ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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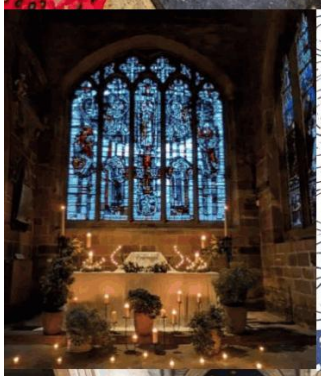
NEWCASTLE CATHEDRAL

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

2025 IN ACTION



The Annual Parish Vestry Meeting and Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday 26 April 2026, 11:30am

AGENDA

Annual Parish Vestry Meeting

1. Opening Prayer
2. Apologies for Absence
3. To elect four Churchwardens
4. Any other business (if notified in advance)

Annual Congregational Meeting

1. To agree and consider the minutes from the meeting held on 25 May 2025

2. Elections
   To elect two Deanery Synod representatives
   To elect Assistant Churchwardens
   To approve Sidespeople

3. Annual Reports

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4. Any other business (if notified in advance)

5. The Grace

Minutes of the Annual Parish Vestry and Annual Congregational Meeting held in the Cathedral on Sunday 25 May 2025

Parish Vestry Meeting

Present: The Very Rev'd Lee Batson (Chair), Dean of Newcastle, Rev'd Canon Zoe Heming, Canon for Mission, and Rev'd Canon Ruth Hulse, Canon for Worship and Congregational Life.

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting commenced with prayers led by the Dean.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Darren Hodge, Carol Holland, Lesley Noble and Ellie Robertson.

3. Election of Churchwardens

The Dean offered thanks to Vicky Pickering and Timothy Wigglesworth for all they have offered in their time as Churchwardens.
Ruth read out the names of nominees for the role of Churchwarden: Vincent Adigwe, Catherine McNally, Giles Hunter, and Heather Murphy. With four vacancies, an election was not necessary, and the above were duly appointed to the office for the coming year.

This being all the business, the Parish Vestry Meeting was closed, and the annual congregational meeting was opened.

Annual Congregational Meeting

1. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2024 were nominated, seconded and accepted as an accurate record.

2. Elections

2.1 Congregational Chapter representatives

The Cathedral's constitution provides for congregation representation on the Chapter (Board of Trustees), holding two seats which have been held by David Lawrence and Eric Jubb who have decided not to stand for re-election. The Dean gave sincere thanks for their nine years of service to the Cathedral.

Nominations were received in advance of the meeting from the following three people: Thomas Aktinson, Didier Avornyo, and Lesley Lee. No nominations were received from the floor. As there are only two congregation vacancies on the Chapter a paper election was held amongst those on the electoral roll. Prior to the election, Zoe led the congregation in prayer.
It was acknowledged background information on nominees would be beneficial and the Dean confirmed this will be implemented for the next round of elections in three years. As people can be nominated from the floor this adds a layer of complexity, but a process will be employed to provide information on those nominees known in advance of an AGM.
Having counted the ballots, Thomas Atkinson and Lesley Lee were elected as the representatives on Chapter. The Dean noted that other opportunities to serve the Cathedral will become available via the Safeguarding, Finance and Audit and Risk Committees.

2.2 Election of Assistant Churchwarden

The following people were nominated to be Assistant Churchwardens: Nneoma Adigwe and Freda Anderson.
There were no nominations from the floor and those nominated were duly accepted and elected.
Ruth clarified that whilst there are Churchwardens and Assistant Churchwardens, we work together as one team and there is no distinction between the 6 individuals in those roles, and she will be working closer with the whole team in the coming year.

2.3 Sidesmen and Sideswomen

Sidespeople are not elected, therefore nominations are not required. Ruth asked for names of anyone from the previous year who is stepping down from the role. It was confirmed that Degu was stepping down and both Catherine McNally and Heather Murphy would no longer serve as Sidespeople after being elected as Churchwardens for the year.

Those who wished to continue as Sidespeople were: Mohammad Hosz, Lesley Lee, Helen Robertson, Carol Holland, Judith Nobel, Leslie Noble, Jennifer Ross. These continuing Sidesmen and Sideswomen were re-appointed en bloc.

3. Annual Reports

The annual report booklet was available for review over the last two weeks, and Ruth asked if there were any questions about any of the reports.

A question was raised about why Chapter agreed to set a deficit budget. The Dean explained that 75–80% of the 42 English cathedrals currently set deficit budgets, and that some cathedrals face annual deficits larger than our entire budget. While this provides important context, the Chapter remains responsible for the financial sustainability of our own Cathedral. He explained that historically, we have set a deficit budget, but we are now approaching a point where this is no longer sustainable. Work is therefore underway to achieve a balanced budget for 2026.

The Dean highlighted that unless additional income is secured, the nature of the Cathedral's operations means that further changes will be necessary, some of which worshippers may already have noticed. The cathedral employs 35 staff (equivalent to 15 full-time roles), at least one third of whom are funded through external sources. This leaves limited scope for further cost reductions. As a result, changes have already been made to how music is provided in services. Four years ago, the paid lay clerks sang three to four times a week; they now sing only on Sundays. Previously, the full choir would sing at Ascension Day and some weekday services, but this is no longer affordable.

