

**Shining the light of Christ into the heart of the city:
an exploration of the mission of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin from the
perspective of members of the cathedral community**



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In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven'
(Matt 5:16).

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Foreword – by Dean Dermot Dunne

I am indebted to Professor Anne Lodge, the cathedral's Priest Scholar for engaging in this research on the mission of the cathedral the result of which is published in this booklet. Every institution, in a pursuit of excellence, should engage in self-reflection to re-examine its mission and goal. This ensures that the same mission is refined and renewed ensuring a continuity of service in new and exciting ways.

The cathedral has many stakeholders who contribute to the life and mission of the foundation. Professor Lodge's research engages with a representation of all such stakeholders, producing a result that is both robust and informative.

As dean of Christ Church Cathedral, I find this a helpful tool in my engagement in the management and governance of the cathedral. This research informs a clear path of mission for the future which will ensure that the cathedral will maintain its vital presence of Welcome, Worship and Witness in the city of Dublin and beyond. For this I am very grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dermot Dunne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Context

1.1 *Rationale for the study*

The purpose of this research and the report that emerged out of it was to explore how a range of people within and beyond the cathedral community¹ understand its mission, how they experience it and how, where relevant, they enact it. A governance report was produced in 2022 with a focus on the cathedral's governance. One of the things that the 2022 report exposed was a desire by many involved with the cathedral - as employees, as volunteers, as active members of the congregation - to discuss mission and ministry, even though those were not its focus.

One of the purposes of this report is to facilitate an exploration of what the mission of Christ Church Cathedral is, from multiple perspectives, with the intent of facilitating its flourishing. Leslie Francis's description of his concern with exploring and understanding 'the distinctive opportunities and challenges presented by cathedral ministry and mission' (2015: xviii) is very much in tune with the rationale for undertaking this study, the purpose of which is to explore and understand the mission and ministry of Christ Church Cathedral from a range of perspectives. The report is focused primarily on the lived or experienced mission from the perspective of a range of voices within and beyond the cathedral community. It also considers the written or intended mission and values as expressed in policy documents.

1.2 *Cathedrals and mission: a review of the literature*

Hall (2014) asks what, if anything, is the specific function or vocation of the cathedral in its Christian community? According to <https://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/cathedrals/about-cathedrals/what-is-a-cathedral/>:

A cathedral is the seat of the bishop and a centre of worship and mission. The primary purpose of a cathedral is to be a place of Christian worship but it is also often the oldest building in continuous use in its surrounding area and of significance to the heritage, culture and community life of the area it serves. Cathedrals are the mother churches of their dioceses and act as focal points for services and celebrations for those worshipping in churches throughout the diocese.

As Doll (2019) explains, the bishop's seat or cathedra must be present in order for the building to be designated a cathedral. This means that cathedrals have a faith teaching function at the heart of its mission. The beauty and spirituality of what is usually an ancient building, as well as the style of worship have been found to be key attractions for those who choose to attend worship in cathedrals (Francis & Williams 2015). Cathedrals have a flexibility which

¹ For the purposes of this report, the cathedral community consists of: all staff, volunteers, canons and congregation. This includes members of the Chapter, Board and Friends.

enable multiple belongings to parish or other place of worship as well as the cathedral (Lankshear, Francis & Ipgrave 2015).

While cathedrals are a sacred space for some people, they are perceived by many others as a strictly civic or secular space (Coleman & Bowman 2019). This juxtaposition creates both tension and opportunity for cathedrals in terms of their mission. While tourism is an increasingly important part of the life, financial security (Shackley 2006) and engagement with the wider world of a typical cathedral, part of that tourism consists of people seeking a spiritual (though maybe not a strictly religious) experience (Curtis, 2016). What is referred to as the *Caminoisation* of religious heritage (Bowman & Sepp 2019) has created a way in which cathedrals can extend a spiritual invitation to an increasingly secular populace thus potentially broadening their mission.

Shaw (2013) points out that it is impossible to calculate the spiritual impact of a cathedral if you focus only on worship or Sunday attendance. While the various outreach activities of a cathedral may be less visible, they have potential for significant effect and expression of its mission. Watts (2015) argues that social action and outreach can enable active mission response to the significant problems that humanity faces today. In the context of a cathedral, that may require a significant shift in priorities. Enabling social justice and community outreach concerns to come to the fore in the cathedral setting involves active reflection and planning. It is a potentially significant change of focus regarding the purpose of cathedral fundraising and decision-making around how those resources are spent (Osborne & Jamieson 2010).

Any type of change in fund-raising and spending priority to support a particular mission focus requires the support of the core congregation and in particular those who are members of the Friends of the Cathedral organisation. Lankshear and Francis (2022) found that many members of cathedral congregations are interested in social action, including giving support to fellow Christians in the developing world as well as speaking and acting in response to social justice issues both locally and globally. Muskett (2015a) argues that such Friends' groups have several key roles in supporting their cathedral. They have an important fundraising role, often taking responsibility for the fabric of an ancient heritage building. They also support the prayer-life of the cathedral. The Friends make a potentially positive contribution to the cathedral's capacity to social network. The Friends' associations have the capacity to straddle the sacred and secular expressions of cathedral life and need and thus can be an essential part of the support structure for a cathedral's mission.

Much cathedral engagement with other institutions tends to be secular or civic rather than sacred. There is evidence of cathedrals reaching out to schools to engage young people through both sacred and secular foci (Edwards & ap Sion 2015). There is also evidence of educational institutions reaching out to cathedrals to utilise the civic space as a non-

traditional setting (Posner *et al* 2017). Cathedrals and educational institutions may form mutually beneficial outreach partnerships (e.g. Krueger Bridge 2022 describes a music outreach programme between university and cathedral during Covid) which reflect shared sacred and secular motivations.

Osborne (2016: 715) argues that ‘cathedrals are seen as beacons of confident, open Christianity through exceptional worship and outreach’. The public visibility of cathedrals and their religious activity enables the non-engaged majority of the population to be aware of Christian practice (Muskett 2015b). In this way it can be argued that cathedrals lay some of the groundwork for the foundational work of mission (Morisy 2006). The potential that cathedrals have to mix high culture and liturgical flexibility renders them potentially more accessible for those who are not engaged believers or who are purely secular in their outlook (Coleman 2018). Francis, Annis & Robbins (2015) explain how the rich liturgical pattern of the building enables those who are unfamiliar with Anglican worship and beliefs to connect with their own spirituality.

The way in which cathedrals both represent and hold simultaneously ‘sacred space and common ground’ gives significant opportunity for mission (Muskett 2016, Coleman & Bowman 2019). People may experience the cathedral by entering into a secular space, but may subsequently experience the sacred while there. One of the benefits of cathedral culture is the non-requirement for community membership to enable those who choose to do so to attend worship with whatever frequency they wish (Percy 2020). A further benefit of cathedral culture is the flexibility in the use of space that allows multiple activities, both sacred and secular, to co-exist (Calvert 2017). Cathedrals tell the story of Christian spiritual heritage and that of the history of the local community (Theos & The Grubb Institute 2012). While being simultaneously sacred and secular offers potential benefits to cathedrals, it also gives rise to tension to try to manage both sets of needs and expectations (Shackely 2005). It is important that those in leadership roles ensure that the sacred/secular balance is carefully and consciously maintained so that mission remains to the forefront. The relative independence that cathedrals enjoy within their dioceses gives them potential for creative exercise of mission (Rowe 2011) while also increasing responsibility to maintain the balance between sacred and secular locally.

1.3 A brief history and current life of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin

Christ Church cathedral has been a place of worship for almost a millennium, making it one of the oldest buildings in Ireland still in use. Its history has impacted its evolving mission. The cathedral was founded in the year 1030 by Dúnán, the first bishop of Dublin and Sitriuc, the Norse king of Dublin. It stood at the heart of the Viking city. It subsequently became an Anglo-Norman cathedral. Using an endowment given by Diarmuid McMorrough when he was consecrated bishop of Dublin, Laurence O’Toole established a monastery of Augustinian Friars

at the cathedral in around 1152. The Friars remained at the Cathedral until the Reformation when the Augustinian priory of the Holy Trinity was dissolved and replaced by a reformed foundation of secular canons. The first dean of the cathedral had been its last prior so there was continuity alongside change at this point. The impact of external political influences on the cathedral continued. During the Cromwellian period, Christ Church Cathedral was given a new constitution in 1660, and this has been modified from time to time by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland following disestablishment in 1870. Refaüssé (2002) explains how the cathedral lost its connection with the people of Dublin during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in particular as it came to be closely associated with the ruling class rather than the local citizenry.

Christ Church Cathedral's history reflects the juxtaposition of sacred and secular or civic which is one of the core characteristics of cathedrals identified in Section 1.2. The cathedral was founded by a king working together with a bishop to serve the city they both ruled, one temporally and one spiritually. The endowment by another king enabled the establishment of a monastery of Canons Regular of St. Augustine to run the cathedral. Throughout its history, the cathedral has continued to be a civic as well as a spiritual space. It has often been, and continues to be, a space where civic events take place or are marked. Much of the change imposed on the cathedral over its many centuries was brought about by external political upheaval. Those changes were primarily focused on the cathedral's governance rather than its mission and ethos – however, it is inevitable that such profound change both within the cathedral, and in the society beyond its walls, impacted its mission whether in its understanding or its expression.

