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Anglican cathedrals as ‘Episcopal Centres of Learning’?

A survey of current educational provision

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Abstract

Metaphors were introduced to the science of cathedral studies by Muskett in her book, *Shop window, flagship, common ground*. Such metaphors have power to inform and shape the perception of cathedrals, but lack theological or ecclesial authority. Gary Hall's analysis of *The purpose of cathedrals* offers a different approach to cathedral metaphors when he roots the purpose of cathedrals in the episcopal ordinal: cathedrals are mandated to do what bishops are called to be, by virtue of displaying the activities of the bishop's *cathedra*. Central to these activities, exemplifying the bishop's role as teacher, cathedrals serve as *Episcopal centres of learning*. Drawing on a careful analysis of information presented by the websites of the 43 Anglican cathedrals within England and the Isle of Man, the current study demonstrated that, like Anglican church schools, as Episcopal centres of learning, Anglican cathedrals offer educational provision that exemplifies a theology of nurture (concerned with the formation of Christian disciples) and educational provision that exemplifies a theology of service (concerned with supporting and serving the wider community).

Keywords: cathedral studies, websites, metaphors, church schools, nurture, service

Introduction

Metaphors play an important part in theological studies and in biblical studies (Soskice, 1985; Marshall, 2015; Lookadoo, 2022). Metaphors were introduced to the science of cathedral studies by Muskett (2019) in her recent book, *Shop window, flagship, common ground*. Here Muskett draws attention to the diversity of metaphors that have been employed to illustrate the capacity and potential of Anglican cathedrals. For Muskett, metaphors have the power not only to inform but to shape the perception and the reality of mission and ministry exemplified by these cathedrals.

Exploring metaphors

In her analysis, Muskett (2019) privileges five metaphors for special attention. Her first metaphor draws on the ‘shop-window’ image. This image was brought to prominence by the Archbishops’ Commission on Cathedrals (1994), claiming that ‘Cathedrals are shop-windows of the Church of England’ (p. 17). This image had been used previously by Edwards (1989, p. 39) in his illustrated guide to British cathedrals. Muskett’s second metaphor draws on the ‘flagship’ image. This image was brought into prominence by the title of the collection of essays edited by Platten and Lewis (1998), *Flagships of the spirit: Cathedrals in society*. For Platten and Lewis, the image of flagships captures the notion that cathedrals are ‘seen as significant by people of any Christian Church or none’ and expresses the ‘loyalty of people to their city, county or region’ (p. xii).

Muskett’s third metaphor draws on the ‘beacon’ image. This image was used by Richmond-Tulloch (2013) who argued that ‘cathedrals could become beacons for the gospel across our land’ (p. 97). Then Osborne (2016) suggested that, in contrast with declining attendance at churches, cathedrals were emerging as ‘beacons of confident, open Christianity making a difference through exceptional worship and outreach’ (p. 715). Muskett’s fourth metaphor draws on the ‘magnet’ image. This image was brought into prominence by Platten

(2006) in his introduction to the edited collection of essays in *Dreaming spires? Cathedrals in a new age* (Platten & Lewis, 2006). For Platten (2006) ‘the explosion of tourism has made cathedrals into magnets’ (p. 2). Later Jenkins (2016) wrote of cathedrals becoming ‘economic magnets, bringing prosperity to their host towns’.

Muskett’s fifth metaphor is more complex and draws into conversation two images ‘sacred space’ and ‘common ground’. Muskett (2019) argues that the collision of these two images had been ‘employed to capture the vocation of churches and cathedrals to be both a spiritual and community utility’ (p. 86). Muskett points to the use of this compound image by Percy (2015) in relation to Christ Church Oxford:

Cathedrals are sacred spaces and common ground. Cathedrals stand as signs of God’s love and grace in the midst of a distracted world. They provide serious spaces and places for prayer and contemplation in a busy world. Cathedrals meet, greet and minister to every visitor, and enable every casual wanderer to take those first steps to becoming an intentional, seeking pilgrim. (p. 7)

Attention is also drawn to the use of this compound image within Truro Cathedral. Barley (2015) explains how Truro Cathedral focused on ‘sacred space and common ground’ to establish itself as ‘a place where people of all backgrounds can come together to experience sacred space in their lives’ (p. 409).

In addition to these five metaphors privileged for special attention, Muskett (2019) also notes the following positive metaphors: ‘gracious courts, where all may roam freely’ (Platten, 2017a, p.3); ‘nurseries ... of liturgical theology and practice’ (Platten, 2017b, p. 19); ‘a carnival in stone’ (Gorringe, 2002, p. 230); ‘a hidden treasure’ (Buckler, 2009); ‘a pump house for preaching’ (Zahl, 1999, p. 500); ‘oases of delight’ (Dorber, 2017); ‘engines for the transformation of the inner life’ (Walker, 1998, p. 115); ‘bright stars radiating light’ (Somerville, 2019, p. 281); ‘religious railway stations’, implying that ‘all sorts of people turn

up to services with different destinations in mind' (Rylands, 2006, p. 129); 'the beating heart' of the city (O'Brien, 2019).

Muskett (2019) also recognises that cathedrals have been the subject of what she describes as 'unflattering metaphors' (pp. 36-38). Here she cites the following images: 'no more than a great stone mountain in their midst' as seen through the eyes of the poor in *The dean's watch* (Goudge, 1960, p. 306); 'Dead places of a forgotten king' (Walpole, 1934, p. v); 'moribund white elephants collapsing in on themselves' (Platten, 2006, p. 2); 'a great white elephant which feeds on the souls of man' as voiced by Charles Raven, when Canon of Ely (Beeson, 2006, p. 149); 'a sleeping giant on the hill' as voiced by Alec Knight when Dean of Lincoln (Peat, 2003); 'dinosaurs', as carrying 'the strong implication that they were excessively large and increasingly useless' (Davie, 2012, p. 486); 'badly kept museums' (Underhill, 1936, p. 335); 'insects trapped in amber' (Hoyle, 2017, pp. 60-61); 'an albatross' (Pepinster, 2017); and 'a mausoleum, a music hall, a "must" for tourists' (Stancliffe, 1970, pp. 51-52).