The Dean explained that he, the Chief Operating Officer (Kate), and others are actively engaging at national level to highlight these challenges and explore alternative funding models for cathedrals. Independent reviewers have assessed the Cathedral within the last 12 months and concluded that it is well managed, that the Chief Operating Officer is highly competent, and that no obvious funding opportunities have been overlooked.

A question was asked about progress on the West Door and how long it would remain inaccessible for wheelchair and level access. The Dean explained the historic context, noting that responsibility for the tower is shared in part with the City Council. At present, neither the Cathedral nor the City Council has sufficient resources to prioritise the work as quickly as desired. He advised that it is likely that additional scaffolding will be erected within the next six months to enable further investigation of the pinnacles, in order to assess the scope of work required and the associated costs. While the inability to ring the bells for special occasions is keenly felt, it is currently unsafe to ring them from the chamber.

Although no definitive timeframe can be given, the Dean emphasised that this issue is being actively monitored and is not being neglected.

4. Any Other Business

Looking Ahead

The Dean reflected on his arrival 18 months ago, shortly after the completion of the Cathedral's new building under the strapline *"Common Ground in Sacred Space"*. He acknowledged the vision of predecessors, staff, and lay leaders in creating a building and culture that is accessible and widely used, and he noted that this prompted a key question: *who is Newcastle Cathedral now called to be?*

Drawing on the Cathedral's historic beacon tower, the Dean explained how the image of the Cathedral as "a beacon of light" emerged through discussions with Chapter, staff, and the congregation. He stressed the intentional use of *"a" beacon rather than "the"*, recognising that the Cathedral is one expression of Christian witness among many in the city, and that God's work extends beyond the institutional Church. This sense of identity is rooted in

scripture and in the example of Christ, who entered fully into the messiness of human life and brought light from within it. The Cathedral is therefore called to be a grounded, engaged Christian community, living within the realities of the world rather than apart from them.

The Dean noted that this vision builds on existing values, including radical welcome, hospitality, inclusion, inspiring worship, and empowering service, and reflects what makes Newcastle Cathedral distinctive within the wider church context. He outlined emerging thinking about who the Cathedral is called to be a light for, emphasising both those drawn to the building itself and the wider city and region. While not primarily a pilgrimage cathedral, Newcastle Cathedral is called to shine light beyond its physical walls through the lives and actions of its clergy, staff, volunteers, and congregation. This includes having the courage to address issues others may overlook.

Despite financial challenges, he explained that the Cathedral aims to identify specific communities and contexts where it can commit to "shining brighter" over the next three years, recognising that change may be gradual as well as visible. He also highlighted a desire to make clearer commitments to staff, volunteers, and the congregation, noting efforts to integrate congregational life more fully into the Cathedral's wider mission. While the congregation is the largest community engaging with the Cathedral, it is one of several, and members are encouraged to participate across all aspects of Cathedral life and mission.

The Dean concluded by emphasising that this work remains provisional and consultative. The congregation is invited to contribute to shaping the vision and priorities, with a final document expected to be brought to Chapter for approval in September and then shared more widely.

Ruth presented headline themes from the emerging vision and strategy relating to those who engage with the Cathedral through faith. It was noted that, while cathedral life can at times feel less immediately connected than parish life, there is increasing evidence of deeper and broader engagement across cathedral activities. Growing numbers of individuals are seeking to volunteer and participate more fully, and there are encouraging signs of greater crossover between worshipping communities and other areas of cathedral life.

She acknowledged that this reflects an ongoing journey of understanding the complexity of cathedral life, including the presence of multiple congregations and communities beyond Sunday worship. The development of these connections was welcomed as a positive sign and something the Cathedral wishes to see continue.

Church growth was described as encompassing both spiritual and numerical growth, with a clear emphasis on faith development, maturity, and healthy relationships within the worshipping community, rather than attendance alone. It was emphasised that these proposals are not final but represent early headlines rather than detailed plans. Their delivery will require the involvement of the whole Cathedral community and should be understood as part of a wider, integrated vision and strategy. Members were encouraged to engage with the full document when available, to ask questions, and to highlight any significant omissions. The process was described as intentionally consultative and two-way, with further discussion welcomed as the strategy continues to develop.

This being all the business, the meeting closed in prayer led by Zoe.

<u>Date of Next Meeting</u>
Sunday 26 April 2026

Signed: Date: 08 April 2026

Dean of Newcastle

ANNUAL REPORTS

From the Dean

This year we launched our new Strategic Document 'Newcastle Cathedral: A Beacon of Light'. This was produced after much consultation and reflected our strong belief that our core purpose is to be a beacon of the light of Christ for our Diocese, Region and City with a particular focus on those who choose to worship regularly with us, the marginalised and our staff and volunteers.

One of the many outworkings of this process has seen a greater integration of our exhibitions with our concern for issues of social justice. We were, for example, really pleased to display work by a local artist that allowed us to reflect on the disabled Christ. We were also able to be the first Cathedral to exhibit work by survivors of Church based abuse which was later booked to be on display during the installation of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. We continued to make sure that our commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in the life of the church was manifested through an interactive display during Pride month – which led one visitor to post a Facebook video proclaiming we were "a funky Cathedral that loves the gays"! This carried through into our worshipping life, and particularly through services we offered for the wider Diocese and it was a privilege to host the commissioning of the new LGBTQI+ chaplaincy team in the Autumn.