When exploring the contemporary understandings and expression of mission it is important to make visible the original influences on the cathedral's mission from its earliest days. In the section below, we explore two key spiritual influences on the mission and activity of the cathedral – St. Augustine whose rule was followed by the Canons Regular of St. Augustine and St. Laurence O'Toole.

(i) AUGUSTINE:

Jackson (1986) explains that, following his conversion to Christianity and his baptism in Milan in 397, Augustine returned to Thagaste in North Africa to found an intentional lay community of fellow-Christians. As a bishop he invited his priests to share in this community life; such a community was the bedrock of his life and work. He wrote his Monastic Rule to reflect this experience and to enable it to be shared more widely; the sick are a special object of care in the community. More than one hundred religious communities use his Rule today. It commends itself by its values, its simplicity, its relaxedness. To us in Christ Church Cathedral what is important today is that it began as a movement of lay baptised and developed into a community of bishop and priests without losing the lay bedrock.

The key components of Augustinian mission are:

- the calling of the Christian soul is to search for God and constantly to interpret the material world as containing pointers to God signposting this spiritual journey through a life which connects love of God and love of neighbour;
- this requires a developing capacity to focus on the interior to interpret the exterior. It manifests itself in the gracious and charitable character of The Rule which focuses more on internal transformation than on external regulations;
- community life is more enriching than exclusive individual sanctity; it is based in Acts 4.32;
- the principles of Augustinian life are: unity and harmony, stewardship, care and respect, worship, moderation, mutual care, humility, common good;
- these derive from four constant virtues in Augustinian theology: providence, fortitude, temperance, justice each and all of which participate in a fifth: wisdom

Augustine holds that faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe (The Epistle to the Hebrews says this). Augustine holds that revelation and inner experience are the two sources of truth (Jackson 1986).

(ii) LAURENCE O'TOOLE:

According to Tyrrell (1981), Laurence O'Toole was the second archbishop of Dublin and the first to be consecrated in Christ Church Cathedral. As he had done in Glendalough when Abbot, he strove to introduce order and sanctity to the city of Dublin. Using the endowment given by Diarmuid McMurrrough, he established a monastery of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine on the grounds outside the city walls where Trinity College stands today.

The Canons Regular of St. Augustine were priests who lived in community under the leadership of their prior. They had vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were associated with education, the care of the poor, the homeless and the sick. In their wide-ranging work, they straddled the worlds of the sacred and the secular. Laurence chose to live in community with the Canons and to follow their rule. He sang the daily offices with the Canons. He was frequently seen in solitary prayer during the night in the cathedral. He founded the Cathedral School of Music and another school for the sons of the Dublin merchants. He rescued homeless children from the streets of Dublin and arranged foster care for them. He fed the poor at his own table and gave of his own purse to those in need in the city. His activity and example of a saintly life where he undertook good works on his own and in partnership with others, influenced the mission of the cathedral in its early years and should continue to be a model of mission for us today.

1.4 Outline of the Report

This report has three further sections. The second chapter outlines the methods used in this study and anonymously describes the participants. The third chapter presents the findings from the nineteen interviews using five key themes that emerged from a study of the data. The fourth chapter analyses the findings in light of the five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion and presents a number of recommendations that emerge from that analysis.

Chapter 2 – Research Methodology

2.1 Research participants

Between mid-April 2023 and mid-May 2023 a total of 19 interviewees were approached and invited to participate in a short interview. All agreed to take part. Most interviewees were members of the cathedral community (namely staff, volunteers, congregation, canons and leaders). Table 2.1 below outlines anonymously describes the participants:

Table 2.1 Profiles of interview participants by role, years involved and code

| CATEGORY | NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES | INTERVIEWEE CODE | YEARS INVOLVED |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Congregation | 4 | Congr1 | 30+ |
| | | Congr2 | 1-5 |
| | | Congr3 | 1-5 |
| | | Congr4 | 40+ |
| Volunteers | 2 | Vol1 | 20+ |
| | | Vol2 | 30+ |
| Staff | 4 | Staff1 | 1-5 |
| | | Staff2 | 6-10 |
| | | Staff3 | 20+ |
| | | Staff4 | 1-5 |
| Canons | 4 | Canon1 | 6-10 |
| | | Canon2 | 1-5 |
| | | Canon3 | 6-10 |
| | | Canon4 | 1-5 |
| Diocese | 3 | Dio1 | - |
| | | Dio2 | - |
| | | Dio3 | - |
| Leadership | 2 | Lead1 | 11-15 |
| | | Lead2 | 11-15 |

Participants included four members of the congregation who ranged in belonging from over 30 years to under two years. It included two lay people who are members of the congregation but are also long-standing volunteers who assist with aspects of worship, one with a connection of more than 20 years and the other with a connection of over 30 years with the cathedral. Three of the congregation and volunteer participants are members of the Friends of Christ Church Cathedral. Four members of staff were interviewed who had between three

and over 20 years as employees of the cathedral. The interviewed staff represented different aspects of the cathedral's work including music, tourism, verging and administration. Four of the canons were interviewed ranging in length of connection with Christ Church Cathedral in this role from two to almost ten years. One of these is an ecumenical canon. Two of those interviewed were in senior leadership roles connected with the cathedral, both with a connection of over a decade with the cathedral. Three members of the diocese were interviewed. One lay person is a member of a diocesan parish and connected with aspects of diocesan structures. Both others are clergy in parishes within the city area. Seven out of the 19 interviewees (37%) are international in origin. Six of the 19 interviewees (26%) are female and the remaining cohort male. The gender imbalance, while less than desirable, can be explained by dint of the fact that many of the people invited to be interviewed were chosen due to the positions they hold.

2.2 Research Methodology

Respondents took part in individual interviews except in two cases where two people in each case were interviewed together. All those in the cathedral community were asked:

1. How long they were associated with Christ Church Cathedral
2. To describe how and why they came to be involved with the cathedral
3. To describe their understanding of the cathedral's mission
4. To describe how they experience that mission when they are part of the cathedral community, e.g. on a typical Sunday or working day
5. To consider whether the cathedral's mission has changed during the time they have been associated with it
6. To identify what, if anything, may support the mission of the cathedral
7. To identify what, if anything, may hinder the mission of the cathedral
8. To consider how they and others like them (e.g. staff, volunteers, congregation members, leaders) contribute to the mission of the cathedral.

The three interviewees from outside the cathedral were asked to talk about their own parishes and their missions, as well as being asked about their understanding of the cathedral's mission and its expression and what helps or hinders it. The clergy from other city parishes were also asked if there was willingness on their part to consider working in partnership with the cathedral.

Most of the interviews (eleven) took place in person with a minority (eight) being conducted on zoom. All respondents were given guarantees of confidentiality and the right to see any quotations from them prior to publication of the report. All interviews were transcribed or written up. They were then analysed using an inductive approach (Azungah 2018). The next chapter presents the outcomes of that inductive analysis. The themes used in the presentation of the data are those that emerged from the process of inductive analysis.

Chapter 3 – Findings: understanding and experiencing the mission of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin

3.1 Introduction

An institution's 'mission' can be found both in the formal statement of its values and in how that institution describes its purpose. Christian mission is concerned with the living out and sharing of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by those individuals and institutions who are Christian. By so doing they discern and respond to God's calling and purpose in the world. There is significant overlap between 'mission' and 'ethos', which according to Robinson (1990: 157) should 'be two sides of the same coin'. 'Ethos' is concerned with the lived values and practice of any institution. All those who belong to the institution contribute to its expression and its evolution. McLaughlin (2005) describes the gap that frequently exists between written or intended ethos on the one hand, and lived or experienced ethos on the other hand. It is impossible to consider 'mission' without taking account of 'ethos' and without recognising the role that all members of a community have in giving expression to mission and ethos and being part of its evolution.

Let us first look at mission and ethos as formally expressed in Christ Church Cathedral. The 2023 Annual report for Christ Church Cathedral formally states that the purpose is:

To continue our mission of hospitality to the stranger through Worship, Witness and Welcome opening to him/her the transcendent God who invites us to dance in the mystery of the Trinity. This mission ensures that we are faithful to the charitable purpose of the cathedral which is the promotion of religion.

The 2023 annual report describes the cathedral's values as:

Integrity, reflected in transparent, fair and consistent actions. Generosity, which generates a warm open welcome to all. Compassion, which promotes social justice, equality, diversity, dignity, consideration and respect for all.

According to the 2023 annual report:

It is our vision to create a spiritual space into which the pilgrim is invited to explore his/her own spiritual journey thus coming to a further understanding of who God is. It is our mission to make the stranger a friend and to walk together in the presence of the Divine.

Welcome, Worship and Witness lie at the heart of the cathedral's mission and objective.

This chapter explores the understandings and experiences expressed by each of the respondents in response to questions about the cathedral's mission. It opens with a section looking at the various definitions of the cathedral's mission that they shared based on their lived experience and resultant insights. It then considers their responses under five thematic headings. Analysis of the interview data demonstrated that respondents emphasised the three themes expressed formally in the 2023 report (Worship, Welcome and Witness) but found that there were two further themes emergent in their responses as well – Welfare and Wellbeing. The next section considers the range of ways in which the 19 respondents defined, understood and experienced the cathedral's mission.