Episcopal cathedra

While Muskett's (2019) five privileged metaphors offer rich resource for inspiring creative reflection on the nature of Anglican cathedrals, what they lack is clear theological or ecclesiological rationale or authority for their implementation. Finding a very different starting point for his exploration of Anglican cathedrals, Gary Hall (2014), sometime Dean of Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC, addresses the question, 'What is the purpose of a cathedral?' (p. 727), or 'What are cathedrals for?' (p. 728), or 'What, specifically are *cathedral* churches for?' (p. 729).

Responding to this question, Hall promotes the episcopal chair as an ecclesial metaphor for Anglican cathedrals. Hall's argument is that cathedrals derive their very name from being the special location of the bishop's chair (*cathedra*). Cathedrals are places that

locate and focus the ministry of their bishop. In that sense, cathedrals are uniquely episcopal and, if cathedrals are uniquely episcopal, their ministries should exemplify the salient characteristics of a bishop's ministry. In other words, cathedrals are mandated to do what bishops are called to be.

In developing and applying this metaphor, the first strength of Hall's study concerns the way in which he recognises that Anglican theology and Anglican ecclesiology characteristically start with the consideration of liturgical texts. In other words, to understand what a cathedral is for, it is first necessary to understand what a bishop is called to be. Then to understand what a bishop is called to be, it is necessary to examine the ordinal, the form of ordaining or consecrating of a bishop.

In developing and applying this metaphor, the second strength of Hall's study concerns the way in which he analyses the episcopal ordinal for The Anglican Church of Canada (1985) and the episcopal ordinal for The Episcopal Church, USA (1979) to uncover what the Anglican Church has to say about the identity and ministry of a bishop. In so doing he identified seven salient characteristics. The ministry of a bishop, and by implication the ministry of a cathedral, is:

- apostolic: being called alongside the apostles;
- prophetic: proclaiming Christ's resurrection and interpreting the Gospel;
- teaching: guarding the faith, unity, and discipline of the church;
- prayerful: celebrating and providing for the administration of the sacraments;
- pastoral: being in all things a faithful pastor and a wholesome example;
- just: being merciful to all, showing compassion to the poor and strangers, and defending those who have no helper;
- empowering: encouraging and supporting all baptized people in their gifts and ministries.

In developing and applying this metaphor, the third strength of Hall's study is the way in which he reflected on and discussed each of these seven salient characteristics within the specific context of cathedral ministry. For example, in terms of *justice*, he argued that cathedral ministry is qualitatively different from parochial ministry. Parish churches, he argued, sharing in the priestly ministry of their rectors, are by their nature providers of direct services: they serve the oppressed and marginalized in the local context. Cathedrals, however, sharing in the episcopal ministry of their bishop and reflecting their civic and public nature and their central locations, are well-placed to work in partnership with government and with nongovernmental organizations 'to advocate for justice at a systemic level' (p. 753). Cathedrals can engage in developing partnerships that may transform systems and go beyond ameliorative interventions.

Episcopal centres of learning

Each of Hall's seven salient characteristics is worth closer scrutiny, analysis, and development, but the focus of the present paper is specifically on the teaching role of bishops. For Hall, this role is captured both in his references to theology (the subject matter of episcopal teaching) and to the cathedra (the mode of episcopal teaching). In terms of the subject matter of teaching (theology), Hall (2014) recognises that historically Anglican cathedrals have been closely involved with the theological education of clergy in ways analogous to theological colleges or seminaries, but argues that today:

cathedrals might be less centres of clerical formation than expansive communities of discourse. Cathedrals can be places for the church and the world to do theological reflection on real world problems and events. (p. 733)

This is an expansive and engaging understanding of the bishop's teaching role as theologian. In terms of the mode of teaching (cathedra), Hall (2014) understands episcopal teaching as principally relational and dialogical.

The central piece of furniture in a cathedral church is not the pulpit. It is the bishop's chair. You speak *at* someone from a pulpit. You speak *with* someone from a chair. (p. 732)

The historic role of cathedrals in England and Wales sharing in the bishop's role of teaching, learning, and scholarship during the pre-Reformation period has been illuminated by studies focusing on specific areas, including the role of cathedral library and chapter in the fifteenth century (Lepine, 2002), the cathedral school up to 1540 (Bowers, 1994), the creative scholarship of the cathedral clergy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Reeves, 2002), and the role of cathedrals in the preparation of candidates for ordination between 1380 and 1548 (Orme, 1981). These studies have not only illustrated the well-established relationship between cathedrals and learning but also have cemented the historic reputation of the cathedral 'as an important educational agency, supplementing the work of schools and universities in training the clergy and even . . . generating literate laymen' (Orme, 1981, p. 282).

During the twentieth century the reports commissioned by the Church of England relating to Anglican cathedrals demonstrate a growing recognition of education as a significant part of the role and ministry of cathedrals. The Cathedrals' Commission Report (Church Assembly, 1927, p. 9) described the primary purpose of cathedrals as: 'to give continuous witness to the things unseen and eternal, and to offer continuous and reverent worship to Almighty God'. Later in the same section of the report, the contribution of cathedrals to religious art and 'religious learning' was referenced explicitly.