This past year was also one in which our interaction with the wider civic society developed further. We became just the third cathedral to sign the Military Covenant along with the Diocese, and we hosted a carol service for the first time for the NHS. We continue to strengthen our links with the Business Community as we discern how to be a Cathedral for Business – and are now represented on the NE1 Board and North East Chamber of Commerce Council.

Our commitment to engaging with our community, and strong relationship with the Diocese, is also becoming increasingly recognised elsewhere in the Church. During the year we welcomed the Third Church Estates Commissioner – Sir Robert Buckland. He has a role in overseeing the work of all Bishoprics and Cathedrals, and he was really enthusiastic about all that we do here.

This year saw us say goodbye to two long serving members of Chapter who were elected by the congregation – Eric Jubb and David Lawrence – and it is important to place on record our thanks to them for all that they contributed to Chapter (not least in their involvement in recruiting all the current clergy!). In their place, we are grateful that Tom Atkinson and Lesley Lee agreed to stand and that they are already making an impact on our life through their contributions at Chapter meetings.

As was reported last year, we continue to deal with significant financial challenges which are systemic and for which it is difficult to see obvious solutions. Whilst we did end the year having published the first balanced budget for many years, we are dependent on external grants if we are to achieve it – and these are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

We enter 2026, therefore, with a new vision and strategic document that will enable us to continue to build on all that has gone before, whilst also recognising that much of what we currently do is precarious because of our financial situation. But we move forward with hope because this Cathedral is served by a fantastic group of staff, a highly committed group of volunteers, and a growing and more engaged congregation. I am thankful for you all.

Lee Batson
Dean of Newcastle

Electoral Roll Report

In accordance with the requirements of the Synodical Government Measure 1969 an Electoral Roll for 2026/2027 had been prepared and copies held in both the Cathedral Office and Vestry for inspection. The number of names on the Roll will be given out at the meeting by the Electoral Roll Officer.

Ellie Robertson
Electoral Roll Officer

Worship and Congregational Life

The last year in respect of the Worshipping and Congregational life of the Cathedral has been a full and joy filled one in many ways.

Regular services of Morning Prayer, midweek lunchtime and Sunday Eucharists, and Evensong have continued to be a source of inspiring worship for many, both those who worship in the building, and those who regularly join us online. No small part of this inspiration is down to our hard working and highly skilled choir, under the continued expert direction of Ian Roberts and Kris Thomsett. I am very grateful to them, the Lay Clerks, Junior Lay Clerks, Choral Scholar, Organ Scholar, Choristers, Deputy Lay Clerks, Choral Supervisors, Voluntary Choirs, and admin staff for all that they do, and for creating space through worship for people to encounter God.

Over the past year, I have aimed to create a wider representation of voices within the life and worship of the Cathedral. More people are contributing through intercessions, assisting with the chalice, serving, and reading lessons. This has enriched our common life and reflects a growing sense of shared ownership. Together with the workshops that have been led by our Readers, Katherine Govier and Helen Wright, and our Head Server, Beth Conway, the development has not only been in terms of numbers of people involved, but also in quality of delivery. There is always space on these teams for others to join!

Our two Readers offer a valued and important ministry amongst us, preaching, leading, reading, praying, gathering, encouraging, and faithfully following the call of God on their lives. With thanks for all they had done as faithful Cathedral Wardens, we said goodbye to Timothy, Vicki and Ged as they stepped down from their roles, and we looked at who might form a new team. I was delighted when Nneoma, Vincent and Freda agreed to stand again, alongside new appointments of Heather, Catherine and Giles. The creation of a monthly warden meeting with the new team and myself has meant that communication is gradually improving, and involvement in other aspects, e.g. the congregational meetings, is growing. Our team of sidespeople offer that all important welcome for those coming through the doors, and our coffee makers give an opportunity for greater connection after services. Flower arrangers draw our attention to the beauty of God in creation, and we are grateful for all that each of these teams do.

The Cathedral has been a gathering point for worship for school children, clergy, community groups, regular worshippers and even international groups throughout the year. One of the areas that has been a particular development is with Evensong as a framework for celebration across the Diocese. Last year we saw a number of groups asking us to help them acknowledge their ministry in a service of Evensong e.g. the Military Covenant signing, and the LGBTQI+ Chaplain commissioning. We have several of these 'Evensong plus' services arranged for 2026 already. In contrast, the slightly less formal Harvest, Mothering Sunday and end of choir year services have helped to make worship more accessible for a larger group of people.

Discipleship has continued to be a key focus of mine, with regular small groups, one-to-one conversations, courses, and the shaping of a clear plan for 2026 taking place. The group on a Sunday lunchtime with people seeking asylum continues to be a precious ministry and has developed into a dual language group with deeper connection taking place between the members, stories being shared, and prayers offered for one another.

We continue to see a steady stream of baptism enquiries and wedding couples coming to us to help mark those significant life events, and these remind us that we are a Cathedral Church which is still very much here

for the people of the community. In the same way, my weekly Collective Worship time at Christ Church CofE Primary School, Shieldfield is a way of connecting with and serving the local community, as is the National Singing Programme, offered so brilliantly by our Singing Programme Directors. Children from this programme came to sing at the Dementia Friendly Carol service in December, and we hope to build on this opportunity in the future.

