



A Liturgical Statement & Plan for Newcastle Cathedral



Draft for Chapter
September 2019

A Liturgical Statement for Newcastle Cathedral 2019.



The key activity and *raison d'être* of a Cathedral is, and must always be, the offering of worship to God.

This simple liturgical statement is an attempt by Chapter to outline some guiding principles about that worship, which will inform the shaping and use of our re-ordered space in the years to come.

It should be read in conjunction with, and in the light of:

- the 2012 document of the same name, which was compiled by the then Dean, Chris Dalliston, with significant input from liturgical reformer, Richard Giles
- the 2019 document which records developments since 2012, and goes into some detail regarding how the principles might look in practice as the HLF project, “Creating Common Ground in Sacred Space” goes ahead in 2020 and beyond.

It is an oft-used aphorism that liturgy (Gk: *leit-ourgia*) is “the work of the people”, but within the Benedictine tradition from which many of our English Cathedrals emerged, it is also described as “the work of God” (Lt: *opus Dei*) We begin therefore with an understanding of liturgy which is both participative – rooted in what the people of God (the *ekklesia*) bring as they gather to worship – and responsive to all that God is working in each receptive individual, and in the community as a whole.

As the title of the Liturgical Commission’s 2007 report suggested, the worship we design, offer and participate in should be transformative¹ as God makes, grows and matures us as disciples of Christ.

At Newcastle Cathedral we therefore aspire to offer worship which is marked by the following five characteristics:

Attractive –

- We aspire to be a place that offers a warm **welcome** to all who cross our threshold. Regardless of who they are, or why they may be choosing to enter the building, we want them to know they are valued, and to leave feeling that they would like to come again.
- Our music, our language, our vestments and deportment are things of **dignity and beauty** which speak of the transcendent and immanent beauty of the God we worship.
- We strive for **excellence** in all that we do.
- We aim to offer both traditional and contemporary liturgy, music and symbolic action which is **rich in depth and breadth**.

Participative –

- We are not a gathering of static observer-consumers when we gather for worship. We are growing into a living Temple – the body of Christ² so we expect our worship to give us **opportunities to contribute as well as to receive**.
- We are a pilgrim people journeying together in the company of Christ. This is expressed in the **movement**, both symbolic and literal, of the “pilgrim liturgy”³ we offer.

¹ GS 1651 Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation A Report by the Liturgical Commission, 2007

² cf. Ephesians 2:21-22

³ Peter Doll “Liturgy and Architecture for a Pilgrim People” 2005

- Every congregation brings a wealth of life experience and a range of expressions of personhood to the community of faith. We will **honour this diversity** in the music we choose, the words we use, and the metaphors and images we apply when we speak of God.
- We will strive to be **inclusive and accessible** so that every child of God – regardless of age or ability – may access the worship material we produce and the acts of worship that we host.

Inculturated –

- We are proud of the City, Diocese and Region in which we gather, and we **celebrate the best** of North-East culture in our worship. We honour in liturgy and music our roots in the Celtic Christian inheritance, as well as the industrial, seafaring, technological, urban and rural traditions of this land.
- We encourage a **creative dialogue** between what we do and reflect upon in the “sacred” space in which we gather, and all that engages and challenges us in the “secular” world in which we spend the majority of our lives.
- Our preaching and our intercessory prayer is **relevant, topical, and responsive** to what is going on in God’s world.

Transformative –

- We acknowledge the powerful **formational** influence of familiar texts and music on the people of God in teaching doctrine, nurturing spirituality and creating a *habitus* of prayer.
- We honour the Anglican **tradition** through the daily pattern of worship that we offer: the structure of Common Worship and the Book of Common Prayer.
- We offer a varied diet of worship that is both **nourishing** and **challenging, healing and refreshing** to body, mind and spirit.
- We are not afraid to keep **silence** and encourage **stillness** in our worship, into which the living God may speak to touch hearts and change lives.