3.2 Respondents' definitions and understandings of the cathedral's mission

Seven of the 19 respondents were involved with either the current or a previous Board of the Cathedral. Therefore it is no surprise that one of them defined the cathedral's mission very much in line with the formal expression in the 2023 report, something also reflected by others who noted the charitable purpose in their responses:

'Where is mission? What is interesting is that the governance committee keeps coming back to the charitable purpose which is for the promotion of religion. Everything is geared to that. We are a new plant church within an old church, evangelism is taking place within the structures of what we already have. The traditional form of worship, when it is done well, is speaking a language people are listening to'. (Lead1)

Despite the written materials in reports and on the website, one other respondent seemed unaware of the formal statement mission, saying: 'I don't recall really hearing the cathedral mission being articulated at least in the last few years'. (Congr1)

Most respondents focused on their own lived experiences of mission in the cathedral in order to define their understanding of it. Some focused particularly on the provision of, and their experience of worship, something expressed also by those outside the cathedral community:

'It's to provide religious services for whoever wants them'. (Staff3)

'First of all, it's a tradition in a way. So it's that tradition of Evensong, the space to come and be, a sort of prayerful place in the city...prayer bookends the day, there's a rhythm to it.' (Staff2)

'From my experience it is to make sure that every individual that steps into the cathedral will have an opportunity to worship, to pray and especially the Eucharist,

daily Eucharist. So I'll say it gives people an opportunity to stay close to God on a daily basis.' (Staff1)

'It is definitely, largely the meditative space which is enhanced by the choir, but not just the choir. ... It's always nice to walk into a space and feel at home, because you recognize the other faces that are there... But also I feel like there's an opportunity when I go into the cathedral to bring it down from the overwhelmingness of the outside world into something a little bit more concentrated, a little bit clearer and also just the opportunity to relax a little bit into a tradition that I'm familiar with.' (Congr2)

'So, it is a kind of place of sanctuary. There is that element that the doors are open. It's not pretentious - people come, there's worship happening. You can rely on the predictable patterns to the life of the cathedral that are centred around prayer and worship and sacraments'. (Dio2)

The centrality of music in supporting the liturgy was noted by some respondents:

'it's the quality of everything really – the music, the way things are done... despite the very slender means, and while the Sunday morning congregation includes a relatively small number of 'regulars', the attendance is large and includes very many young people'. (Congr4)

'The choir is actually one of the things that also supports that mission more broadly. I can't imagine the cathedral without them. And even if I walked through the doors and there was nothing but their singing, I would walk away feeling like I had been where I needed to be. It's phenomenal, and it does something to the space, it really transforms it. Yeah, I feel very, very lucky to hear them. Oh, and the bell ringers. I absolutely adore the bells.' (Congr2)

Someone connected with the choir explained how they serve both liturgy and congregation: 'Certainly for choir, well, for any services, we're leading on the congregation's behalf'.

Some respondents focused on the relational role of the cathedral, with one of the respondents tying that to the canon's role of service.

'When you talk about mission, it's reaching out to people, right?' (Dio1)

'Seems to me the cathedral is uniquely placed in the city centre when it's right on the tourist route just near the castle. It's got marvellous musical resources, and it's open

during the day, and it offers times of worship when people can actually get there during the day.' (Congr3)

'Christ Church cathedral and the canon's mission, it's the engagement, the relationship. It's the saying in business circles, it's 'pressing the flesh' but is done in a genuine way'. (Canon3)

Others focused on how the cathedral's mission reflected their expression of their Christian faith. One also situated the cathedral very firmly in the Anglican Communion:

'The primary aim is to make everybody, no matter what your background, welcome in the presence of God, in the house of God. There are cardinal parts of the mission of Christ - the teaching part, the healing part and the preaching. So I will say they are all embedded in the Cathedral's mission. The mission is very simple from our Christ Jesus to really, really shine a light, for he said, 'You are the light of the world. You cannot light up the lantern and throw it under the bushel. Rather, you put it on the table, so that everybody will see' and that is what I have experienced here'. (Staff1)

'Where the mission is, it's not different from other churches I would say. It's not different for that it is to preach the gospel. You preach the gospel of Christ, you know, I always come here to listen to the Word of God. The mission of Christ Church is to preach the Gospel, preach the Gospel of Christ.' (Vol1)

'The mission of the cathedral is to advance the kingdom of God in the world of God's creation through worship and welcome within the context of the Anglican communion'. (Lead2)

A few staff and a canon described the cathedral as a place with multiple functions and different purposes, a place that is both sacred and secular, a place with numbers of different aims. One of the staff said:

'It comes in different forms because we're not just a religious building, so we have to be that place where we're welcome to all and all, all, all. But we also need to have a religious existence. That is, you know it's acceptable, and any way we can enable its religious existence is, if we have people to do it with. And so I think probably the most important thing is actually getting out and getting people to come in.'

'It would be very tempting to say, okay, well, you know, tourism is back. Events are back. The shop is going really well. The auditor says 2022 is pretty much like 2019, you know. So that's great. But is it really enough. Is it? Is it the right thing?' (Staff2)

'I would see that it's twofold. It is the Mother Church of the diocese. For Dublin and Glendalough for clergy and people obviously it is the seat of the Bishop. But then it has a very important function in the city of Dublin, as well as a welcoming witnessing community of faith. I think it's challenging to describe the mission because obviously it's also a tourist attraction, and it's one that that needs revenue to pay its very large overhead, and staff and everything else.' (Canon2)

Others beyond the staff, some of who are outside of the cathedral's usual community, were aware of multiple aspects of the cathedral's role and outward-looking mission in their responses:

'The worship of God and bearing witness to Christian faith in the heart of the city of Dublin. I would see the mission as being expressed in the daily offices and the regular Eucharist, and especially the worship on Sundays and on major festivals and the core way in which that is expressed. But I was also aware that there was a Social Ministry with a dimension to teach with a kind of outreach.' (Canon4)

'I think it's a mission of many parts. I would say, its mission is to be a place to pray. We're talking about the cathedral being rooted in the daily office. And then they have a ministry to the diocese as well - one of the jobs is to serve the diocese in terms of things like ordinations and all those things, and to help to resource the diocese as well. It's the place where people will come if they want to attend lectures, or do things like that. So it has that ministry to the diocese as well. And then, from what I could understand from previous times, as well as that they had a ministry to those on the edges [A previous Dean's Vicar] had what I would describe as the ministry to those on the fringes. So that's why I would understand Christ Church's ministry to be to be one of prayer, to be a ministry to the diocese and to be a ministry to the wider world.' (Dio3)

A number of respondents felt that the mission of the cathedral was not as visible across the United Dioceses as they would like, but recognised the context was partly one of a lack of knowledge of diocesan structures and belonging, as well as a reduced interest in church in society in general:

'I mean. I had been here once before I started working here and in it. And I know my boys came with the Diocesan school service. But it's not really on the radar for people out in the diocese I don't think.' (Staff2)

I think it's a shame that people don't maybe know, that the kind of city resident or working community isn't more aware.' (Congr3)

‘I’m not saying anything against my own parishes. But in my area, if I mentioned Christ Church, and they go ‘oh, yeah, I was there once’. They don’t identify with the diocese and cathedral at all.’ (Canon3)

‘I mean I think church is not an important part of people’s lives now.’ (Dio1)

The following five sections look at the five themes that emerged from an analysis of the respondents’ answers as well as mapping those on to the three themes claimed by the formal statement of the Cathedral’s mission and values.

3.3 Worship

The 2023 report states that:

WORSHIP is the core activity of the Cathedral and it strives to be a place of excellence in liturgy enriched by its music. Worship of Almighty God seeks to include everyone from whatever background they come. The excellence of worship at Christ Church continues to be noted by visitors and pilgrims from across the globe. The Choir continues to offer excellence in music accompaniment to the liturgy.

As noted in section 3.2, members of the congregation, staff, canons, leaders and those in the wider diocese showed very clear awareness of the importance of worship as a core part of the cathedral’s mission. The high quality of the worship and liturgical music was referenced as was the fact that the cathedral is a place of worship for visitors from across the world.

The responses to this research gave an opportunity to participants to explore the worship dimension of the cathedral’s mission from their own perspective and experience. The excellence of the liturgy and music was noted:

‘Now, that there is such a cohesiveness between music and liturgy that it is as one and that’s what cathedrals should be for: liturgy. The choir are no longer in performance mode, they are much more, and they are getting much more out of it. They are going with the mood of the liturgy and the mood of the readings’. (Lead1)

‘Liturgical precision is pivotal. Worship presented and given and shared involves the near perfection of the music, the evanescence of those who lead the worship, it’s the content, all of that is a kind of synergy that really, really works.’ (Lead2)

Respondents noted the fact that liturgy and music of a consistently professional standard is freely available on a regular basis.

‘The worship isn’t consumer-driven’. (Lead2)

'it's encouraging to know the people who come to services, do so not just to have free entry to the building, but also to join. So they're actually attracted to the worship as opposed to just the building. (Staff4).