Of course, all of the above would be a much greater challenge without our wonderful team of vergers, led by Paul. In 2025, 2 of our vergers moved on and we rearranged the team, appointing a deputy head verger, Sam, to provide a greater sense of continuity and communication across the team. Together with Alan and Lewis, this team of vergers work extremely hard across an almost impossible range of areas, from moving furniture to responding to emergencies, being part of services of worship to cleaning and maintaining the Cathedral building.

The children in our community continue to be a source of joy and a reminder of the life that is found when children are part of a church. Our Junior Church leaders provide activities every week for those who gather as part of the Sunday congregation, and our older young people are very much part of the worshipping life of the Cathedral, getting fully involved in serving, reading, and helping with things like the Crib Service in December. There are so many other things that could be mentioned, but space is short! I look forward to the coming year, and to continuing working alongside all those mentioned above, and many more besides, as we nurture the worship and congregational life of Newcastle Cathedral together, to the glory of God.

Ruth Hulse
Canon for Worship and Congregational Life

Music

Music continued to play a vital role in the Cathedral's daily life of worship, witness and prayer, as well as providing life-changing opportunities to people from many different areas and backgrounds. This was particularly through our work with children and young people, many of whom would not have had access to the very special musical, cultural and spiritual education that we offer. Throughout the year more than 100 under 18s (Choristers, Training Choirs, ChoriStarters, Small Sounds, and our developing Cambiata Voices initiative) have regularly come to sing at the Cathedral. 40 adults regularly contributed to the worshipping life of the Cathedral through music leadership or administrative roles, and as Lay Clerks, Junior Lay Clerks, Choral Scholars, and members of the Cathedral Consort and Cathedral Schola Cantorum. In our ever-growing Schools Singing Programme, 840 children across the city have received expert singing tuition in the classroom on a weekly basis, working towards the National and Model Music Curriculums, changing singing culture in schools and offering a tangible route for families that may have never before stepped foot inside the Cathedral.

As in other years, raising the profile of the work that we do has been an important consideration. As one of the smaller English Cathedrals we cannot compete with our larger cousins in terms of resource, but we are on a continuing journey to embed an awareness, on both local and national level, of the quality of our work in music education, the richness of music offered in worship at the Cathedral by all of our choral groups, and the high standards of our Cathedral Choir. Three specific endeavours during 2025 enabled us to reach new people in exciting ways: our album recording of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany music (recorded in February and released in November), our live BBC Radio 3 Broadcast of Choral Evensong on Easter Day, and our intense but exciting weekend of hosting of the Cathedral Music Trust National Gathering in May (5 services, after dinner entertainment, speeches, and an organ recital, all within 48 hours!).

We were fortunate to receive grant funding across the year towards certain specific areas of the musical life of the Cathedral from The Cathedral Music Trust, the Ouseley Church Music Trust, The Diocesan Society, and the St Hilda's Trust. We received seed funding from the National Schools Singing Programme and

contributions from each of the participating schools. We continued our music partnership with Northumbria University in which Kris Thomsett takes the role of Director of Campus Music, and continued to offer an Organ Scholarship, financed in collaboration with St Andrew's Church, Newgate Street.

One of the tougher challenges of 2025, in what remains a challenging financial climate for the Cathedral, was to sustain those areas of the Cathedral's musical life for which independent funding isn't available. In late 2024 we were asked to find 20% of savings on the 2025 net music spend (i.e. spending a fifth less on those elements of the music not being externally funded but instead funded centrally by the Cathedral). Adamant that we should do all possible to ensure that this didn't affect musical standards, our quality of education for young people, or our unswerving commitment to safeguarding, we none the less had to make difficult decisions in an attempt to balance the books. We went for various small changes that, when totalled together, would narrowly enable these savings to be made. Individually, each initiative may not have had huge individual significance on the balance sheet but was disconcerting for those affected. This included further small reductions in the services for which all of the back row sing, a further reduction in the number of services for which the student singers are involved, and a reduction in the pocket money for all of our boy and girl choristers.

On the positive side, with a lesser time commitment we were able to revisit the nature of our student roles, looking innovatively at what we can offer to students, how we can best resource the back row of the Cathedral Choir, increase paid opportunities for female singers, and ensure that the student roles better reflect the Cathedral's commitment to the Living Wage. We introduced new Junior Lay Clerk roles specially designed for advanced students and early career musicians, for the first time we offered a Two-Year Choral Scholarship funded by the Ouseley Trust, and 4 Section Leaders for the Cathedral Consort. The knock-on effect of smaller resources has meant that some Evensongs in the week have been sung by a very small group, particularly in times of illness or school exams (for example, we have had a few Evensongs sung by a group of 5 of the older Girl Choristers or a similar number of Cambiata Voices). There is clear jeopardy when fielding only a small number of young voices, but these services have been special in their beauty, simplicity, and authenticity.

