cathedral building. The candle-stand near the chapel of prayer is frequently used. There should be one candle-stand at this end of the cathedral, with a facility for leaving prayer-requests.

Similarly, there should be a candle-stand, with an appropriate focus, in the current location by the north door for visitors whose sole intent is to enter the cathedral, light a candle, and leave. There is no obvious location for this other than the current one: the remainder of the north wall is taken up with memorials, and the north transept, as well as being too far for visitors who wish to come and go swiftly, is taken up with the sizeable display about cathedral life, and/or with seating for large services. Vergers have tried other locations for lighting candles near the north door at peak periods, and found them less successful.

The Lady chapel is an exquisite and underestimated space that should be deployed for those wishing to leave prayers or light candles as the ‘climax’ to their visit (figure 19). The candle-stand(s) should be central, and light enough to be moved when the chapel is used for the Sunday 8 am communion and for occasional other purposes. The candle-stand by the icon is too small for this purpose, and the candle-stand near the chapel of prayer is too heavy to move routinely, and leads to wax damage of the floor. Both should be put into storage. The vergers have sufficient spare candle-stands of the ‘tea light’ variety used by the north porch to be placed centrally in the Lady chapel. The stands would be highly visible, and visitors would be drawn into the chapel in order to light a candle.



Figure 19: the Lady chapel at the re-dedication of the east window in 2016

A visual focus behind the candle-stands would be provided in the long-term by a high-quality icon or statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary commissioned for the space on the wall behind the Lady chapel altar. In the short-term, the icon currently used on a stand in the Lady chapel could be hung behind the Lady chapel altar, which would also have the advantage of covering to some extent the extensive staining on that part of the wall.

Prayer requests could be written on, and 'posted' into, a bespoke item of furniture specially made for the purpose, which had facilities for holding paper and pens, desk-space for writing requests, a box into which requests could be put, and facilities for holding the cathedral DL-size leaflets on faith and prayer. The prayer-requests left here could be used daily (a few each day) as the intercessions at 7.30 am morning prayer in the chapel of prayer, left on the officiant's prayer-desk by the vergers as part of their set-up for the office.

The most appropriate location for candle-stands in proximity to the north door is outside the Jesus chapel, where they are currently. They should, however, be moved south by a metre, away from the wall of the chapel, to protect the wall from splashed wax. No space would be lost to other use, as this space is always kept clear for visitors, even during services.



Figure 20: Glynn Williams's *Pietà* in front of the north wall of the crypt

A highly appropriate focus for this candle-stand would be the Glynn Williams *Pietà* (figure 20) currently sited in front of the north wall of the crypt (not an obvious place for it, nor a natural passing place for people who might pause and appreciate it), newly situated in between the candle stands and the south wall of the Jesus chapel. This unusual and effective sculpture is neglected in its current location. Theologically, it would allow a Marian focus for the lighting of candles, while its incorporation of the figure of Christ would also render it eminently suitable for location by the south wall of the Jesus chapel. Furthermore, the stone used for the sculpture is entirely sympathetic with the stone of the south wall of the Jesus chapel. There was a second Marian altar (or even chapel) in this part of the cathedral before the Reformation. In 1310, 86 years after Bishop William of Blois began the construction of the Lady chapel, a second altar of Our Lady was dedicated by Bishop Walter Reynolds. The location of this is discussed at length by Ute Engel.¹⁰

It seems to have been in the north nave aisle, one bay west of the Jesus chapel, as it is described as being 'at the red door' (the 'red door' in a northern European cathedral was the entrance facing the city, usually on the north side, where various civic and legal functions took place). Three vault bosses in the north nave aisle have Marian subjects, though none of them is above the bay in which Engel locates the Marian altar. The boss above the proposed place for the *pietà* is identified by Engel as the nativity of the virgin. So although the place suggested for the *pietà* is probably one bay east of the medieval altar of Our Lady, it would stand immediately beneath a Marian vault boss, and it would recover a pre-Reformation tradition of venerating Our Lady immediately on entering the cathedral from the north porch.