Missional –

- Our worship is not something restricted to a “sacred bubble” of ecclesial piety, but something that equips and inspires us **to share and to be the Good News** of Jesus Christ amongst our families, neighbourhoods, friendship networks and places of work.
- The **movement** of our “pilgrim liturgy” is not simply about gathering in, but about **sending out** to continue “the work of the people” and “the work of God”. The *ekklesia* – the church – literally “called out” – of the world and into the world.
- We strive to be a community of faith that **grows disciples**, from cradle to grave. We use baptisms, weddings and funerals as a wonderful opportunity to speak the Gospel boldly, and commend the faith to those who rarely attend church.
- We intend to remain a place where God may be encountered by those who simply want to “slip in at the back” or light a candle - seeking **solace, sanctuary or silence**.

With these guiding principles in mind, we look forward to the possibilities and potential of our newly re-ordered and flexible worship space. We will be open and ready to adaptation and experimentation as we settle into a new physical space, trying a variety of configurations as circumstances require.

Canon Clare MacLaren, Canon for Music and Liturgy September 2019

A Liturgical Plan for Newcastle Cathedral 2019.



Introduction

In October 2012, the then Dean of Newcastle, Christopher Dalliston - with significant input from liturgical reformer and former Dean of Philadelphia, Richard Giles – produced the Liturgical Framework which has underpinned and provided a theological rationale for a finally successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid to reorder and redevelop Newcastle Cathedral.

The last 7 years have seen many changes at the Cathedral – not least in personnel - with the arrival of a new Director of Operations (August 2015), a new Canon for Music and Liturgy (October 2015) a new Director of Music (September 2016) a new Head Verger (June 2018) and since October 2018, a new Dean – Geoff Miller. The Liturgical Framework has informed at least three of these appointments, and Chapter’s desire to see the worship of the Cathedral become more participative, more engaging and more distinctive has been made explicit on each occasion.

This period has also seen developments in a number of areas referred to in the 2012 report:

- the installation of the new lighting system mentioned in the report, as part of the HLF funded “Illuminating Stories” project - and its demise.
- the purchase (through sponsorship) of almost 200 of the Treske folding chairs
- the provision of a sample of the benches proposed by Treske
- the establishment of a well-used “Children’s Area” in St Margaret’s Chapel

The last 5 years in particular have seen Chapter engage very robustly with the financial challenges faced by every Cathedral at present. This has led to a rigorous interrogation of expenditure, cuts in staff hours, and the development of a fresh culture of realism regarding the practicalities of efficiently running a Cathedral – not least in the Vergers’ department.

The tenure of some of these new staff – the Canon for Music and Liturgy and the Director of Music in particular – has seen a great deal of musical and liturgical experimentation take place in the Cathedral, which has revealed both potential and limitations, in terms of lighting, acoustics, flexible furnishings and imaginative uses of the worship space.

This document is an attempt to map the impact of these changes onto the 2012 proposals, to take into account some of the learning that has occurred over the intervening period.