In the comprehensive review of Anglican cathedrals in England, published in 1994 by a Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, education is given a much more prominent position. The task assigned to the Commission was to examine 'the future role in the Church and nation of the Cathedrals of the Church of England and to make

recommendations as to how best that role could be fulfilled' (Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals, 1994, p. 1). Among the 'crucial purposes' of cathedrals are their concerns 'with education, and with service which attends to social need; they are centres of evangelism, presenting the gospel to many who would not otherwise recognize it, and they are places where witness to the presence of God in the world achieves great spiritual beauty' (p. 3). The future role of cathedrals in education is then expressed in more practical terms through two of the report's main recommendations in the area of education: first, cathedrals should be active in their contribution to 'Christian reflection about the whole process and direction of education' (p. 42); second, cathedrals should further enhance their work in 'developing links with schools and in relating other areas of education to the Christian faith' (p. 49).

An Anglican approach to education

In order to illuminate the educational role of Anglican cathedrals, Francis, Jones, and McKenna (2021) transferred to cathedrals a conceptual framework developed initially to illuminate the educational role of Anglican schools within the state-maintained system of education. They rooted their argument in the clear thinking of the Durham Report (1970) under the chairmanship of Bishop Ian Ramsey. In this report Ramsey crafted a clear philosophical distinction between the Church of England's twin objectives in maintaining church schools. The first objective was styled the Church's general aim of service to the nation. The second objective was styled the Church's domestic aim of service to the Church.

Reflecting on the Durham Report 20 years after its publication, in a paper entitled 'Theology of education', Francis (1990) suggested that those twin aims of the Church of England's involvement within the state-maintained system of education could be better nuanced within theological categories. Francis (1990) located the domestic aim identified by the Durham Report within a theology of nurture and recognised that this important function of church schools, engaging within the total mission of God's Church, was to do with the

formation of Christian lives. Working together with Christian households and local congregations, church schools played a part in discipleship learning (see Astley, 2015) and inherited the legacy of Jesus himself who shaped the twelve close disciples to walk in his footsteps.

Francis (1990) located the general aim identified by the Durham Report within a theology of service and recognised that this important function of church schools, again engaging within the total mission of God's Church, was to do with service to the wider community. Working together with other statutory and voluntary provision, church schools played a part within wider provision and inherited the legacy of Jesus himself whose heart went out to the crowd when he satisfied their hunger in the wilderness.

Francis, Jones, and McKenna (2021) argued that the theological work previously invested to clarify the nature of Anglican church schools can be extended to inform the theological rationale for the educational vision of Anglican cathedrals. Like church schools, Anglican cathedrals may be seen to embrace the twin commitments expressed through a theology of nurture (the formation of Christian disciples) and through a theology of service (supporting and serving the wider community). It is this conceptual framework that the present study employs to explore the rich diversity of provision that may characterise Anglican cathedrals as Episcopal Centres of Learning.

Research questions

Although education, teaching, and learning has been positioned at the heart of the ministry and mission of cathedrals, there is a lack of recent and relevant empirical research focused on this specific area. Against this background, the aim of the present study is to map the current activities relevant to the fields of education, teaching, and learning of the 43 Anglican cathedrals within England and the Isle of Man by a systematic search of their websites, building on earlier studies in this tradition within the field of cathedral studies reported by ap

Siôn and Edwards (2012), Edwards and ap Siôn (2015), Curtis (2016), Bondi and Sezzi (2021), and McKenna, Francis, and Stewart (2022). Given the wide range of activities that may count as relevant to the fields of education, teaching, and learning, the following review is excluding engagement with schools, a specialist field that will become the subject of a subsequent study. Specifically, this study has been designed to test two research questions. The first research question tests the extent to which Anglican cathedrals present themselves as Episcopal centres of learning. The second research question tests whether, like Anglican church schools, Anglican cathedrals display the twin commitments expressed through a theology of nurture (the formation of Christian disciples) and through a theology of service (supporting and serving the wider community).

Method

The study used content analysis of the information provided on the websites of the 43 Anglican cathedrals located in England and the Isle of Man to map the variety of educational provision hosted within the cathedral space. The specific focus of the study was restricted to the range of educational provision provided outside and additional to that provided to engage schools. Data were collected throughout April 2022. Website pages selected for analysis were those that had a home page navigation heading using some combination of 'Education', 'Learning', or 'Education and Learning'. Nine cathedrals had no immediately visible education or learning heading. For these cathedrals other navigation headings were scanned and educational material located within other sections of the website was captured ('About Us', 'Visits', and 'Discover'). Information was located and saved into a separate Word document. This information consisted of: the website uniform resource locator (url) for each page where material was sited, the educational activity supported by a short description, the type of activity (tour, workshop, lecture, study group, course, etc), for whom the activity was

designed (children, young people, adults), together with the capture of any linked or downloadable learning material or resources.

The analysis was done on a thematic basis (reading, re-reading, categorising, and grouping) that allowed comparison of educational activity and provision across multiple cathedrals. At the first stage, the range of educational activity within each cathedral was noted, to map the variety and breadth of educational experiences being offered. Re-reading and re-grouping the data facilitated the identification of themes. For example, on the one hand, there were materials and activities that were clearly *looking inwards* to attract people who were perhaps already involved with churches and engaging with faith, or who were looking to explore activities that might lead to the development of faith (prayer groups, bible study, theology lectures). On the other hand, there were materials and activities that were *looking outwards* in terms of providing engagement and service to the wider community (visits and tours, adult learning programmes, access to library and archive collections).

It is acknowledged that the data presented is a snapshot in time, accurate when the research was carried out during April 2022. Discussing the challenges of content analysis, Robson (1993) identified the issue of ‘information availability’ where ‘information which is difficult to get hold of gets less attention than that which is easier to obtain’ (p. 374). Website information can change on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. What information is chosen to share, how often each page is updated, and for how long material is made available are matters that differ across cathedral websites. A specific issue in the present study was the occasional absence of dates. It was not always clear whether the educational material or activities promoted were current. All cathedral websites claimed to provide a wide range of learning opportunities in the form of visits, lectures, talks, workshops, discussion groups, courses, and practical activities. While some cathedrals may be doing more than their website

might suggest, it is also entirely possible that some cathedrals may be doing less than their websites maintain.