It was recognised that the beauty of the music was a significant contributor.

'I think the music is exquisite, and I think people will come to listen to the music, and if that's all they do, that is certainly worship as well.' (Canon2)

Some committed Christians who are regulars in the congregation note that this style of liturgy is their comfort zone resulting in their loyalty to the cathedral.

'As far as the worship is concerned, it's a style that I personally like very, very much. It's a sort of Anglicanism I feel at home in. The other people who do feel quite at home are Catholic tourists from the Latin world. They feel completely at home.' (Congr3)

'Christ Church cathedral is where I was comfortable in in my youthful look at theology. I still call Christ Church my parish church. (Canon3)

Some respondents expressed hopes about the potential impact of the high standard of the liturgy and music on people's expression of faith, or encounter with faith.

'I would like to think that the worship of the cathedral inspires people who are already Christian to live a Christian life, and that it also may touch other people, to at least see the beauty of the place and the beauty of the liturgy'. (Vol2)

The challenge to the cathedral is to find ways to build on the impact of excellent liturgy to help build discipleship.

'A big part of how the role of the cathedral is in terms of its Sunday ministry, which is the shop window, and its daily prayer. Its ministry is to represent Christ in all the fullness of what that means to all the visitors, the global village idea that we all get a sense of, when you see who's there on a Sunday. But I would also want to feed in somewhere what's very topical now which is the whole idea of intentional discipleship. And if you begin to fit all of the various pieces together, the creative new idea is perhaps not just representing Christ to all the visitors, but actually finding ways to nurture faith within those who are the occasional visitors, and finding ways in which that intentional sense of how faith can actually be formulated in the sense of drawing people into membership and life.' (Canon1)

The cathedral has a regular cycle of worship but is also used for diocesan worship including ordinations, confirmations and other special or occasional events. A few different examples

were commented on including the annual Schools' Service, occasional healing services and a one-off service of remembrance to mark loss due to the pandemic. One of the Canons noted that the use of the cathedral for such events gave added value and status to the events themselves.

'I've been involved in the school services as well, which have been magnificently organized and sheer space of it, and it's wonderful. It's the only time, the only place you're going to get the school communities going together, and you see how much that means to the teaching staff, who like the church community are a small community. That's a wonderful use of the facilities for bringing people together.... the audio-visual setup that they get in, and all is first class. So, it's a very positive experience'. (Canon2)

The same canon praised the use of the cathedral for a pandemic service of remembrance saying 'I thought it was lovely to use the cathedral because the service was so emotive and and because we were still in some restrictions, we had some people who couldn't celebrate lives'.

There were a handful of slightly critical comments about worship, all of which were also constructive. Canon2 noted that 'sometimes I think the cathedral is so big, and the mechanisms are so well oiled that something that's different and smaller (like a diocesan healing service), can get lost in the midst of it'. This comment was in relation to the inclusion of a diocesan healing service in Sunday afternoon Evensong when it was neither advertised nor flagged as such. The same respondent wondered if there were ways to more effectively flag and advertise such events in order to involve a bigger congregation.

'We were wondering, you know, could we put a banner on the railings, or something like that. So, there may be missed opportunities for advertising the spirituality by a lack of kind of overt advertising. Everyone who goes to Christ Church, the majority are tourists, but maybe there is space for more 'in your face' advertising.' (Canon2)

Another respondent expressed a wish for greater flexibility in the liturgy:

'I think there is a lot of untapped potential in the liturgy. I long for the liturgy to move into a more contemporary expression....I don't mean abandoning what we have, I don't mean messy church. We hardly ever sing a contemporary hymn. The congregation is basically passive except for the hymns'. (Vol2)

Canon2 described Choral Evensong as 'particularly non-participatory' noting a willingness to be transcended by the music, but being 'very much a spectator' and commented that this is 'just a Choral Evensong thing'. One of those associated with the choir commented separately

on the recent changed arrangements for Choral Evensong, explaining how the congregation are invited to sit in the choir stalls, in the sanctuary and the rows in the nave closest to the screen to enable them to feel less like spectators and more a part of the service.

While many respondents commented on the beauty of the building and its spaces both interior and exterior, a few noted aspects of layout related to worship that needed to be reconsidered and possibly reconfigured.

‘If there was anything I would change it is to bring the baptistry out into the centre’.
(Lead1)

‘A place that is still to be elevated in its use is the baptistry, not necessarily for baptism....that is part of the disturbance. That is how you create the pearl.’ (Lead2)

One other respondent agreed about the need to reconsider the placing of the baptistry but also made even more radical suggestions about the whole worship space:

‘The cathedral itself as a space for celebrating the Eucharist needs a serious rethink and the involvement of qualified consultants in liturgical space. The element of domesticity can be done, even in a cathedral. The baptismal font should be in a public part of the cathedral. The layout of the cathedral interior should make the point that it is the whole community that celebrates, not just those in the 'holy end' beyond the screen’. (Vol2)

Linked to the reflections on the interior space within the cathedral is the question of how a suite of buildings might be re-envisioned:

‘I would be interested in how the cathedral envisages using its suite of buildings. There were discussions about having a different kind of service and how that might be realized not in the cathedral, but perhaps something intended for St. Werburgh’s, for example, and how that would be re-envisioned. So I’m interested in where that conversation has got to.’ (Canon1)

It is worth considering the range of spaces in any consideration of changes to space or ranges of type of worship offered.

3.4 Welcome

According to the 2023 report:

The WELCOME is characterised by the Cathedral's place both as the mother church of the United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough and the Metropolitan Church of the southern province of the Church of Ireland; an historic part of the Anglican Communion. Its open doors signify the ready welcome given to all visitors and those seeking a place set apart for God.

The contributions by the 19 respondents reported in Section 3.2 indicate a strong awareness by the various members of the cathedral's community, and those beyond, of the importance of welcome in the cathedral's expression of its mission. The participants' perspectives gave insight not only into how that welcome is expressed and experienced but also how it can continue to be developed.

Those in leadership roles were clear that welcome is at the heart of the cathedral's mission because it invites people to worship and to respond.

'The welcome needs to be such that people feel included to the point where they actually move from curiosity to personal response. That is what I think mission is in our context. It is a question of garnering interest, keeping in touch with the cathedral so they instantly become part of the cathedral family'. (Lead2)

'The warmth of welcome that people feel when they come through the door.... To all newcomers the words of welcome is the way into what we are celebrating. After that the liturgy just draws people in and they feel part of it. We're not interested in them coming back because they are floating. If it touches them they will go somewhere else. It is not about coveting those that are there. It is about meeting them and letting go.' (Lead1)

One of the respondents explained how it feels to be welcomed to the cathedral community:

'The welcome was second to none. I was not really sure what the system was but the Dean gave me a clear path for what to do'. (Staff1)

Another respondent noted the welcome afforded to theological students who visit as part of their studies.

'Very kindly the cathedral has been great about having groups of theological students for an introduction for the last couple of years.' (Congr3)

Welcome is not solely the remit of those in leadership roles, or indeed of staff. The congregation themselves are an important part of the expression of that welcome.

‘I think that they are disposed to be a friendly congregation. I know they’re not very demonstrative, but if you bump into them, and if you bump into somebody new, and at the coffee time afterwards, they are always friendly, and ask you where you come from. And you notice that there's a reasonable cordiality around the sharing of the peace. But the reinstatement of coffee after services, I think, is doing something very good, and people stay in large numbers, and they circulate and chat. They don't get into little clots and huddle in them.’ (Congr3)

‘After the service it's like during the cup of tea. It's a kind of socialization interaction with people coming to this church. So you see, like interaction, we get to know people, it's friendships with fellow disciples.’ (Vol1)

Some of those who have come to the cathedral from other traditions have particularly noticed the change in the culture of the cathedral over time so that it has become a place very welcoming of diversity.

‘The Christ Church Cathedral I first knew in the 1960s was for Prods by Prods, Church of Ireland. Ascendancy. Dublin families. After that came a church that welcomes. So that's very different. It has grown in a way that I like because its open, to everyone.’ (Canon3)

‘I find it a very friendly, a very welcoming space.... I notice the growth there has been in the cathedral worshipping population over the years. I would have gone to services in Christ Church when I was based in Dublin in the early 1990s and it was just a largely Church of Ireland constituency that time with occasional visitors, and then occasionally people like myself and other traditions but now there are much larger numbers than I would just have been aware of in previous times, and also much more diverse. The space is occupied by a much greater variety of people now and also I feel the people coming from various backgrounds, that they're very comfortable themselves.’ (Canon4)

This has been very important to those from other backgrounds who found themselves accepted in the cathedral rather than being treated as outsiders.

‘I have grown to love Christ Church..... At an ecumenical event years ago, I was sitting on that bench out there by myself and I'm about to welcome guests on behalf of the cathedral. It was an amazing moment, because for me it really showed that I was welcome, and nobody was saying that you're not one of us. I was fully as involved as

any official member of the Church of Ireland, you know. So that was lovely....I'm immensely grateful for the cathedral, I'm immensely grateful for the welcome I received from the very first contact with it.' (Vol2)

The building itself, and its presentation have been highlighted by members of the community as part of what expresses the welcome.