Canon Clare MacLaren

Canon for Music & Liturgy, Newcastle Cathedral
September 2019

Context

1. The primary purpose of a Cathedral is the worship of God. In a Cathedral the timeless dimension of worship is encountered as in few other places, and a standard of excellence aspired to which is not usually experienced at parish level. In serving as a mother church to a whole diocese, a Cathedral can hold before the wider church a priority for worship which lifts us beyond the pressures of the immediate and the mediocre.
2. A parish-church Cathedral in a great industrial – now post-industrial - city like Newcastle, compared with more ancient foundations in smaller conurbations, has distinctive opportunities and responsibilities to make connections with the civic, business and heritage sectors and to speak into the “public square” of contemporary social and political life.
3. As in most of our great industrial cities, Newcastle Cathedral knew life first as a parish church and this gives it a more accessible feel and ideally an easier working relationship with the parishes it serves. This offers it the opportunity both to strive for and offer excellence, but also to model and exemplify what might be possible in a parish setting.
4. While the role of Newcastle Cathedral as “mother church” of the Diocese has not changed in the last 7 years, its profile has risen, and its reputation improved both in the city of Newcastle and further afield. Attitudes to the Cathedral are beginning to change for the better, as an intentional programme of outreach to the parishes has developed.
5. Our choirs have grown very significantly in number and quality. A successful weekly organ recital programme is established. The liturgy is being renewed, and has become more creative, imaginative and engaging, such that visitors from the parishes and further afield frequently express surprise and appreciation. Newcastle Cathedral, despite limited resources is now delivering a standard of excellence in worship which bodes extremely well for its future.
6. Our new Dean, together with members of the Cathedral Trust are developing good relationships with the civic and business communities of the city. The Cathedral is still a building into which many local people have never ventured however – though those who do, unfailingly express delight and surprise at what they find.

Liturgical Space in the Cathedral

1. Cathedrals function as liturgical spaces in a wide range of ways – from small weekday congregations in a side chapel, to the regular Sunday services, to gathering of several hundred for Diocesan occasions, Carol Services and Civic observations.
2. The design of the liturgical space - itself; its physical attributes, the configuration of seating for the congregation, and the design and positioning of its liturgical furnishings need, above all things to be flexible.
3. Sight lines, audibility, lighting and acoustics all need to be taken into account – and accommodations made for such a range of different needs.
4. The late nineteenth century re-ordering of St Nicholas Cathedral sought to establish a liturgical space or series of spaces with a distinct Quire and heavily pewed Nave

that reflected the then contemporary understanding of “catholic” worship - with a strong West-East axis and a focus on the elevated high Altar at the East end.

5. The principles of **participation and accessibility** have been enacted as much as possible within the current constraints of the pewed worship space.
 - a. The liturgy has been re-designed to include far more of the richness and variety of the Common Worship resources, without becoming over-complicated. Orders of Service have been enlivened by the use of attractive thematic illustrations. Layout has been made clearer and more consistent, with rubrics which not only lead the assembly through the liturgy, but help to explain the theological significance of each invitation to change posture, or participate. They were recently described by a local disability access consultant as “amongst the best we’ve seen” in terms of clarity of layout for those with visual impairments. Striving to offer “best practice” in this area has become a priority.
 - b. The choir now sits in the Nave rather than in the Quire for the Sunday morning service – moving between a position in front of the Rood Screen and one at the West End of the Cathedral. This has made an appreciable difference to the acoustic quality and musical texture enjoyed by the congregation as the choir sits closer to the gathered people of God.