Despite these limitations, analysis revealed that most educational provision for adults and for children and families, outside and additional to that provided to engage schools, evidenced one or other of the two educational objectives already well established within the context of Anglican church schools within the state-maintained sector. The first objective focuses on educational activities exemplifying a theology of nurture and the formation of Christian lives (illustrating the domestic aim previously expressed within the Anglican vision for education in church schools). This objective embraced six themes: nurturing children and families, discipleship, growing in faith, exploring Christian faith, theological education, and clergy and parish education. The second objective focuses on educational activities exemplifying a theology of service to the wider community (illustrating the general aim previously expressed within the Anglican vision for education in church schools). This objective embraced seven themes: engaging children and families, reaching out online, visits and tours, further education and higher education, library, archives and heritage collections, adult community learning programmes, and educational action.

Results

Nurture in faith

Nurturing children and families

Many cathedrals sought to encourage children and young people to join the cathedral congregation and to explore the Christian faith in ways that were directly relevant to them. Informal mid-week services for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers were offered at the cathedrals of Guildford (Cathedral Tots), Peel Isle of Man (Caterpillar Club), Ely (Story and Song Time), and at St Edmundsbury (Diddy Disciples). Primary age children were invited to attend Sunday services where special learning activities were provided so that they could take

part in the worshipping life of the Cathedral. Often this involved time in the main service worshipping with the rest of the congregation, and some time spent in another part of the cathedral engaged in special activities geared more specifically towards them such as craft, storytelling, singing and drama, before then re-joining the main service usually at the offertory. While essentially the same format at each cathedral, this activity was sometimes named Children's Church (Birmingham, Ripon), BriCKs (Bristol Cathedral Kids), Cloister Club (Exeter), Junior Church (Ely, Leicester, Peterborough, St Edmundsbury), Wellsprings (Wells), and Sunday School (Blackburn, Norwich).

At Wells Cathedral learning outreach included 'Listen and Watch', the hosting of children's interactive stories, all based on biblical passages. For young people over the age of 11, Ely Cathedral offered Café Church. Youth groups providing Christian fellowship and opportunities to meet, learn and explore questions about life and faith, and to grow spiritually were offered at the cathedrals of Liverpool, St Edmundsbury, and Southwell. At Liverpool 'Overcrofters' aimed to provide all young people who were members of the worshipping community of the Cathedral 'with a Christian structure within which they can feel cherished and valued and from which they can get support and encouragement as they develop into adulthood'. Sometimes a link was made with these events and the opportunity they provided for young people to develop their faith through admission to Holy Communion or Confirmation (Blackburn, Liverpool, Peterborough).

To support families in understanding the liturgy Wakefield Cathedral produced a weekly craft and activity sheet, themed around the readings for the following Sunday, that could be downloaded and completed at home. In a project styled, 'Exploring the Sunday Gospel at Home' Liverpool Cathedral offered individuals and households through 'activities that people of all ages can engage with as we allow God's word to shape us' the opportunity to prepare for the weekly Sunday Gospel reading. The material was released early in the

week so that people of all ages could have reflected on the Gospel before hearing it proclaimed aloud in the Sunday service.

Discipleship

Several cathedrals offered a range of adult educational opportunities for growing in ‘Discipleship’, where those interested were invited to explore what it meant to follow Christ and to deepen their faith and relationships with each other (Blackburn, Guildford, Ely, Leicester, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Ripon). At Leicester events included a Cathedral Book Club, a monthly nonstop day of prayer, a Global Voices webinar in partnership with Leicester Diocese’s Intercultural Worshipping Communities, and a Faith Explorers Club. At Blackburn Cathedral the offer of ‘Christian Discipleship’ included small group discussions, dialogue about interfaith issues, an annual Quiet Day, and lectures that addressed issues of Christian faith and practice in the twentieth century. At Ely, ‘Prayer and Discipleship’ provided poetry readings with discussion, and breakfast meetings focused on scripture, right action, and the life of the spirit. At Ripon, opportunities to ‘grow in discipleship and understanding of faith’ were evidenced in ‘Hot Potatoes’ discussion evenings where trickier questions of faith (a theological hot potato) would take place over a supper of jacket potatoes. At Guildford ‘Faith and Discipleship’ offered opportunities for learning, dialogue, and engagement with issues of public debate via study groups and Lent Lectures, and at Worcester ‘Faith and Spirituality’ included sermons, talks and addresses.

Growing in Faith

Akin to ‘discipleship’ the cathedrals of Chelmsford, Derby, Exeter, Truro, and Wakefield used the terminology of ‘growing in faith’ to describe learning opportunities geared towards the development and enrichment of faith. This was emphasised at Truro Cathedral where its link to ‘growing faith’ had the following aim, ‘At our absolute core is our desire to promote the Christian faith and its values, provoking thought and reflection on the relevance of that

faith and the application of its values to our daily lives.’ At Derby Cathedral the aim was to ‘encourage people to explore questions of faith and doubt in an open and enquiring way’ and this was achieved through sermons, lectures, articles, and discussion groups. Similar activities were offered by Exeter Cathedral but with the addition of prayer groups and study groups. Chelmsford Cathedral offered an online course, 'Living in Love and Faith'. Using YouTube videos and podcasts questions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage and their place within the bigger picture of the good news of Jesus Christ were explored, alongside questions about what it might mean to live in love and faith together as a Church.