Our exciting but elderly Cathedral Organ has continued to battle on, with Organ Recitals taking place on all 52 Mondays of 2025. The regularity and quality of the concerts is now attracting an average of around 50, with the audience swelling on certain weeks. Despite the organ's sounding magnificent on the CD recording, on the radio broadcast, and at all of the Cathedral's great celebrations, we know that the reality is that the clock is ticking. Rebuilding of the whole instrument is overdue, but completion of Phase 1 will at least provide some security whilst contributing to the long-term aims. We were delighted to be able to utilise grants from Pilling Trust and the Terry Bramall Foundation, along with the donations from kind individuals, so that we could commission the designs for the rebuilt East Organ, and the designing and building of a new console. The console will be stored and then installed when we can complete the work on the East Organ. It is therefore very important that we remain focused on fundraising as the organ plays a vital role in the life of the Cathedral, but without the work outlined it will become increasingly unreliable.

One of the greatest joys and strengths of making music at Newcastle Cathedral, something that I'm aware of every day in my work as Director of Music, is that it is a real team effort. It would be impossible without the work of my fellow organists, Schools Singing Programme Choral Director colleagues, all of all those staff and volunteers that play a role in the wellbeing, nurturing, and safeguarding our choristers, of all of our singers across the choirs, and the parents that support our younger members, all of the schools with which we have a special relationship, and the work of the Choirs' Association. Through the network of opportunities that we offered throughout 2025 we were able to witness the results of meaningful progression - from singing at school to singing at the Cathedral, from the Training Choirs to the Cathedral Choir, from Chorister to Cambiata Voices, from Head Chorister to Junior Organ Scholar, and those leaving us from the back row

equipped to take on professional roles in other cathedral choirs. Also, through working closely in partnership with Canon Ruth we saw the largest number of Choristers preparing for Confirmation in any year throughout my time at the Cathedral.

So huge thanks to Ruth, Kris, James, Laura, Verity, Tim, Alessia, Grace, Kate, and the many staff and volunteers that enabled our hallowed walls to resound in praise and prayer throughout 2025.

Ian Roberts
Director of Music

Verging

It has been another busy and challenging year for the Vergers Department.

We said goodbye to Fred in June, who left us to go full time to Durham Cathedral. It was lovely to see him back for the Patronal Festival, along with the Durham Cathedral Choir. In August, we also said goodbye to Ray, who left to begin his vocation training for ordination. We wish them both well on their onward journeys.

In October we welcomed Sam into the team as our new Deputy Head Verger. He has been a welcome asset, bringing new skills to the department. Alongside all these changes, we continue with the daily setup for services.

One of the biggest roles for the vergers is supporting our programme of events and venue hires. Each year this continues to grow and is particularly important as events and venue hire now provide a crucial income stream.

Last year we helped to set up for well over 1,500 services, concerts, recitals, school events, workshops, trust gatherings, open days, school services, weddings, funerals, baptisms, heritage events, conferences, gala dinners, fashion shows, silent discos, room hire and much more.

Alongside this, we deal with the day-to-day running of keeping the Cathedral open, clean, and welcoming to everyone.

Some of this would not be possible without the help of our amazing volunteers, who support concerts and events by providing a friendly welcome, as well as our volunteer vergers. If you would like to find out more about volunteering, please come and see any of the vergers — we can reward you with tea and biscuits.

Paul Russell Sewell
Head Verger

Churchwardens

This year has seen further changes in the make-up of the Cathedral Churchwarden team.
We were sad when Timothy Wigglesworth, Ged Graham and Vicki Pickering decided to step back from their roles but remain hugely grateful for their years of unstinting input into the smooth running of worship at the Cathedral.
It was a blessing that Vincent Adigwe, Nneoma Adigwe and Freda Anderson continued as Churchwardens and Assistant Churchwardens. Catherine McNally, Heather Murphy and Giles Hunter were elected to work alongside them.
The new team meets regularly and has worked together on a number of significant issues affecting our common life. A recent training session with our Safeguarding Officer, Jane Forsdyke, was of great value. We feel that the team is not only strong and reliable, but also mutually supportive and flexible.
Our role is, as ever, to facilitate the smooth operation of the Cathedral's essential functions, to be a presence at regular worship and at special events such as ordinations and carol services, to offer that radical welcome to all who enter our doors and to respond to the needs of those we encounter in our city centre location.
None of this would be possible without the dedication and willingness of our marvellous team of sides-people. They are an ever-present force for good, and their work far exceeds greeting people, distributing orders of service and taking the collection.
I believe that we can look to the future with optimism that our sense of community is growing and that God's work is being done in this place.

Heather Murphy
Churchwarden

Mission

After my first full year at the Cathedral, 2025 has been a year of renewed clarity and integration of how Christian mission is understood and expressed throughout the life of this Cathedral in our Radical Welcome, Inspiring Worship and Empowering Worth.
Our revised exhibition programme to strengthen the focus through public theology and creative engagement with marginalised communities has been an important step forward in giving a voice to marginalised people. Visitors have encountered: those who have experienced abuse through the Jagged Edges exhibition, workshops and events programme; Northern Pride and Pride Month exhibition included the commissioning of new LGBTQI+ Chaplains for the Diocese; the multi-sensory and digital work we help to co-create led to The Disabled Christ exhibition which became a catalyst for theological reflection and community dialogue with disabled Christians in the North East; the various recovery communities who asked us all "What is Recovery?" for the month of September; and most recently our Verger Alan's urban photography exhibition and event invited us all to remember and be open to new encounters with God in everyday life through his first ever public exhibition God Is In The Detail.
The Cathedral Lantern Project has continued to evolve and change, learning and adapting as demand and resource continues to change across all sectors, creating further demand across increasing complexity of life for so many. I'm delighted that the Lantern Lead will have an additional staff member from January 2026 who comes to us with a wealth of experience working with the hardest to reach people in most acute need. 2026 will be a year of consolidating and developing how others can get involved with the wonderful work which expresses so much of our values here at the Cathedral.
The Dean and I have been working hard to strengthen relationships with faith leaders in both civic and community led networks across the city. My work has focussed on challenging prejudice and participating in events locally which engage positively in reducing rising community tensions. Our second annual collaborative initiative with Northumbria Police, 'Bake Not Hate' has become too large for the Cafe and will fill the Nave in