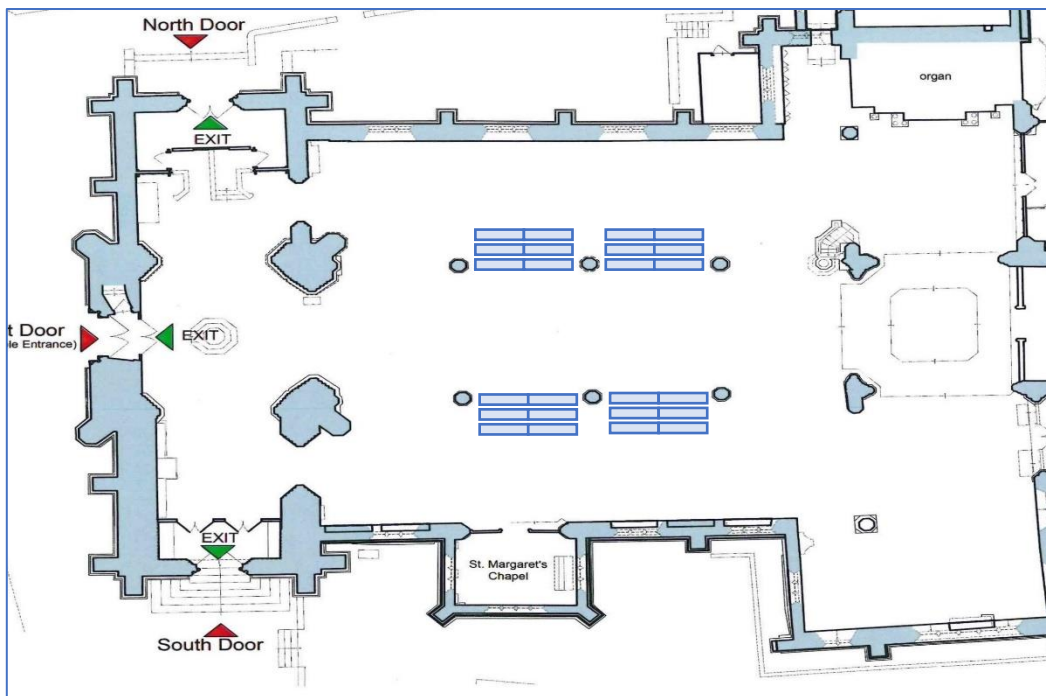
Clearing the Nave

1. The experience of the last 7 years has reinforced the absolute need to clear the Nave of pews, and to level the entire floor area.
2. The removal of the pews, will not simply enable more flexibility in the seating arrangements for worship, but reflect a theological move away from an outdated understanding of the congregation as observer-consumers of worship, to a more incarnational understanding of the whole people of God as ministers of word and sacrament.
3. Cleared of clutter and extraneous distractions the re-ordered Nave will become a majestic space in which, from the great West Doors the eye is immediately drawn down a strong West-East axis towards the Rood screen and High Altar beyond.
4. The possibility of anonymity that some seek in attending a Cathedral whether as visitors or enquirers must be taken into account, by consciously safeguarding and sign-posting those quiet corners where people can still “slip in at the back.”

Seating

1. the 200 Treske chairs that have now been purchased for the Cathedral are undoubtedly more comfortable and flexible than the current pews, however the last few years of using them has revealed that they are heavy to lift and difficult to manoeuvre. The Treske bench which has been lent to the Cathedral to try, equally, requires two people to lift or move it.
 - a. While there is no suggestion that the Treske chairs be disposed of, it would be counter-productive if the design of new seating, purchased in order flexibly to chair the whole Cathedral (800 seats in all) was so cumbersome to move that it was never moved.

- b. Ideally, any further new chairs will be light-weight and stackable, stained to the same colour as the current Treske seating.
2. A combination of benches forming a neat front row, with subsequent rows of lightweight chairs behind, as indicated in the image below, could form the “default” weekday seating area for visitors who wish to sit in the Cathedral quietly to pray.



3. If wheels could be fitted to the Treske benches there would be some merit in having, 8 of them as part of the seating that will be in the Cathedral when it is in “default” position during the week. Their presence and solidity would give clear and tidy boundaries to the seating area, while the wheels would make moving them easier for staff, as they will need to be moved regularly for events.

Movement within the Liturgy

1. Following cues from Richard Giles, and other proponents of liturgical renewal, there is a will amongst Dean and Chapter to embody the theological principles declared in the 2019 Liturgical Statement in the lay-out and choreography of our re-ordered worship space.
2. The Cathedral’s Sunday Liturgy has for many years emphasised the notion of journey by beginning every week with the congregation facing the Font at the West end for the penitential rite. As the rubrics in the Sunday order of service say, this is “a reminder that all baptised Christians are called to be a holy people, serving God in worship and love of our neighbour”. The sense of journey has been hampered thereafter, however by the fixed seating configuration facing East, “cinema style”
3. Sitting the congregation in collegiate style, facing one another across the central axis of the Nave will encourage a sense of community, and gather the assembly into a smaller and more intimate space.
4. The large level liturgical pavement will enable an assembly, conscious of itself as a pilgrim people (or the ministers as representatives of the wider assembly) to make a

physical and metaphorical journey from Font, to Ambo, and to Altar during the course of the Sunday Eucharist.