'It feels like a more accessible place, and I think, when I first visited, that there was still work going on outside to transform the exterior into the labyrinth, and so on. But psychologically, opening up that space and making it something which has a point and it's beautiful, it worked so well. You can see the people just love being in there particularly during the summer, where you can just sit on a bench, if you happen to arrive early or you're in that part of town. I've stood there watching people, and they're just relaxed and enjoying being there. And then you see people who are walking the labyrinth, and so on. So that general visual impression coming towards it has opened up'. (Congr3)

Other respondents noted some concerns about accessibility due to the age of the building.

'Because of the age of the building, there would be a distinct lack of access in some areas for people with mobility issues. So, I suppose I don't know how you get around that, but I think that's one thing that would be a challenge.' (Canon2)

'I don't think a health and safety officer would approve of communion at the altar rails. There are so many steps (without rails) and varying floor levels, especially if one has to negotiate one's way around the Archbishop's throne!' (Vol2)

The age and heritage status of the building is both a source of welcome and a potential challenge to that welcome.

'People look to take a little something away, maybe a shell, or they like to interact with the building, and maybe light a candle. We are custodians of this beautiful space, and that's why people come because it is historic. It is beautiful, and but by being old it's also very expensive to look after. Visitors maybe have no sense of how to behave or what to do, and that quite often they come and observe, and they are on the periphery. The messages like 'don't touch', 'don't do this', 'no entry' are not conducive to feeling comfortable or welcome. I don't know what we do with that. But I think that's what it's going to be re-thinking of some of the welcome. So that is something that we could consider, so there is that ease in the building, so it is less daunting'. (Staff2)

Heritage buildings like cathedrals can intentionally open up their space to their local community to ensure that the sense of welcome and belonging is broadened and diversified.

‘[An English cathedral] combined those things like venue hire and tourism but what it did a lot of the time was it combined it with community benefit. So, for example, the Council asked for a venue to run a fashion show for young people from the local colleges who design their clothes. There was a big catwalk put up. But what it did was it was to open the cathedral to a whole new audience, and it encouraged the creative gifts of people who design these things’. (Dio3)

The involvement of children in the cathedral space for activities beyond the Diocesan Schools’ Service was positively noted.

‘On a couple of occasions, I’ve been there when you’ve been doing things with children, and it works. I think, that works amazingly, and children love buildings like that. They’re not intimidated by them at all. They just love hearing their voices appearing in a big space.’ (Congr3)

Ultimately, a cathedral is a sacred space and by welcoming people, staff can give a positive message about its core purpose and mission:

‘I think it’s easier to bring visitors closer to the house of the Lord and see actually after that, because they will say I love that building, I want to visit again. So people might come back in part because of the welcome so I make sure that anybody and everybody that comes in here feels welcome. Anybody I meet in the stairways and the church crypt, and it will make them feel really at home’. (Staff1)

However, ensuring that the sacred mission of the cathedral is to the forefront and in balance with the secular aspects of the cathedral’s existence can be a challenge. This is because of the limited staff available to take care of its religious life, particularly with regard to building a sustainable community. One of the staff explained:

‘Look at the staffing. There’s the Dean, there’s the Dean’s Vicar, choir master, an organist and half an organist and choir members. Everybody else on staff is about bringing the people in for a short period of time, either coming to visit or for an event. There’s nothing set up for trying to get those people to come in and be part of the community’.

As noted on pages 16 and 17 at the end of Section 3.2, not everyone in the United Diocese was particularly aware of the Cathedral’s mission. One of the respondents outside the

cathedral community suggested ways of raising awareness of the cathedral and the reality that it belongs to and serves the whole diocese.

‘I certainly would think it would be nice to have the rural deanery with a few parishes invited together. This is their day in the cathedral. Now, we'll have a service for them in the morning, and hopefully, maybe they will give up their service in their own parish church and come into the cathedral instead, make it a day for us all to pray together. I would think that open days would be a good idea and say, look this is an open day in the cathedral now, and invite all the parishes. I'd say if there was an open day in the cathedral for all parishes, that they could come in and enjoy it. You know they could visit the cathedral. Come in and have a look around, tell them that it's their cathedral.’ (Dio1)

One member of the congregation talked about the challenge of trying to encourage people to attend the cathedral when you want to avoid ‘stealing sheep’:

‘But then we may be finding ways to bring people with them and that may take a little thinking about, perhaps. Many people are fairly sort of doggedly loyal to their regular place of worship, which is fair enough. And I feel that about my own parish. You feel much more a part of the congregation you normally are associated with. So, in that case you're not trying to steal people away from other parishes, you know, but maybe encourage friends who don't have a distinctive place of belonging.’ (Congr3)

This encapsulated the challenge that there is to a diocesan cathedral both to support its own core congregation and to serve the diocese.

One of the leaders suggested that those who visit can be gently encouraged to affiliate to the cathedral community, even virtually.

‘Visitors can opt to leave their email address by their consent so that the cathedral community is widened daily. Such persons can receive information by bulletin from time to time and can log-in to worship or lectures. It would be like a free subscription and they could also receive an electronic Christmas and Easter card’. (Lead2)

3.5 Witness

According to the 2023 report:

The WITNESS of the cathedral concentrates on being a centre of spirituality, prayer & learning in the heart of the city, a practice already maintained for nearly a thousand years.

The contributions by the 19 respondents reported in Section 3.2 indicate an awareness by the various members of the cathedral's community, and those beyond, of the role of Christian witness in the cathedral's expression of its mission. Some respondents spoke about spirituality and faith-based learning. However, most of the participants' perspectives and the future hopes they expressed give a solid indication that witness is understood not only in terms of spirituality, but for many of them primarily in terms of faith-inspired social action. One of the canons said:

'It would be lovely to find ways within Christ Church as the Mother Church of the diocese to see that it would be producing, maybe more so than what I have a sense is the case of, candidates for confirmation, for example, whether that is in a younger cohort, or indeed with those who come to faith in adulthood, and equally, offering opportunities to those who are regular worshippers within the life of the cathedral, that would help them to discover a deeper sense of their own discipleship'.

The same respondent had some in-depth suggestions for how this kind of spiritual learning could be facilitated.

'Are there ways, for example, of churches in this day and age rediscovering a place for catechesis? Are there other resources that could be developed such as short mini courses, e.g. thinking of how the catechism was historically framed around the Apostles Creed, Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments? Those were seen as the touchstones of what people needed to have some comprehension in terms of an understanding of their own spiritual experience and the doctrine of the Church. So those would be the kind of areas that could be developed which might entice and enrich people who are regular worshippers. They could even potentially be things that would be developed in the cathedral to be shared out across the diocese, so that would be the cathedral being at the centre. I would love to see the cathedral's self-understanding being that kind of resource place for the other churches around the diocese. And maybe it ought to lean more heavily on the Chapter to find ways in which those who see themselves as members of the cathedral might also be nurtured and deepened in their faith journey.....to have set piece occasions occasionally, whether it's in Lent with a guest speaker to talk about some aspect of

what we have named categorically, and to open up a conversation. Those might be just some of the ways in which one can begin to think.'

Individual respondents from the congregation indicated that they were willing to take part in learning activities. Indeed, one of these respondents went so far as to say:

'If we're going to have a chance of re-energizing or revitalizing the cathedral's outlook there's got to be some kind of preparation and teaching for the present crew that are here now, as I say, they may not be at all receptive, but you still have to try, because you won't get anywhere unless it's clearly articulated to them.' (Congr1)

Another member of the congregation talked about the provision of learning opportunities and was wary of relying on distance learning options because:

'I'm in two minds about online things. You know that the request always comes. Will this be available online? And it makes you think that people think oh, why would I join if I could do it from home? You think if they're not living that far from the venue, why couldn't they just come and be part of it?' (Congr3)

The same respondent noted how much value theological students gained from experiencing the building and its worship face-to-face.

'Allowing theological students to be in there more, because I think it gives them an experience which they can't possibly have in the chapel, and it isn't unlike what most of them are used to.' (Congr3)

Those in leadership recognised the importance of modelling a fluid form of ministry as part of the witness of faith.

'What I am building here is where the Dean doesn't become indispensable, we create a system that perpetuates itself and is organic and moves itself without personality. I thrive on team. It is saying to the congregation, it is not about celebrity it is about all of us.' (Lead1)

'There is a new monasticism here and it is worth not losing that. The fluidity of ministry and belonging is a form of monasticism.' (Lead2)

This same concern with partnership in ministry and outreach was very apparent in the openness of some nearby parish incumbents to consider dialogue and exploration about possible future projects.