Exploring Christian Faith

Many of the cathedrals welcomed enquirers to find out more about the Christian faith and to explore what it might mean to be a Christian. Often ‘open to all’ they were nonetheless often phrased as activities through which participants could begin their Christian journey. Courses and talks at Winchester Cathedral, were ‘designed to both guide and teach’. Chelmsford Cathedral provided access to over six pages of media clips exploring a range of topics from a Christian standpoint including, ‘Facing our Mortality’, and ‘Facing Crisis with Faith.’ The webpages of the cathedrals of Leicester and Wakefield provided introductions to ‘Christian Faith’ and ‘Christianity’ respectively, and Peterborough Cathedral offered an eight-week ‘Introduction to the Christian Faith’ course.

At Liverpool the aim of its ‘exploring faith’ offer was explicitly stated, ‘we would love for you to explore your faith and encounter God’, and a range of resources and further information was provided to help with that encounter including: The Alpha Course, Bible study (provided online by the Bible Society in 2022), and opportunities to join in with prayer. The Alpha course, a programme which seeks to introduce the basics of the Christian faith, was also offered at St Edmundsbury and at Leicester. At St Pauls Cathedral a resource library containing films and podcasts from leading theologians, scholars, speakers, and writers

allows users to explore everything from deepening understanding of the Bible and learning how to pray, to how Christianity changes everyday lives.

Weekly Bible study and talks were popular means to deepen faith and understanding. At Chelmsford, 'Breakfast with the Bible' was described as a space to read Scripture with others and grow in faith. At Peterborough 'Wednesday at One', part of the Cathedral's teaching programme, was a mid-week lunchtime service focused on a talk which aimed to 'inform, illuminate and inspire'. At Wells Cathedral, 'Talks and Thoughts' provided streamed videos on topics such as 'Mark the Evangelist', and 'Saints and Holy People'. As with nurture in faith for children, sometimes the information provided for adults who wished to explore Christianity was followed with information and links to sacrament preparation for Baptism or Confirmation (Liverpool, Peterborough, Southwark, Ripon).

Theological Education

Theological education and the provision of opportunities to extend knowledge about religion and faith in history and society was a core feature of many activities offered by cathedrals. Several cathedrals promoted 'theology networks.' At Lincoln Cathedral a Theological Network was set up in March 2011 'with the specific aim of providing an opportunity ... to hear respected and published theologians of all denominations and faiths.' The 'Peterborough Theological Society' based at Peterborough Cathedral offered a programme of monthly theological talks by visiting academics covering biblical studies, church history, prayer, liturgy and worship, the mission and ministry of the church, ethical issues, the arts and spirituality, the sociology and philosophy of religion, ecumenical and inter-faith issues, and understanding of God.

A partnership between the Cathedrals of Chichester and Lichfield was undertaken to provide a broader repertoire of lectures, study-days and conferences in theology, spirituality, and biblical studies to people across their own dioceses and beyond. At Southwell Minster

the 'Theology Group' offered study of the work of Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, as a starting point for discussion. Based at Norwich Cathedral, 'The Norwich Centre for Christian Learning' offered courses exploring aspects of faith including biblical studies, spirituality, church history and doctrine. St Albans Cathedral a part-time accredited theological course allowed students to explore Christian faith, and at Truro Cathedral 'Windows Into' courses (six, two-hour sessions) provided the opportunity to explore big questions about different aspects of the Christian faith.

Theology Lectures were a common feature of the theological education offered. Many of the lectures were recorded and could be viewed on YouTube at a time convenient to those interested. Birmingham is host to the annual 'Gore Lecture' that reflects on Christian themes within the contemporary world. At Blackburn the 'Temple Lectures' often explore contemporary social and ethical issues from a Christian perspective, but they sometimes also address aspects of the Church's life and mission, its spirituality, and its proclamation of good news. Manchester Cathedral hosts an annual 'Wickham Theological Lecture'. At Liverpool Cathedral leading practitioners and theologians contribute to the educational programme 'exploring issues relevant to its ministry as a prominent cathedral in an urban setting.' This includes the 'Gilbert Scott Lectures' on science and faith, and social justice themed lectures such as the annual 'Micah Lecture' and 'Prisons Week Lectures'.

While the content of much of this theological education had clear aspects of nurture in faith it was also promoted as of interest to anyone in the community regardless of age or faith but with an interest in church history and theology or wishing to explore personal growth and development. As an open society, the 'Truro Cathedral Theological Society' lectures were launched to give visitors to the Cathedral an opportunity to hear published theologians of all denominations and faiths. Similarly, The Norwich Centre for Christian Learning website

stressed that their ethos was ecumenical, ‘welcoming those from any faith or those with no faith but a lively interest.’

Clergy and parish education

The cathedrals of Blackburn and Ripon were unique in inviting full or part day visits from parish and other church groups. Blackburn Cathedral offered to ‘tailor a day course ... whether the emphasis be reflection on your vision and strategy, prayer and quiet, Bible study or theological discussion, exploration and interpretation of the Cathedral.’ Guildford Cathedral described itself as a theological and educational resource for the Diocese, supporting the work of clergy and parishes. To this end the Cathedral worked with the Diocese in the planning and delivery of an annual summer school. Liverpool Cathedral promoted the ‘Emmanuel Theological College’ a partnership between the bishops of six Church of England dioceses in the North West of England. Together they aimed to provide character and ministry formation, and rigorous theological study for lay and ordained ministry on a full-time and part-time basis. At Canterbury Cathedral, residential courses and conferences were offered for newly appointed Bishops, for seminarians and new clergy, and for faculty members across the Anglican communion to share knowledge and experience and learn from each other. The ‘Canterbury Scholars’ programme provided opportunities for Anglican and Episcopalian Christians from around the Anglican Communion to pray, study and live together.

Service and Community Engagement

Engaging children and families

Many cathedrals encouraged learning outside the classroom and promoted themselves as places of discovery and fun for all the family, with informal family learning an integral part of their all-year-round education offer. Information on family visits was often accompanied by family friendly or children’s trails to help learn and discover more about each Cathedral

(Birmingham, Carlisle, Newcastle, Peterborough, Rochester, St Edmundsbury, Truro). At Peterborough a ‘Monks, Mischief and Marauders’ activity book and ‘tower tours’ were offered, and at Truro there were two explorer trails, ‘A Cathedral for Cornwall’ (for ages 4-7) and ‘Bishops and Builders’ (for ages 8-11).