October 2026! The Community Iftar we hosted with the Dialogue Society (who continue to meet as a Scriptural Reasoning Group monthly in the Education Centre) welcomed over 250 people for a joyful celebration of friendship and interfaith cooperation. 2026's event is set to be another success!

Over the last 12 months we have become more active members of Tyne and Wear Citizens, in new work with our diverse community members organising to bring about change on issues of social justice and the common good, recently participating in a huge listening campaign across the region asking people about pressures facing local communities. This will feed into helping to shape civic action and advocacy for change ahead of the May 2026 elections.

We also hosted Diocesan colleagues for the 'Theology And…' series, exploring contemporary issues through a theological lens. A highlight was a well-received lecture on the ethical and practical implications of Artificial Intelligence.

The year ended having successfully appointed to our new, externally funded, Community Engagement Officer post who will help strengthen partnerships across the city and enhance our programme of mission-focused activities.

Our volunteer Chaplains continue to offer an invaluable ministry of presence and hospitality. In the coming year we look forward to welcoming student Ordinands and others exploring vocation, further enriching our pastoral support for all who come through our doors.

2025 has laid strong foundations. With deepening partnerships, clearer structures and a growing shared vision, we remain committed to serving our city with courage, hospitality and hope.

Zoe Heming
Canon for Mission

Cathedral Lantern Project

The Cathedral Lantern Project appointed its new Lantern Officer at the end of the year who will be working alongside the Lantern Lead from January 2026, enabling greater diversity and depth of engagement with those we work with. A pilot early in 2025 to create an intentional footprint in the Cathedral for people seeking support and a space of sanctuary has now become a feature of Cathedral life that we are proud of. Having dedicated comfortable and secure space, where people can safely access help of various kinds including, 1-2-1 support with refreshments, phone charging, pastoral care etc. has enabled us to deliver a consistent offer for the many people who are homeless in the city. Multi-disciplinary working has been a focus with specialist services where we have become an important part of the city-wide teams, often being the point of access for targeted support for people with multiple vulnerabilities who come through our doors. This has led to more successful engagements and stronger partnership with local specialist services. These include the City Council Homeless Team and an outreach nurse from Cumbria Newcastle Tyne and Wear (NHS) who bases herself in the Cathedral to help connect our individuals with immediate medical needs and linking us with mental health and wider services within the city regarding drug and alcohol abuse. We've celebrated many "Recovery Graduations" in the Cathedral this year as part of this work!

Our ability to provide 1-to-1 support as part of new multi-disciplinary teams has enabled us to expand our dedicated work with people seeking asylum and refugees. Through this new way of working, many have found community, been able to get involved as volunteers, taken part in social activities, trips and gatherings for prayer and peer support through their work with an artist on Sundays after worship. In partnership with West End Refugee Service, through their work and our new focused calendar, their October exhibition was an important part of beginning to deepen the congregation's understanding of the challenges they face, built relationships and created practical opportunities for congregational involvement.

We are now part of the "Welcome Directory" as a named place of welcome for prison leavers and look forward to offering training for our whole community soon!

With Daniel on the team, we look forward to co-creating more events, workshops and more as we focus on expanding opportunities for those who come through our doors to thrive, body mind and soul.

Nicola Maxwell
Lantern Project Lead

Photos above and on front cover by Volunteer photographer Tim Watkinson, who Peter Cumiskey (Marketing & Communications Manager) would like to thank for his contributions in 2025.

Safeguarding

I was delighted to be appointed in October 2024 as the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer. Reflecting on completing my first year in 2025, it has been an absolute pleasure to get to know the clergy, staff, the many dedicated volunteers and some of our wonderful congregation, all of whom have welcomed me into the role. I am grateful for their support in helping me to understand the Cathedral context.
It has been a busy year and trying to manage all aspects of my role over two days was a challenge, this has been recognised and from January 2026 I will be working over three days.