5. This Nave then becomes an entire liturgical room - simplified as far as possible by the removal of all extraneous objects or decoration e.g. banners, obsolete hymn boards, display boards, stacked chairs, to allow the liturgy itself, in its colour and movement, to be the icon of the presence of Christ.
6. Each section of the liturgical journey could be centred on a single liturgical focus - the Font, Ambo and Altar - each speaking with clarity and force of the life and practice which they symbolise.
7. The focus could move from the Font at the West end, to an Ambo set up in the centre of the Nave, facing East - indicative of the journey that is to continue and distancing the liturgy from the traditional 'up front' position of the lectern and pulpit.
8. Following the Liturgy of the Word and the sharing of the Peace, the assembly might continue its journey to stand around the Altar at the Eastern end of the Nave for the Eucharistic prayer and the sharing of Communion.
9. Thought and care would need to be given to how this might be done in order not to exclude the frail elderly, visitors not familiar with such a practice, and any who did not fit into the circle if numbers were large.

The Font

1. The Font is the natural starting point for every liturgical journey and for pilgrims and visitors on their entry through the West Doors of the Cathedral.
2. As proposed in 2012, the existing Font will be lowered to floor level, to make it accessible to all. It will be re-lined, but not simply in order to be filled to the brim, but rather to make possible the insertion of a bowl and pump. This will enable the Font to be full and overflowing with constantly running water – echoing the Hebrew concept of *Mayim Chayim* – “living water”.
3. It will stand as a reminder of our baptismal promises within the liturgy, and as a place at other times where the individual may touch holy water as a sign of blessing.
4. The canopy will be raised to an adequate distance and the effect of the water heightened by appropriate lighting.
5. The proposed new setting of the Font will give added prominence.

The Ambo

1. The Ambo will replace both the existing lectern and pulpit as the primary liturgical focus for the reading of the scriptures, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the preaching.
2. It will need to be a piece of furniture of strength and dignity, matching the Altar table and Font in prominence, to give a proper balance between word and sacrament.
3. It could be so designed as to enable an open book of the scriptures to be displayed at all times.
4. The existing pre-Reformation eagle lectern might be relocated to the Quire, or left *in situ* for those large “set piece” services where a traditional Eastward facing congregation might look to it and to the existing pulpit.

The Altar

1. The Altar table should be a piece of liturgical furniture of great strength and dignity, and to this end it should be a thing of beauty in its own right, not necessarily requiring Altar frontals to give it prominence. Like the Font and Ambo, the Altar table would stand on the floor, without steps or rails to separate it from the people. It could stand within the Crossing or further West depending on the shape of the assembly.
2. Appropriately located, the Altar whatever its design, would on occasions enable the whole assembly to gather around, standing, for the Eucharistic prayer, to make explicit the offering of the whole assembly. After Communion the assembly could return to their places in the Nave for a time of quiet reflection before the thanksgiving for Communion and the sending forth. Such a pattern would presuppose and permit a single point of reception.

The Ambo and Altar

1. Both Ambo and Altar, unlike the Font, would need to be movable in order to serve the needs of other Cathedral liturgies and events. This does not mean however that these items would look movable or lightweight.
2. They must both be significant in size, appropriate to their focal role in the liturgy as the places where word and sacrament are broken open and shared.
3. Because the Nave needs to be completely flexible when not in use for worship, it is essential that the Ambo and Altar be, if not lightweight, certainly wheeled, and therefore easy to move – and yet also easy to anchor firmly to the spot, looking immovable when in position.
4. The Altar and Ambo must, nevertheless, be treated with dignity at all times, and not simply pushed into a corner when not in use.
5. Ideally they will be sculpturally striking – and should stand, when not in use, nested or tessellated together as a work of art in their own right. The most appropriate place for this is probably the Nave Crossing, just in front of the Rood Screen, which, with its already powerful visual focus, would naturally draw the eye and make a strong theological connection between redemption and salvation.
6. Given that both Ambo and Altar need to be a visual focus at large, Diocesan services, as well as in the more intimate Sunday setting, it may be that a low raised platform should be obtained for each for the president and other ministers to stand on so that they can be clearly seen.