In addition to visits that explored the cathedral building, many cathedrals also offered learning in the form of special family event days and school holiday clubs with activities ranging from art & crafts, to storytelling, quizzes & games (Birmingham, Bristol, Ely, Gloucester, Guildford, Liverpool, Norwich, Southwell, Wakefield, Wells, Worcester). At Ely holiday activities included: ‘Gargoyles by night’, ‘torchlight safaris’ and ‘pumpkin carving’. At Guildford in June 2022 a family fun day celebrated the royal Platinum Jubilee, the Cathedral’s dedication to the Holy Spirit, and the festival of Pentecost.

Other activities included an initiative at Birmingham Cathedral held in partnership with the Birmingham Poet Laureate that encouraged young people to create poems on themes that reflected the Commonwealth Games values (*humanity, destiny, and equality*), the power of the human body, a sporting moment, or the spirit of the games. This interest in bringing poetry to a wider audience was also evident at cathedrals hosting a ‘Poet in Residence’ (Chester) and a ‘Riddler in Residence’ (Exeter). Inspired by the Exeter Book, one of the world’s oldest volumes of English Literature, Exeter Cathedral commissioned the Riddler in Residence ‘to empower young co-creators to engage in a reinterpretation of the Exeter Book, by drawing connections between 10th Century poetry and contemporary verse.’ Workshops were offered both to youth groups and to 16- to 25-year-olds.

Reaching out online

Several cathedrals were also engaged in creating on-line resources for children and families to access from home, often labelled as ‘learning at home’ or ‘learning for fun’. (Birmingham, Carlisle, Durham, Chichester, Rochester, Worcester). At Birmingham, The Faith Encounters

Programme (a collaboration with the Arts Society Birmingham) consisted of downloadable resources that families with children between the ages of 8-13 could use to support a virtual visit, encouraging children to be curious and reflective by focusing on the imagery, heritage, and culture present in the Cathedral. The digital ‘Learn and Do’ family resources at Chichester were activities designed to help families explore more of the Cathedral, learn about some of the beautiful artwork and have fun getting creative together. At Rochester digital activities and worksheets included ‘Design your own Coat of Arms’ and ‘Make a Pilgrim Hat’. Similar resources were available at Carlisle where families were invited to learn about the cathedral using their Stained-Glass Window and Misericords booklets or to try a Cathedral word search or colouring sheet. An impressive range of learning at home activities were offered by Worcester Cathedral including opportunities to find out about the Cathedral’s connection to the Tudor dynasty, to play Tudor games and learn about King Henry VIII’s six wives. Ely cathedral was unique in working alongside the ‘home educator’ community to offer an exciting and engaging learning programme delivered both in person and online. Learning experiences in subjects including history (19th Century Ely - Riots and Restorations) and religious studies were offered, as well as a book club. Other online educational resources for families included a ‘Wellness’ resource pack at Lichfield Cathedral designed for children aged under 11. Creative activities included ‘making a worry doll’ and ‘growing a rainbow’ and were described as encouraging children to think about their mental health, giving them the opportunity to discuss their emotions with a parent or caregiver.

Visits and tours

Every cathedral offered a variety of visits and tours which could be individual, group, guided, self-led, or themed and might include the cathedral building, towers, and gardens and grounds. Birmingham Cathedral offered a ‘Hearts and Sounds Trail’ described as ‘a beautifully illustrated trail to discover the variety of sounds that can be heard in the

Cathedral.’ Audio tours were also offered by the cathedrals of Rochester and Peel Isle of Man. At Blackburn guided tours were described as providing ‘opportunities not only to explore the Cathedral as a building, but to understand and interpret it spiritually and theologically.’ The cathedrals of Bradford and Sheffield noted how a visit might be a first step in learning about the history and heritage of the both the cathedrals and of the wider cities as revealed through their sacred space, their artwork, objects, windows, and architecture.

Several cathedrals also offered virtual or digital tours (Chichester, Durham, Gloucester, Guildford, Liverpool, Peel IOM, Rochester, Ripon, Sheffield, York Minster). Such tours often consisted of an interactive cathedral map with points of interest presented and explained. At Rochester the new ‘Virtual Cathedral’ was described as ‘a growing encyclopaedia ... each item of sculpture, memorial, tomb, graffito, painting and fragment can now be explored up close and in 3D, to help you take a closer look at the archaeology and history of this 1,400-year site and to judge for yourself what lessons are to be learned.’

Further education and higher education

Some cathedrals specifically mentioned links with, and the suitability of their education offer for the further education and higher education sectors (Bradford, Canterbury, Guildford, Liverpool, Portsmouth, St Pauls, Truro, Worcester). Worcester Cathedral hosted a series of online ‘Religion and Society’ talks in partnership with the University of Worcester. Together with the University it also hosted the annual ‘Worcester Lecture’ with previous speakers including former Health Secretary Frank Dobson, Lady Hale, QC and Keir Starmer, MP. As a way of encouraging new art to its sacred space and reflecting the emphasis placed by the Cathedral on the arts in learning, Truro Cathedral works with a local university to host student art exhibitions. With a dedicated ‘further education’ link, Canterbury Cathedral described how it worked in partnership with colleges and universities to offer a range of

opportunities to enhance the student learning experience including: supporting course work, professional development, work placement and volunteering. Additionally, as part of its ‘learning for all’ offer the Cathedral aimed to support ‘academic and specialist research’, welcoming proposals from those interested in ‘creative practice, projects, and collaborations which in turn supports our objectives to reach new and diverse audiences ... projects which help increase our knowledge of the Cathedral, its heritage, and collections, as well as creating outcomes for wider learning, interpretation, public engagement and participation.’ At Liverpool Cathedral the ‘Postgraduate Learning Community’ is an initiative between the Cathedral and the St Mary’s Centre ‘to nurture M-level, Doctoral, and Postdoctoral researchers engaged in the broad fields of Christian learning and practical and empirical theology.’