Some of the key areas of work achieved over 2025 include:
Managing risk and response to safeguarding concerns – over 2025 I have continued to have a strong focus on case work, including responding promptly to allegations of abuse/harm, or where individuals are identified as a potential safeguarding risk to others, undertaking risk assessments and reviews of safety plans, working closely where appropriate with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and other statutory and non-statutory organisations. I have worked with our newly appointed Lantern Lead to ensure safeguarding is a priority, sharing relevant information, providing safeguarding advice and guidance. Jointly overseeing the Lantern risk assessment, we consider how the work of the Lantern interacts and overlaps with the wider work of the Cathedral.
I have also continued to provide additional scrutiny and challenge to ensure safer recruitment, working closely with our Volunteer Coordinator and our Business Support Manager.
INEQE – Our Independent Safeguarding Audit of Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance and Newcastle Cathedral took place in May 2024. Following some valuable time in 2024 to reflect on the findings and consider how best the actions could be taken forward, 2025 has seen acceleration in the plan and significant progress made. At the end of 2025 out of the 41 actions, 32 have been implemented with the remaining 9 in progress and expected to be completed early 2026. The action plan has been overseen by the Senior Management Team, Chapter and the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee.

Cathedral Safeguarding Committee – in 2025 we completed a review our safeguarding committee with external independent oversight. The review included broadening and strengthening membership to ensure there is more independence. As a result, our newly constituted committee met in 2025 with Independent Chair Audrey Kingham. We secured buy in from a range of external partners who are now members of the committee which includes representation from the Police, Mental Health, Homelessness services, Community Safety, and Adults Safeguarding (City Council), thus providing the external scrutiny and support that will enhance safeguarding across all aspects of Cathedral life.

Training and engagement – Raising awareness of safeguarding is one of my key responsibilities. In 2025, I delivered face-to-face safeguarding training for staff, with a bespoke session for the music team. I jointly delivered a separate training session with the Volunteer Coordinator for our Churchwardens which encompassed safeguarding and Radical Welcome. All the training sessions are designed to add value to the existing safeguarding training delivered through the Church of England and are specifically tailored to recognise the unique aspects of safeguarding in the context of a cathedral. Feedback from the training has been extremely positive and 2026 will see this rolled out to volunteers and will capture any new staff members.
Attending the service for Safeguarding Sunday, which also marked a year on from the publication of the Makin Review, was an important day, not only to raise awareness of safeguarding and my role, but also to remember the impact on victims and survivors of abuse.
In 2026, I intend to increase my presence with the congregation and will be attending the congregational meetings held over the year.

The MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Cathedral and Newcastle Diocese has been reviewed, agreed and signed off. This is a significant step in forging positive relationships with the newly established Diocesan Safeguarding Team, which in 2024/25 saw the appointment of a Director of Safeguarding, and 3 other new members of the team. The MoU reflects a strong commitment by the Diocese of Newcastle and Newcastle Cathedral to work together to implement safeguarding policies and ensure that all safeguarding issues are responded to appropriately and effectively.
It was positive to end 2025 with the criteria for certification for safeguarding being met by the Diocese of Newcastle. This shows that the National Safeguarding Team believes there is a strong safeguarding culture developing within the Cathedral and meets the criteria for certification and therefore reflects our hard work and commitment to safeguarding.

Impact
Building on a strong foundation, through raising awareness of safeguarding, tightening of processes and procedures, bespoke training and a focus on safer recruitment, I have seen an enhanced understanding of safeguarding across all aspects of the Cathedral in 2025. This has been demonstrated by the depth of conversations about safeguarding I have had with others and by the range of referrals/concerns raised with me from all areas including clergy, staff, volunteers, members of the congregation and the Oswin Project. Any challenges I have made have been met with curiosity, a willingness to understand and find solutions, always seeking an opportunity to improve.
As a Cathedral we feel positive that we have made significant steps to ensure safeguarding is a priority and we do not shy away from facing the hard reality of church-based abuse and its impact on victims and survivors. Following the powerful survivor led service held in 2024, and the continued existence of the LOUDfence, in 2025 we hosted the Jagged Edges exhibition of print making, poetry and music created by and for survivors of church-related abuse. We were also proud to host the Moral Injury Conference in May 2025 organised by Maggi Creese and informed by a group of survivors of church-related abuse. The conference explored ways in which the moral injury caused by the institution of the Church and its systems can be addressed in and by the Church.
There will always be more we can do, and we will continue to strive to provide a culture and environment where victims and survivors can report or disclose abuse safely and where they will find support and best practice that contributes to the prevention of abuse. To be a place where, whatever your role, everyone feels able to report concerns and is empowered to speak out, as this is what can really prevent harm and abuse.

In closing, I would like to give a huge thanks to Lee, Zoe and Ruth, Chapter, my colleagues and all those who are involved in the Cathedral, for their continued support and commitment to safeguarding during 2025. Further information can also be found on the safeguarding pages of the Cathedral website.

Jayne Forsdike
Cathedral Safeguarding Officer

Volunteering

Another very busy year for the Cathedral and for the volunteers.
Because hours have been tracked by both sign-in sheets and Better Impact, we have a much more accurate picture of volunteer hours for 2025. It still does not capture everything, but that is work in progress.

Volunteer Hours 2024:	3882
Volunteer Hours 2025:	6331

Of the 81 volunteers who have contributed hours this year, 25% have given more than 100+ hours of their time to the Cathedral. That is an amazing gift and shows just how big a part volunteers play in the life of the Cathedral.

Volunteer recruitment has been slow, but steady. Inevitably, we have also had long-serving volunteers retiring. Grateful thanks go to Chris Sayers, Audrey Brady and Margaret Thirwell.
It has been good to see a broad range of faces join us this year, across a wide age range and activities, including flower arranging, photography, and roles such as welcomers, event stewards, and many other volunteer roles.