‘There's a scope for shared outreach projects, I would say. You know, between us shared resources, to go in and do projects together. I'm not quite sure what those projects would be. But actually, if in the fullness of time, we all sat down and saw if there was something that floats all our boats, why not get going with it? That could be something interesting.... for example, like I talk with the Pioneer Ministry people, you know, because outreach and mission is our common life. I'm all for pooling and going in together, because the more we pull together the less burdensome it is for an individual parish. I think there's probably opportunities for thinking in terms of city ministry beyond our silos, you know, and that's something that maybe we could all develop as the city centre changes.’ (Dio3)

‘I'm always open. So, if you're looking for a one word answer it's ‘yes’. I suppose the curiosity part as well. What if it's not gathered worship, if it's not sacramental but is about impacting the thousands of lives that exist. Live, breathe, work, sleep around the cathedral. Well, yes, absolutely 100%. Of course. You know, it would have to be different. You know all this stuff, it requires real leadership, I think, and commitment and resources. So, it's great wanting something and being open to a conversation happening, but we have to get to a point where you need to say, okay, we're going to follow through on these things. Partnerships and collaboration are hard. That's why very, very few people do it’. (Dio2)

What was clear from the responses by clergy in nearby parishes about any potential for shared projects was a focus on mission as outreach, mission as something that in the words of one of them could ‘impact the thousands of lives that exist’ in the city centre. Interestingly, most respondents within the cathedral community understood witness as part of the cathedral’s mission to mean social action. One of the canons expressed the view that the city centre is crying out for an outreach presence to compliment a worship witness.

‘We just need to have that very active and living worship, presence and outreach presence in the City Centre. Christ Church is an ideal location for that’. (Canon2)

Two respondents commented positively about previous social action projects in the cathedral:

‘I felt as a city centre church, the work that [a previous Dean’s Vicar] did, the people that she brought to the space with that innovative way of drawing people in or welcoming them or inviting them, and it's energizing and refreshing’. (Staff2)

‘When [Dean’s Vicar] was there, a couple of times I participated in just assembling things, gift packages, and donations for refugees. So that was a nice thing to do a few times with her, and since then I've not done anything like that. I would like to do

something like that, those things were nice opportunities that didn't require a lot of time, were fun to do and I felt like I was able to contribute.' (Congr2)

One respondent expressed a concern that the cathedral's intention to be a Christian witness in the heart of the city was worthy but that it needed to revive more of this practical focus:

'There was outreach work done with disadvantaged people and that was great but doesn't seem to have produced any impetus to go further forward.... The archbishop when he celebrates does this kind of summing up and I thought gosh, this all sounds very lofty, in the heart of the city. And I said yeah that's a very worthy aspiration, but is it really happening?' (Congr1)

Another respondent noted the potential for building community through the holding different kinds of civic services in the cathedral to which people who are not usually part of the Christ Church cathedral congregation would be invited:

'In the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York they have an annual blessing of the bikes. It's an ecological initiative in the sense that it's to encourage people to use sustainable transport. It's also in memory of any cyclists who have been killed during the year, and the people actually bring their bikes into the cathedral to be blessed. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to happen here?' (Vol2)

Another example of creating community also came from the United States. One staff member talked about a conversation she had with a Dean of an American city cathedral. He had told her about his congregation in his cathedral. This involved a range of young city dwellers who met in the mornings with him:

'The congregation do daily Yoga with [the Dean]. They were all city dwellers, young people, different demographic, of course, but you know he told me that they had a coffee shop. It was yoga and it was a community for the apartment people.' (Staff2)

3.6 Welfare

The first three themes of Worship, Welcome and Witness that emerged from the interview data matched the three themes in the cathedral's expressed mission and values statement. However, two further and related themes that emerged from the interview data had not featured in the formal statement of the cathedral's mission. The first of these is welfare and it was concerned with the wellbeing of members of the congregation, members of staff and members of the wider community.

The type of support being offered to people was confidential and discreet but was clearly of real importance to different respondents who noted this:

‘Welfare of people is important there. They have done more than enough, not just for me or my family but for people who we know. We have a couple of friends that even before we started worshipping they mentioned Christ Church Cathedral helping them.’ (Staff1)

‘I reached out to Christchurch, looking for some support for something I was going through shortly after I arrived in Dublin. I've had talks with [the Dean] about things that have been on my mind, so in that way he has certainly offered me support for which I'm grateful. After I made contact with the Dean then I just felt like attending.’ (Congr2)

One of the staff explained that this commitment to the welfare of each reflected the Christian ethos of the cathedral itself and its community:

‘It’s the lived ethos, how we do our business, Christian values. It’s what retains staff. It’s how I attempt to go about my day here. (Staff2)

‘It is just improving by the day because, starting from the Dean down to the least stuff, everybody’s goal is to see that his or her colleague is well attended to, both physically, spiritually. The Dean, you always see that fatherly care in him’ (Staff1)

One of the leaders indicated that:

‘I do feel genuine support behind me’. (Lead1)

This comment was mirrored in the concern other staff members had for all those carrying heavy workloads and the shared commitment to the cathedral and to the team.

‘One person cannot carry all the work of the cathedral, the type of thinking and its implementation’. (Staff2)

‘There’s a lot of people who go the extra mile because it serves a good purpose. It’s a good bunch to work with. The staff and the volunteers’. (Staff3)

It was also mirrored in the concern one staff member had for the older members of the core congregation, saying:

‘The amount of people that come on a regular basis, apart from you know, religious services, most of the people that come here will be the regulars and a lot of them are elderly. I think they should have trips for them to go on, classes upstairs.’ (Staff3)

3.7 Wellbeing

The final theme that emerged from the interview data was that of wellbeing – the wellbeing of the cathedral itself through an achievement of proper balance between sacred and secular, along with the wellbeing of its community now and into the future. This also emerged as an issue for canons who needed to balance their own wellbeing through the avoidance of over-commitment while at the same time sincerely wishing to do more for the wellbeing of the cathedral and its mission.

Staff expressed strong commitment to the cathedral:

For the place to thrive, everyone has to be going in the same direction, to feel part of it, to have ownership of it. There's a reason I don't work for Diageo, or the Weston Hotel. I like to think that the revenue that's generated through my work supports something that's a little bit more important. But you know that's actually something meaningful as well as the music and the preservation of this building. But there's a reason people come to work to places like this, and a reason they stay.’ (Staff2)

That staff commitment to the many facets of the life and activity of the cathedral meant that they are highly sensitive to things that could support or threaten its wellbeing, now or in the future. They expressed a clear awareness of the need to ensure that the balance between the sacred and the secular is carefully maintained.

‘You know, for me there's almost this discrepancy between the activities that bring in the money and the primary purposes of the building.’ (Staff2)

‘I know they need the money everybody needs, but sometimes the schedule between these events, the corporate and services is too tight. There's a fine line and on one of these days it will go wrong. You get away with it most of the time, but sometimes it's too close’ (Staff3)

One of the canons expressed that same concern for ensuring the delicate balance is maintained:

‘There's a danger that Christ Church ends up being a tourist venue and that this aspect is flourishing and blossoming and allowing for all the other roles to be sustained. I think it's about keeping the right kind of calibration in terms of where all

the energy goes. It's not losing sight of that overall statement of purpose – the advancement of religion.' (Canon1)

One of the longer standing members of the congregation pointed out the important role played by the Cathedral Friends in supporting many of its sacred activities. Congr4 explained how the Friends support the cathedral in many ways. They have taken responsibility for the care of many of the monuments, they funded the new chairs. The Friends also create a core group of weekly attenders for the cathedral, who know and support each other. They organise trips together and still fund the tea/coffee after services. This respondent saw their contribution as significant in supporting the wellbeing of the mission of the cathedral. However, the reduced numbers of the Friends was a concern for this respondent who noted that efforts to get new members for that body was a very important consideration. This same respondent also praised the increasing diversity of the typical Sunday congregation, so the concern was about maintaining the right balance.

There were concerns expressed by staff and congregation about the aging of and decrease in numbers of both the Friends of the Cathedral and the core congregation.

'What if, in 20 years' time, there's no Sunday morning service because nobody comes? The hope is that we will find people and they come to the cathedral, they call the cathedral their home, if they like the kind of liturgy that we offer.'

This staff member, along with others, was engaged in a variety of outreach activities with a view to growing the core congregation both for Sunday mornings and for weekday services. A staff member also said, in recognition of the cathedral's ability to operate without a huge number of supports: 'we don't need a whole team of residential canons. We need a general re-focus on what we can do, what we can achieve. We shouldn't just be organising the millennium celebrations for ourselves, emphasising the need to look beyond our own existing community as well as supporting it. One of the canons also expressed an interest in congregation numbers and asked: 'I don't know how do cathedrals go about drawing people in? Does it just happen or is there a strategy?'

Each of the four canons who were interviewed noted the relatively limited nature of their contributions. They typically preach twice a year, may do additional duties during their week of residence if available. Some are elected by the Chapter on to the Board for periods of three years. One of the canons explained:

'It can be a very peripheral attachment if you choose it to be. You've got two Sundays that you're in canonical residence, and if you choose to do the add on during the week or whatever. We talked about how, even from a logistical point of view, it can be difficult to get cover now on a Sunday when you're preaching. We came up with

this plan that the Dean would support and come out and actually do a swap, which I think would be very good. This would allow the Dean to invite parishioners to visit the cathedral, make the link. Obviously, there is a status there’.

Each separately indicated a keenness to be able to contribute more while also noting their level of busyness in their own parishes and with other church commitments. One said: ‘I need to be careful not to over-commit myself’. Another explained that parishioners do not understand canonical duties in the cathedral and can complain and humorously explained: ‘It’s the practicality of God only giving us 24 hours in a day.’