This specific interest in ‘research’ was also exhibited by the cathedrals of Durham, Newcastle, and Rochester. At Durham a ‘for researchers’ link invited researchers to make use of its historical collections. At Rochester a ‘research’ link highlighted how a group of volunteers and research associates, the ‘Research Guild’, had recorded and researched the structures, artefacts, and persons in the history of the Cathedral, more recently focused on ‘redressing imbalances or previously underappreciated collections or episodes in the history of the Cathedral, or of underrepresented persons.’

Provision for language students and international engagement were part of the learning outreach offer at the cathedrals of Canterbury, Chelmsford, Guildford, and Winchester. Canterbury Cathedral described itself as ‘ideal for foreign students’ who can learn about the Cathedral and improve their language skills using a specially designed questionnaire based on the Cathedral or take part in guided tours in ‘slow English.’ At Winchester Cathedral, international groups of students were welcomed to self-guide, with paper trails available in English, French and Italian. At Chelmsford the offer was to women

living in the UK who wanted to improve their English, ‘so you can be part of your local community, find a job, support your child at school, access local services, or just have a conversation with your neighbour.’ At Gloucester courses in ancient Greek or Latin were promoted.

Library, archives and heritage collections

The idea of cathedrals as places where a diverse range of people, including researchers, filmmakers, family historians, and wider public, could share in and benefit from learning was underpinned by the access provided to their library, archives, and heritage collections. Many cathedrals held an impressive collection of manuscripts, historic records, photographs, maps, and printed books dating back many centuries, making up an extraordinarily rich resource. Lincoln Cathedral described its collections as ‘very much a living library with readers coming from all over the world to study the books and manuscripts.’ Only a few examples can be highlighted, while recognising that in nearly all cases this was a comprehensively documented part of many cathedral websites (Canterbury, Carlisle, Chester, Derby, Durham, Exeter, Guildford, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, St Pauls, Norwich, Salisbury, Southwell, St Albans, Worcester, York Minster). The library at Canterbury was said to contain about 30,000 books and pamphlets printed before 1900, and an expanding collection of some 20,000 books and serials published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Canterbury Collections were described as particularly rich in books on church history, older theology, national and local history, travel, natural science, medicine, and the anti-slavery movement. The oldest books in a collection of over 8,000 volumes at Carlisle Cathedral included a fifteenth century Bible and an early copy of the Koran. Salisbury Cathedral described its archive as ‘the Cathedral’s memory’, with the oldest document written on parchment in 1136 while the most recent documents were created electronically. At Lichfield the collections date back as far as the eighth century and treasures include a fifteenth-century

hand-copied manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, one of three surviving original copies of Christopher Saxton's maps of Tudor England, and a manuscript of illustrations issued by and signed by Charles I. At Rochester, *The Lapidarium* (repository of stone) consists of a collection of over 400 fine sculptural artefacts from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries, and the photographic 'graffiti survey' started in 2016 records over 7,000 inscriptions from the twelfth to the twenty-first centuries. The collection provides insights into the Cathedral, its worshippers, and workers over many generations. At York Minster the 'Undercroft Museum' gives access to 2,000 years of history with visitors able to see the remains of Roman barracks, discover the Minster's Viking connections and view artefacts never previously on public display.

Adult and community learning programmes

Adult and community learning programmes were prominent at several cathedrals. At Canterbury the 'Learning for All' programme included Cathedral inspired workshops, short courses, master classes and demonstrations with the activities delivered by the Cathedral's experts in conservation, collections, and traditional crafts, as well as by external creative practitioners and partnering organisations. At Southwell the 'Adult Learning Programme' included year-round opportunities for learning through seasonal lectures, talks, concerts and events, as well as an annual 'Discovery Day', where visitors were given the chance to choose workshops, tours or talks on a range of creative, historical, or religious themes. 'Life Learning' at Worcester Cathedral consisted of regular workshops such as poetry, calligraphy and creative writing, watercolour painting, and stone carving. Worcester also offered adult learning in partnership with Worcestershire County Council with a range of courses run within the Cathedral. At Lincoln, 'Community Art and Technology Craft' (CATCH) was marketed as an opportunity for a range of community groups to immerse their creativity into the themes of Lincoln Cathedral. Camera clubs, adult learners' groups, knitting groups, youth

clubs, or University of the Third Age (U3A) members were invited to apply to participate in the Cathedral's publicised themes. If selected, the Cathedral would then work with the chosen group to produce artwork to be displayed either digitally or on site at the Cathedral. At York Minster there were plans, if approved, to create in 2024 a 'Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management.' The initiative will, according to the Cathedral website, establish the York Minster Precinct 'as a world class campus facility for research, education and training in ancient craft skills ... continuing the craft of stonemasonry and encouraging global learning and knowledge sharing, as well as being a shining example of best practice in managing complex heritage estates.' Stonemasonry was also offered at Worcester Cathedral, described as one of only nine Cathedrals to have their own team where new masons could be trained through involvement in learning programmes and apprenticeships.