Prayer requests could be written on, and 'posted' into, a bespoke item of furniture specially made for the purpose, identical to that used in the Lady chapel, ie with facilities for holding paper and pens, desk-space for writing requests, a box into which requests could be put, and holders for DL-size leaflets on faith and prayer. The prayer-requests left here could be used as the intercessions at a simple office of midday prayer held on a Monday by members of the pastoral care team, day chaplains, vergers or the canon-in-residence.

In conclusion, the light outside the Jesus chapel should be turned off and removed, bespoke items of furniture for prayer requests should be designed, either by tender or by a selected designer, and an artistic impression of the *Pietà* against the south wall of the Jesus chapel should be drawn up, for taking in the first instance to the Fabric Advisory Committee.

(g) Where to reserve the blessed sacrament?

The Church of England allows the reservation of the blessed sacrament: that is to say, the keeping of a portion of the consecrated bread and/or wine of the eucharist for the purpose of giving holy communion at short notice to the sick or dying, or in circumstances (such as a bedroom or a hospital ward) when it is not practicable to celebrate the eucharist in its entirety.

The consecrated elements which are thus reserved are renewed, usually weekly. That is to say, a fresh quantity of five or six hosts, consecrated in the course of an ordinary eucharist, is set aside one day each week, and what has been previously reserved is either given in communion in that service or consumed at the end.

¹⁰ Ute Engel, *Worcester Cathedral: An Architectural History*, tr. Hilary Heltay (Chichester: Phillimore and Co., 2007), pp. 196-97.

In a cathedral, when very large congregations sometimes attend (at ordinations, Christmas, Easter, etc) and it is difficult to calculate the number of communicants, it may be that large quantities of consecrated bread and wine remain at the end of the service, which cannot practically be consumed there and then. On these occasions, what remains is also 'reserved' and as far as possible used in communion on the following Sunday.

The Church of England requires, in common with western catholic tradition, that the blessed sacrament shall be reserved in a fixed and secure place, which is not used for any other purpose. This is usually an 'aumbry' (a locked cupboard set into the wall of the sanctuary), a 'tabernacle' (a freestanding structure containing such a cupboard, behind, above or near an altar) or a 'hanging pyx' (a receptacle suspended above an altar which can be lowered by pulley for access).

The presence of the blessed sacrament reserved is usually indicated by a red or white lamp, and as far as possible an atmosphere of quiet and reverence is maintained in its vicinity. The place where the sacrament is reserved becomes a particular focus for prayer.