Seating for the Bishop, Ministers and Lord Mayor of Newcastle

1. Because the seating arrangements for worship are to be flexible, with a focus on physically engaging the congregation at every stage of the liturgy, the positions in which the ministers of the liturgy will sit need to be equally flexible. A period of experimentation will certainly be necessary to decide what works best in the newly re-ordered space.

2. While acknowledging that the ministers of the liturgy do have particular roles to play, the current physical separation of robed ministers sitting at the front, apart from the congregation, implies a hierarchy amongst the priesthood of all believers. The likelihood is that for normal Sunday worship, the ministers would sit in a block amongst – probably in the front row – of the congregation.
3. For large civic or Diocesan occasions, it will be likely that the collegiate relationship of Bishop, Dean, Senior Staff and Chapter be expressed by sitting in a more traditionally “separate” position.
4. It is proposed that the ministers’ chairs should not be very significantly different in size, shape, or weight from the majority of light weight stackable congregational chairs. Certainly they must be the same colour. Perhaps they could be distinguished by having backs that are higher than the backs of the rest of the chairs and with arm-rests to give them a more substantial appearance.
5. The issue of the Lord Mayor’s seat (and neighbouring stalls) is dealt with elsewhere – but, as recommended after the 2012 report, this will not be adapted in any way, other than to ensure that it and its neighbours may be used as a free-standing and mobile unit once detached from its current position. The intention is to re-locate it to “live” under the organ pipes in the North transept, where the colour of the wood will be in sympathy with its surroundings. It may then be moved into appropriate alternative positions as occasion requires.
6. Some discussion has taken place regarding the disposal of the existing ministers’ seats – and perhaps they could be rehomed in our neighbouring Newcastle Castle, where their sturdiness and “throne-like” appearance would be very much in keeping. Alternatively, perhaps they could form the basis for a creative re-ordering of the currently neglected Crypt (which is at present too damp for regular use.)

Choir Stalls

1. The new flexible seating arrangements will enable musicians and singers to be positioned in such a way that they will look and feel a part of the whole assembly rather than being seated in a distinct or distant area, though probably sitting together as a group alongside everyone else.
2. Lightweight, mobile choir stalls will certainly be required, with capacity for 32 singers – a “front row” of approximately 20 youngsters and our 12 Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars.
3. The Director of Music has expressed a preference for a series of 3 two-part units, each seating 6 children. Each front section would be the music rest for the front row. Each middle section would consist of a simple bench for the children, incorporating the music rest for the adults behind. The adults would then simply have a matching bench to sit on.
4. It will be essential for the benches at least (too heavy for one verger to move unaided) to be wheeled, or easily moveable in some other way.
5. In order for them to blend in, in a range of different positions, the choir stalls would need to be the same colour as the rest of the seating. This would also make it

possible for them to be augmented by extra “congregational” chairs when both girls’ and boys’ choirs sing together (taking the numbers nearer to 50.)

6. It would be ideal, if finances permitted, to be able to have two such sets of mobile choir stalls, in order easily to continue the current, very effective, practice of moving the choir during the course of the liturgy from one part of the building to another.
7. Of course, if the long-term aim of obtaining a Chamber Organ for the Cathedral comes to fruition, this will make possible some very exciting and innovative uses of the space.