Each of them viewed the role of canon as potentially offering a wealth of resources and expertise to the cathedral. One said: ‘maybe the cathedral ought to lean more heavily on the Chapter’. Another, who is an ecumenical canon, suggested:

‘The ecumenical canons might contribute in a different way, perhaps, to canons. I suppose I normally have an inclusive form of preaching, so I would normally not refer to the denomination I come from. But maybe there's something to think about in the future. Is there some way which a Presbyterian or a Methodist or a Roman Catholic, could be kind of a bridge person between their own tradition and the Anglican tradition? How can we help those who worship in the cathedral, and those who come as visitors to have a sense that there is a universal body of Christ? You have the followers of Jesus, a kind of spiritual community, but it has different historical expressions. There have been divisions along the way, and how can we have a sense of how the various traditions complement each other’.

There was also a sense that some longer-serving canons may find it hard to retain commitment and enthusiasm. One, who was very keen that there be dedicated youth ministry in the cathedral, said:

‘Some of the canons seem to be passing time treading water. They go because they have to. Now that probably will change. There is a good group of young able clergy coming in, youthful enough that they can stand for an hour and a half and talk to kids..... the youth thing is really important. It gives them something to identify with. Youth officers are brilliant, but in terms of my cathedral, I’d rather than somebody in-house than relying on the youth department because they can’t be everywhere.’

It is worth pointing out that, despite the concerns about balancing activities, the time pressures on everyone, despite operating on very limited resources, the Cathedral’s commitment and that of its staff and volunteers, to high quality and to welcome was ‘second to none’ (Congr4).

3.8 Summary of findings: the lived and experienced mission and values of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin

This chapter analysed the understandings and experiences of the mission of Christ Church Cathedral reported by the 19 interview respondents. That cohort included a range of voices from within the cathedral community as well as a small number of participants who were much less closely connected to the cathedral. Their responses reflected their lived experiences of the mission and values of the cathedral, as well as outlining their own participation in the expression and evolution of that mission. The responses also reflected their care and concern for the cathedral, as an institution and as a community. The summary that follows is organised under the five thematic headings that emerged from the analysis of the interview data – the 5Ws of Worship, Welcome, Witness, Welfare and Wellbeing.

WORSHIP

There was a strong correlation between the written / intended and the lived / experienced mission and values under this first thematic heading. Respondents had a very strong sense of the importance of liturgical and musical excellence in worship of almighty God as a core value and expression of the mission of the Cathedral. They praised the regular pattern of worship as well as the provision of occasional services for the United Dioceses. They made some recommendations for and asked some questions about aspects of worship, including the potential for diversification of content or style, encouraging greater participation and re-ordering of aspects of the space and potential future use of St. Werburg's Church.

WELCOME

There was also a strong correlation between the written / intended and the lived / experienced mission and values under this second thematic heading. Respondents were very proud of the welcome that the cathedral gives to all who attend. Members of the staff and congregation explained their own commitments and actions to give practical expression to that welcome. They expressed hopes and made suggestions about ways to increase the numbers of people who became repeat visitors or regular attenders. This was a core imperative for some of the respondents who believed that without ensuring that repeat footfall, the core mission of the cathedral would be endangered. There was also consideration given so that people from the United Dioceses could be encouraged to come more often but in partnership rather than competition with parishes.

WITNESS

This was the first theme where there were noticeable divergences between the written / intended mission and values and those that were lived and experienced by the respondents. The intended mission and values statement was partly focused on faith-based learning and this was reflected in comments made by one of the respondents. However, the majority of the respondents, both within and beyond the cathedral community, understood 'witness'

primarily in terms of evangelism and social action. They understood witness through a Gospel lens of care for the marginalised and for a few it was also outreach to those who have yet to know God. The incumbents of two nearby parishes shared those understandings of mission. Both recognised the limited resources that parishes and the cathedral have for such activity. They indicated a willingness to engage in dialogue about possible future partnerships for mission-based outreach and response to the city around us with a view to accessing funding and resources, e.g. through Pioneer activities.

WELFARE

There were also noticeable divergences between the written / intended mission and values and those expressed by the interview respondents. The focus on welfare is an interesting one because it was clear from the responses that a ministry of care for the welfare of others is a core value and activity of the cathedral but perhaps because of the confidential nature of such pastoral support it has not been included in the formal expression of those values. Care for each other was a core part of their lived values for both staff and congregation.

WELLBEING

This final theme emergent from the interview data was also a divergence from the written / intended mission and values. It was clear that the focus on the wellbeing of the cathedral and its community, both now and in the future as a foundation stone for the enactment of the cathedral's mission was a core concern for the respondents. They were concerned with ensuring a balance between secular and sacred activities so that the former did not accidentally overshadow the latter, given that the sacred is core to the mission. They were concerned with the wellbeing of the cathedral worshipping community both now and into the future, recognising that the nurturing of the wellbeing of people who remain connected long enough to contribute to activity and resources is an essential foundation for that wellbeing. Canons were concerned both for the wellbeing of the cathedral and their own wellbeing in terms of trying to balance commitments to their parishes, their other diocesan / wider church commitments and the cathedral.

Chapter 4 – Analysis using the Five Marks of Mission and Final Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the findings presented in chapter 3 in light of the five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion. The five marks provide a very useful framework for evaluating whether any activity or initiative can be described as Anglican and for guiding recommendations. The chapter first presents some information about the five marks of mission. It then goes on to consider recommendations arising out of the findings in light of the five marks.

4.2 The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion

In 1984, the Anglican Consultative Council developed a mission statement for the global Anglican Communion,² subsequently amended to address ecological concerns a few years later. The five marks are presented as follows on the website of the Anglican Communion (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>):

‘The mission of the church is the mission of Christ:

1. TELL - To **proclaim the good news** of the Kingdom
2. TEACH - To **teach, baptise and nurture** new believers
3. TEND - To **respond to human need** by loving service
4. TRANSFORM - To **seek to transform unjust structures** of society
5. TREASURE - To strive to **safeguard the integrity of creation** and to sustain the life of the earth’.

The five marks have been adopted by provinces, dioceses and parishes around the global Anglican Communion as a way of holistically expressing the focus and commitments of the discipleship of the church and its membership as well as its commitments to engaging with the wider world and contributing to the public square. Hodgson (2011) notes that the five marks have the advantage of being easily understood by people regardless of age or background and she also states that the framework has become equally popular with other Christian denominations.

Jefferts Schori (2012) argues that mission is about more than proclaiming the Gospel; rather it is also how Christians live as citizens in the world, how they engage with those around them.

² The Anglican Communion is the name given to the collective of regional Anglican churches across the world that are in full communion with one another, through holding similar doctrine, order / structure and forms of worship. The Anglican Communion was established in this form at the Lambeth Conference in 1867. These churches are independent of one another, they are not centrally governed. All consider themselves to be both reformed and Catholic, but represent a broad range of values, styles of worship, interpretations of scripture and traditions.

In this context, the five marks of mission offer a framework for how Christians engage with the world around them, including with those of other beliefs or no religious beliefs. They also serve as an invitation to those outside the Anglican community to engage in partnership in the activities of care or social action by all who share human citizenship. According to Zink (2017), one of the strengths of the five marks as a framework is that their existence has enabled cross-cultural and ecumenical dialogue and provided a means of achieving consensus among different groups of Christians amid differences of opinion and focus of doctrine. The dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough used the five marks as a framework to support a discipleship development programme from 2014 until 2018 (Tuohy & Feeney 2019).

Walker (2011) argues that the five marks can provide a framework of invitation. He outlines how they can help to guide people within the Church so that they can identify engagement and action that can act as ways of including those on the margins of church (or those outside traditional church) to participate in the broadly defined social mission of the church. Walker (2011) shows how the practical action orientation of the five marks potentially enables those of faith to reach out beyond their own church walls to those on the margins or beyond, and to work in equal partnership with those outside of church. This is possible because the five marks show the shared concerns of church and wider society for ecology, social justice, personal development and flourishing across generations - the universal need to care and be cared for. This highlights a way of both growing a church's outreach and witnessing to its Christian mission in a public way.

4.3 Evaluation of Christ Church Cathedral's Community Definition of Mission using the Five Marks of Mission

According to one of the canons interviewed, 'Christ Church, like anywhere that is carrying the brand 'Anglican', is not going to carry this forward in ways that don't fit with the five marks of mission'.

The five marks offer Anglicans a framework to analyze our own beliefs and practices and to proof the ways in which we seek to share and communicate those beliefs and practices with those who enter our sacred spaces whether through a sacred or a secular entrance portal. It also gives us a framework to examine how we engage with the public square in partnership with our fellow Christians as well as with those of other faiths and of no religion (Lodge 2018). The table overleaf is adapted from Lodge (2018) as an evaluation tool for consideration of how the cathedral's mission and values (both intended and experienced) map against the five marks of mission.