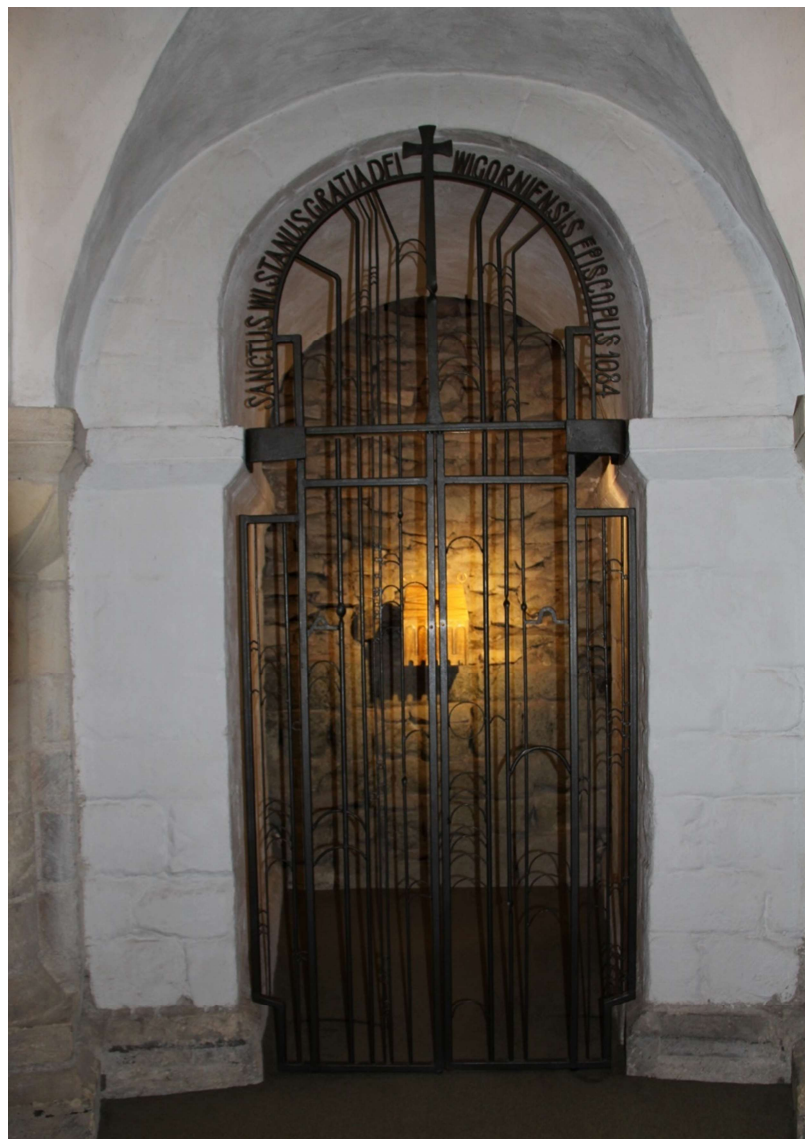


Figure 21: reservation of the blessed sacrament in the crypt

All these considerations point to the following requirements: that the blessed sacrament should be reserved in a place (most obviously one of the chapels) (a) where quiet can be maintained, (b) where nothing else happens, (c) where a small number of people can kneel to pray, but (d) within practical reach of both the quire and the nave as the places where the sung eucharist is celebrated.

At present, the blessed sacrament is reserved in the crypt (figure 21). This fails on all four counts. Despite the wonderful atmosphere of the crypt, it (rightly) draws visitors who want to explore its history and architecture. At present there is no wheelchair access; it is out of reach of the nave and the quire; and it is not furnished for people to kneel, facing the tabernacle.



Figure 22: piscina in the John chapel

The chapter's view is that St John's chapel is potentially the place which most nearly fulfils the requirements set out above. It is the most readily accessible chapel, insofar as a vergers will be needed to give the minister access to it; it has the capacity to be a place of prayer; and it is the one place within reach of both the high altar and the nave altar. It is already the place where ablutions are carried out when the eucharist is in the nave. The blessed sacrament could be reserved in the existing piscina (figure 22), with a specially designed and fitted door. The resolution of difficulties of access to the chapel could be resolved by either or both of two trials. The first trial envisages a short ramp for the single step into the chapel (figure 23), and a partitioning screen, which would allow those who are unable to access the higher level of the chapel to remain on the lower level while the vergers still used the west end of the chapel as a thoroughfare (figure 24). The second trial envisages a longer perpendicular ramp and landing for the single step into the chapel, and a



Figure 23: step into the John chapel

ramp against the south wall of the chapel for access to its higher level, with a partitioning screen on the steps between the two levels. Such trial(s) would include re-introducing the chapel to the

round of early morning eucharists (on Thursdays), and would involve clearing the west end of the chapel, where recycling and furniture storage can sometimes obscure the superb Romanesque arch at that end of the chapel (figure 25). Either trial would be for a specific length of time and have review processes, and might even suggest that separate access to the chapel would best be accommodated on the north side of the higher level of the chapel, via a newly-created entry point into the chapel through the existing screen, matching the current entrance through the screen to the lower level of the chapel, with the upper level of the chapel itself orientated in a southward-facing direction.



Figure 24: steps from the lower level of the John chapel to the upper level



Figure 25: west end of the John chapel

(h) The shrines of the saints

The bodies of St Oswald and St Wulfstan rested in shrines near the high altar until their removal in 1537. The historical record is that the bodies were wrapped in lead and reburied to the north of the high altar, unlike the bones of other saints, some of which were lost, others pulverised to prevent any revival of the cult. The specific reference to bones wrapped in lead suggests that had they been discovered, they would have been identifiable. Geophysical investigations by Stratascan in 2012 indicated several areas of disturbance in the ground in the north quire aisle and St George's chapel which would be consistent with a leaden object.



Figure 26: alcove on the north-east side of the crypt

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