Educational Action

Some cathedral websites gave space to educational activities, materials, and events that were focused on concern with issues of public debate and social justice. These activities were open to all and often no link was made with any religion or faith group. The website of Truro Cathedral stated that its long-term objective was to increase engagement with and provide support and advocacy to various groups in the community covering issues such as homelessness, climate change, and addiction, and marking important occasions, such as Holocaust Memorial Day. At Manchester an extensive list of missional issues and work with key partners were cited including homelessness, migration, unemployment, wellbeing, climate change, human trafficking, and modern slavery. As part of community engagement Worcester Cathedral provided links to further information on social action and modern slavery. At Gloucester the 'Michael Perham University and Cathedral Lecture for May 2022 explored questions around the climate crisis in relation to being human, and about how faith might be rethought in the face of global collapse. At Southwell an adult 'Justice Action

Group’, committed to working for social justice in the local community and wider world was formed to raise awareness of justice, peace, poverty, and persecution. At Wakefield social events and study groups supported Wakefield City of Sanctuary, ‘a grassroots movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK by promoting and encouraging the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers across the district.’ At Wells Cathedral part of its ‘talks and thoughts’ programme included a session based around the Black Lives Matter campaign followed with a link to further detailed resources on this topic. At Birmingham Cathedral a ‘Sensitive History Lecture’ provided a question-and-answer conversation around the national debate exploring shared history with connections to the British Empire.

In some instances, an explicit reference was made to the role of Christian faith and mission underpinning activities around social action, justice and reconciliation. For those looking to make a difference in their community the ‘Faith in Action’ resources provided by St Pauls Cathedral, as part of a year-round social justice and spirituality programme, provided guidance for Christians looking to act on climate change, racial justice, and young people’s mental health. At Bristol Cathedral, ‘The Social Justice Network’ was a collaboration between the Cathedral and the Diocese. While stated as an Anglican initiative, to ‘educate through mutual learning and theological reflection, and to encourage Christians to put their faith into action in new and exciting ways’, it was open to all. It was prefaced with a quote from Isaiah (1:17), ‘Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.’ Bristol Cathedral also offered a ‘Social Justice Group’ described as a ‘learning and doing group, as for many of our members practical action is key.’ All regardless of faith or denomination were welcome and areas of interest ranged from homelessness in Bristol, refugees, the rights of the LGBTQ community, caring for the environment, creating interfaith relationship, to the legacy of slavery in the city.

Conclusion

Located against the wider background of the role of metaphors within the science of cathedral studies, the present paper examined the distinctive metaphor proposed by Hall (2014) in his paper 'The purpose of cathedrals'. Hall argues that cathedrals are Episcopal centres that derive their identity and mission from the way in which they host the bishop's *cathedra*. The metaphor then works by transferring to the cathedral the qualities of the bishop as encapsulated in the episcopal ordinal. In this sense, cathedrals are mandated to do what bishops are called to be. Extrapolation from the episcopal ordinal leads Hall to identify seven specific activities in which cathedrals are mandated to engage. From these seven activities, the present paper selected the bishop's role as teacher for further examination.

Conceptualising Anglican cathedrals as Episcopal centres of learning, data were drawn down from the websites of the 43 Anglican cathedrals within England and the Isle of Man. Then analyses of these data were constructed to address two specific research questions. Given the wide range of activities that may count as relevant to the fields of education, teaching, and learning, these research questions specifically excluded engagement with schools, a specialised field that will become the subject of a subsequent study.

The first research question tested the extent to which Anglican cathedral websites presented their cathedrals as Episcopal centres of learning. Of the 43 cathedral websites, 34 had a home page navigation heading using some combination of 'Education', 'Learning', or 'Education and learning'. This suggests that the educational function was very prominent for four in every five cathedrals (79%), although somewhat less so for the others. Slightly more persistent searching of the websites quickly revealed that a wide educational provision was standard across the sector. Drawing on extrapolation from Hall's metaphor, the case is sustainable that, among other activities, Anglican cathedrals may be conceptualised as Episcopal centres of learning.

The second research question tested whether, like Anglican church schools, Anglican cathedrals display the twin commitments expressed through a theology of nurture (the formation of Christian disciples) and through a theology of service (supporting and serving the wider community). This research question is rooted in the conceptualisation of the Durham Report (1970) as renounced by Francis (1990). Data derived from the 43 cathedral websites provided rich exemplification of commitment to both educational objectives.

In terms of activities exemplifying a theology of nurture and the formation of Christian lives (illustrating the domestic aim previously expressed within the Anglican vision for education in church schools), analysis of the websites identified six themes that were characterised as: nurturing children and families, discipleship, growing in faith, exploring Christian faith, theological education, and clergy parish education.

In terms of activities exemplifying a theology of service to the wider community (illustrating the general aim previously expressed within the Anglican vision for education in church schools), analysis of the websites identified eight themes that were characterised as: engaging children and families, reaching out online, visits and tours, further education and higher education, library, archives and heritage collection, adult community learning programme, and educational action.

These data confirm that cathedrals are exemplifying the twin objectives of the wider involvement of the Anglican Church in education and are doing so in the name of the bishop, serving as Episcopal centres of learning. Located against the wider background of Anglican ecclesiology, what Anglican cathedrals are doing in the name of the bishop is not being done in any sense exclusively for the benefit of the cathedral church, but for the wider benefit of the parishes within the diocese. Here are the benefits of the distinctively episcopal ministry that the bishop shares with incumbents when inducting them into parish ministry, declaring,

‘Receive this cure of souls, which is both yours and mine’. Working alongside the bishop, Anglican cathedrals are functioning as episcopal resource churches for the dioceses.

Drawing on Hall’s (2014) analysis of the seven episcopal functions of Anglican cathedrals, the present paper has documented the way in which Anglican cathedrals are currently fulfilling one of those seven functions, namely the calling of bishops as teachers to an educational ministry. Subsequent research needs to build on the present project in two ways: first, by revisiting Hall’s analysis of the ordinal and drawing out more clearly the components of what it is bishops are called to be in order to extrapolate more clearly what it is cathedrals are mandated to do; second, by documenting how adequately and in what ways cathedrals are currently implementing these mandates as evidenced by publicly accessible statements concerning the range and depth of their ministry and mission.

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