Table 4.1 Evaluation Tool: the cathedral's mission themes / the five marks of mission

I = Intended; E = Experienced; (E) = experienced in the past

| 5 marks of mission | Tell | Teach | Tend | Transform | Treasure |
|--------------------|------|-------|------|-----------|----------|
| Cathedral mission | | | | | |
| Worship | I E | I | | | |
| Welcome | | | I E | | |
| Witness | I | I | I E | (E) | |
| Welfare | | | E | | |
| Well-being | | | E | | E |

Based on an analysis of the responses to the interviews and an analysis of the written policy material about mission and values it would appear that the cathedral emphasises the first three marks of mission in particular. This is particularly true of the focus of the written or intended mission and values. It was also clear that the experienced mission and values were actually broader than was captured by the written policy material. The benefit of the evaluation tool is first, that it enables the cathedral to test its expressed mission and values against the five marks of mission and second, it may provide a useful support for devising future expression of mission and values. It may, for example, allow a focus on those areas like 'Treasure' and 'Transform' that are less apparent at present in the written / intended statement of mission and values.

4.4 Recommendations

Recommendation A: that members of the cathedral community use this Report's content as a springboard for creative conversations about the intended and experienced mission and values of Christ Church Cathedral, to allow them to share perspectives, identify concerns and hopes and formulate plans for development. One of the respondents who is in a nearby parish said the following about such times of prayerful reflection, listening and engagement and it is worth reflecting on this advice:

'I think we go in those cycles and those circles of coming in and out of forgetting and remembering. I think that's a Biblical pattern, being called to be people in the world. But inevitably you get to a point where we say, Lord, we've forgotten this, but you are the hope of the world. Actually identifying with Jesus in a really powerful kind of a way can guide us. I just feel that maybe it's in listening and thinking about the kingdom in creative and sustainable ways that we give expression to faith.' (Dio2)

The five marks of mission are used as a way of arranging specific recommendations below. According to Lead2, the five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion can be used to affirm the work that we do within the cathedral as well as helping us to focus our planning

within their broad framework. They give agency to equip people for their work to further the mission of the cathedral, which ultimately is the mission of God in the world.

(i) Tell – communicating the cathedral’s mission to promote the Christian faith

Respondents felt that the cathedral’s mission needed to be more familiar to those beyond the cathedral community, both those in the parishes in the United Dioceses and those who are outside the traditional Church of Ireland community. Many respondents had high praise for the increasing diversity of the congregations but noted the transience of many of those who attended. However, they wanted a balance in terms of visitors, transient attenders and those with a longer term commitment. In order to achieve this balance, they suggested that the cathedral should improve the ways that it reaches out and communicates its mission to the whole community.

Recommendation B: Produce a short quarterly Newsletter for sending out electronically to parishes, the United Dioceses, sister cathedrals and other bodies and individuals giving summary news of things that have taken place and advertising upcoming events and emphasising the cathedral’s mission in practical terms and in accessible language

Recommendation C: Establish a small working group to report to the Dean consisting of two Canons and two staff members to explore and make recommendations for improved communication both within the cathedral community and beyond. This can also make recommendations about communicating with canons, volunteers and others. In the words of Canon2, ‘communication is always good for new people’.

(ii) Teach – Christian faith education in and through the cathedral

Respondents felt that the cathedral’s mission to teach the Christian faith applied not only to the cathedral community itself but to the United Dioceses and the community beyond. Suggestions were made about the provision of learning opportunities as well as the development of materials. It was noted by one respondent that perhaps the cathedral could draw on the expertise in the Chapter to develop its own materials or that it could wait for materials for adult faith education to be produced centrally either by the Anglican Communion, or by the Church of Ireland. Faith education opportunities can also take the form of talks or lecture series at key times of the year, e.g. Advent or Lent. Lead1 said ‘we need to develop our lecture series. We need more teaching on various particular subjects peculiar to Anglicanism’.

Recommendation D – continue with the Lent and Advent themed preaching series administered by the Priest Scholar. Explore ways, with permission of the preachers, to record the sermons and share them on the cathedral’s website or to create an annual electronic publication of those sermons with some commentary

Recommendation E - Establish a small working group lead by the Priest Scholar to report to the Dean to explore and make recommendations to address adult faith education in the cathedral and in partnership with other institutions, considering content, modes of delivery and target audience

(iii) Tend – exercising a duty of care within and beyond the Cathedral community

It became clear that the experienced mission and values of the cathedral deeply value care of one another by staff, volunteers and congregation, as well as there being a ministry to offer welfare and care to any who approach the cathedral in need. However, the reality of this expressed value and ministry is not captured in the current iteration of the cathedral's mission and values statement.

Recommendation F – revisit the written statement of mission and values to capture the reality of the care that is a characteristic of the cathedral's ministry and of its relationships between staff members, volunteers, congregation and the wider community. The ministry of care apparent in the different relationships and lived ethos in the cathedral should be recognised and affirmed

(iv) Transform – engaging in social action reflecting Gospel values through participation in shared, resourced projects

It was clear that many of the respondents understood witness to mean social action and transformation. The cathedral had been involved in a number of such activities, mainly organised internally, in the past. However, it was also clear that the cathedral has a very small staff and that its ministerial resources are stretched so that creative ways of encouraging social action and outreach are needed. Lead1 explained: 'we are tied in with Church St and Br Kevin, but what's important is our engagement with decency. Once we become tied in with them, when we establish a firm link with them, we become the cathedral in the city, they enable us to go beyond the gates. When we establish a firm link with them it opens up more possibility for us to become involved in more areas'.

Most respondents were clearly aware of the limited resources that the cathedral could draw on to support all these kinds of mission and witness activities if they had to be organized internally. Lead2 stated that an over-emphasis on 'activity could be the finish of us. We can't actually become a place where we do everything that is required in the justice area, but we can pick up things and affirm them'. The willingness of nearby parishes to engage in dialogue to address witness through evangelization and transformation in order to consider resourced projects e.g. through Pioneer ministry or other funding sources is also a very important consideration.

Recommendation G – a dialogue be opened with nearby parishes who have shared interests in outreach and witness with a view to exploring in partnership what might be co-constructed and how such a project(s) could be funded and resourced by central church or other agencies.

Recommendation H – the dialogue and planning with Church St and Br Kevin continue and be affirmed

(v) *Treasure – caring for the built and natural environment of the cathedral and its environs; tending its congregation*

It was evident from the comments of the respondents that there is great care for, and pride in the beauty of the heritage buildings of the cathedral. There was praise for the labyrinth as a social and public space. There was very little mention of the environment and sustainability and this is an area of huge importance to many people within the Church of Ireland and in Irish society in general. Such shared interest may provide opportunities, outreach and engagement with Anglicans, with those of other faiths and those of no professed faith like the type of activity Walker (2011) described.

Recommendation I – that the planned committee on sustainability begin its work and give regular updates which can feed into policy and practice. This committee might consider how sustainability can feed into the cathedral's outreach and broader engagement including through the provision of occasional worship events. It might also consider expanding the numbers of hives and other simple responses to the needs of the natural environment in the cathedral grounds

Recommendation J – that conversations be enabled between people internal to the Cathedral community and beyond with an interest and expertise in both internal re-ordering of the cathedral space (e.g. the baptistry) and for planning for the future use of St. Werburg's as a space for innovative and creative liturgy and worship

4.5 *Concluding comments*

As noted in Chapter 1, Osborne (2016: 715) argues that 'cathedrals are seen as beacons of confident, open Christianity through exceptional worship and outreach'. It was argued that this public visibility has the potential to enable cathedrals to lay the groundwork for that mission (Morisy 2006). Cathedrals straddle sacred and secular functions, and this can both give rise to tension but also be the irritant that creates a pearl. The interviews with the 19 participants in this study clearly demonstrate an awareness of the multiple roles of Christ Church Cathedral as well as the tensions between those roles.

Irish Anglicanism is a minority Christian denomination in Ireland. On 29th May 2023 the Central Statistics Office released the latest census figures showing that the Church of Ireland

has held its own at 2% of the population. This means that high profile, public facing places of worship like Christ Church Cathedral have work to do to ensure that their Christian mission in the world is understood by all who come in contact with us and that we continue to be an invitational space, and a caring place, that reaches out to welcome all who wish to enter our doors in the hopes that they may be touched by the spiritual beauty of what we offer.

The cathedral will celebrate a millennium in existence as a sacred place of worship in Dublin city in 2030. It is worth looking back over its early history in particular to find inspiration for how the cathedral serves and loves God and neighbour in the heart of the city. A key source of inspiration for that lived and experienced mission can be found in the cathedral itself – the heart of St. Laurence O'Toole. As outlined in Chapter 1, Laurence lived in community with the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. They sang the daily offices together. He and they served and cared for the poor of the city. They were involved in education and music. Through our own efforts or our supports and affirmation for partnerships with neighbouring faith communities we can continue to follow the example of St. Laurence O'Toole in our intended and experienced mission as well as refining a model for communicating that mission to our own community and beyond.

I leave the final word with one of our respondents who said: 'if we want to be a Gospel place, it's going to look like the life of Jesus. It's going to look like a presence with the poor. It's going to look like healing services'. (Dio2) St. Laurence O'Toole was someone who created the cathedral as a Gospel place. We could do worse than reflect on his legacy and mission as we reflect on our own contribution to the ongoing story of this Gospel place, Christ Church Cathedral Dublin.



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‘One thing I asked of the Lord, that I will seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple’ Psalm 27: 4