Lighting System

1. In the last 3 years, both the potential and the limitations of the new lighting system installed as part of the “Illuminating Stories” project have been exposed.
2. The “Lutron” wireless control system was complex, and took many hours to master. Nevertheless, it has been used to great effect during the liturgies of the great Christian festivals of the last two years. The slow and dramatic transitions from light to dark (Tenebrae) and dark to light (9 Lessons and Carols), for example, have been very effectively accomplished.
3. In the last 6 months, however, the system has crashed and Lutron advise that it is no longer supported, which leaves the Cathedral with only a bare minimum of “manual” lighting options.
4. The system was clearly designed, within a limited budget, to beautify the building, and not to illuminate it for liturgical use. As a result, there are pools of shadow in the building in crucial spots – the pavement of the High Altar sanctuary; the Nave Crossing where bride and groom exchange their vows; several areas of the current Nave pews – which means that when external light levels are low, the Cathedral feels gloomy, and the congregation cannot easily see to read...
5. While not the primary purpose of this report, the drawbacks of the lighting system are frequently remarked upon by visitors who sometimes find the building dark and unwelcoming, concert-goers who cannot see the performers, and those with access requirements who cannot see to make their way safely through the building.
6. Options for improving the situation are currently being explored.

The Quire and Chapels

1. The Quire of the Cathedral - created in the late nineteenth century re-ordering as part of the scheme for the Church’s new status as a Cathedral - is a set-piece of remarkable interest and quality and includes an exceptionally fine collection of neo-gothic carving.
2. The intimacy of the space works well both practically and acoustically when the Office is sung by the choir and the regular offering of Choral Evensong not only continues to undergird and enrich the rhythm of daily prayer but, at a practical level also has an important role to play in developing the skills of singers and musicians.

The Eastern Chapels

1. Once the Cathedral's new Eastern access doors are opened up, the Eastern Chapels will be the first, rather than the last area of the Cathedral that many visitors will encounter.
2. These three Chapels are relatively "shallow" spaces and lack definition. They offer a key space for processions to gather for services, and are much used for the hosting of drinks receptions and the Cathedral's "Big Sunday Lunch" but their lack of depth means that they offer no vista to admire the great East Window – or to meditate on the striking Eucharistic sculpture by Stephen Cox.
3. The delicate artistry of the Incarnation Chapel Altar and tryptich, the handsome Leonard Evetts window in the Ascension Chapel and the Danish memorial and window on the north wall of the Chapel of the Resurrection, all risk being overlooked.
4. Thus far relatively hidden from public view and clearly bounded – this area has, however, proved to be very suitable for "sensitive" services - for bereaved people, and those who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, for example.

St George's Chapel

1. St George's Chapel, where the sacrament is reserved, has served for many years as the most regular and obvious location for the daily office and Eucharist, given both its relative intimacy and enclosure – it is likely that this space would continue to exercise this function.
2. It is the single warmest space in the Cathedral during the winter months, which makes it a popular destination for our homeless visitors.
3. The Chapel's pews can easily be moved, and have been repositioned in the last couple of years so as to create more of an arc before the (extremely large) Altar.
4. Balancing the needs of worshippers, homeless guests and visitors wishing to explore this gem of a space will continue to invite creative new ideas.

St Margaret's Chapel

1. This small Chapel, which opens onto the south side of the Nave is the most visible and distinctive "other" space for those entering the Cathedral from the West end. The removal of the Victorian screen which was vandalised and carvings stolen in 2005 has left it somewhat exposed and this openness has lent it successfully to use as a "Children's Area", both on Sundays and during the week.
2. Chapter has, in the past, looked into developing this space as a dedicated prayer space, engaging an artist to work on a suitable piece of artwork for the chapel, however resources were not available to progress this.
3. The connection of St Nicholas with a care for children, and Chapter's desire to ensure that the Cathedral offers a warm welcome to all ages means that at present, a change of use of this space is not being contemplated. However Chapter is considering using wood from the removed pews to create a series of bench storage chests to sit around the perimeter of the Chapel, so that the space may easily be cleared of toys and other activities when its use is required for other purposes.