Radical Welcome and General Volunteer Training has been held on a monthly basis. Nicola Maxwell, the Lantern Lead and I have thoroughly revised and refreshed the training to reflect the level of change in the Cathedral. Feedback from participants has been very positive. It has been great to have Nicola's input and support in the delivery of this training. We have also appreciated input from Jayne Forsdike, the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer.
We delivered our first training session to the Refugee Community with a Farsi interpreter, enabling participants with language barriers to receive training and take on volunteer roles.

We hosted our first ever Volunteer Recruitment Fair in June 2025 to coincide with National Volunteers Week, working alongside 28 external charities and organisations. This involved support from our own volunteers in the form of welcoming, telling visitors about the different roles and also offering guided tours to those organisations taking part. This was followed by a Volunteer Thanksgiving Service for both our Cathedral volunteers and the broader volunteering community in Newcastle.

We have expanded volunteering opportunities by welcoming supported volunteering – a student from Dilston college (Autism College for Young Adults). Dan helped the vergers hoovering in the Cathedral. He was great to have around and very enthusiastic!

The monthly Volunteer Newsletter keeps volunteers informed and briefed about new initiatives, activities and exhibitions and events ahead of their arrival so that they can plan their volunteering and are fully equipped to

answer the range of questions they receive from visitors. 2025 has included in depth focus on different areas of volunteering in the Cathedral.

Coffee, Cake and Chat continues on a monthly basis – a great opportunity for volunteers and staff to get together once a month (and also for me to bake!).

As always, there is the unseen time that the volunteer Coordinator spends supporting the members of the volunteer community. This is one of the most rewarding parts of my role. I continue to be in awe of what volunteers are prepared to give even when they are facing difficult personal circumstances.

Volunteering is part of the lifeblood of the Cathedral covering many areas. We are fortunate to have a diverse age range including the student and refugee community up to more mature volunteers. Each person brings a wealth of skills, experience, dedication and enthusiasm. The gift of their time and dedication is very significant to the overall life of the Cathedral.

Vanessa Ward
Volunteer Coordinator

Finance

Wider financial context for Cathedral funding

- The pilot scheme carried out by the Church Commissioners in 2025 ('Project Narthex') into the sector-wide financial picture of cathedrals was extended in 2025 to cover remaining Cathedrals.
- Similar to many charities, cathedrals are finding it tough to balance income generation, core mission and infrastructure costs. The initial findings of Project Narthex have identified that 75% of cathedrals run at a deficit, with many struggling to keep up with their long-term fabric repairs, and that 20% of cathedrals have a 'structural deficit' – i.e. their income will never match their outgoings.
- We continue to have an open and positive dialogue with the Church Commissioners about next steps; the Dean and COO (Chief Operating Officer) are attending various meetings in 2026 with strategic decision-makers together to discuss the outcomes of the report.
- The National Cathedrals Conference (being held in Bristol in May 2026) will also have key speakers such as the First Estates Commissioner, who the Bishop and Dean were delighted to host on his trip to the north-east in March 2025, attending the Sunday morning Eucharist, meeting members of the congregation and staff, and experiencing first hand not just our amazing choir but hearing from the team about how our Cathedral and mission is embedded in our community.
- Like many churches, the Cathedral will have to contend with the ending of the Listed Places of Worship Scheme which enabled us to recover a proportion of VAT related to repairs.

2025 – challenges and opportunities

- Top-level financial picture for Newcastle Cathedral in 2025: budgeted operational deficit for the full year was £115,087. Year End actual operational deficit was £67,250.

Challenges

- Our continuing challenge is to secure levels of unrestricted income to enable us to fund core costs; whilst we secured a number of grants in 2025, almost all of these were for defined/restricted work. We secured small amounts of funding from the Cathedral Music Trust and the Ouseley Trust for music salaries, as well as funding from the Diocesan Society to help with unexpected fabric spend. However, the budgeted level of unrestricted income continues to be a challenge.

- We have worked exceptionally hard in 2025 to ensure there is a step-change in our financial reporting in line with new charity reporting and Trustee requirements for financial scrutiny. The Finance and Investment Committee are supporting the finance team in this.
- We have worked hard to ensure that, as far as possible, our operating/infrastructure costs are within budget and that the building is adequately maintained. This is a challenge with any significant historic building, within the context of increasing compliance responsibilities and rising costs of maintenance.
- We are fortunate that good financial planning by the Finance Manager in 2024 ensured a fixed contract for utilities; however, we are concerned, like everyone, of the impact of international tensions on future utility costs e.g. one utility contract to be renewed at the end of 2026 as well as the increased cost of living for our staff.
- We supported the Cathedral Trust in 2025 on their large Gala Dinner; however, predicted ticket sales fell short of the forecast, resulting in less income than budgeted.

Opportunities

- Our events programme continues to be extremely successful. The report from our Commercial Enterprise Manager highlights some of the incredible work being undertaken to secure a healthy income from events, with a 5% increase in hire against budget for 2025.
- We continue to work hard as a team to ensure that there is space for all our events and activities, particularly as we enter 2026 with new Learning and Community Engagement staff whose roles are to develop impactful engagement opportunities for our community.
- We are fortunate to have had external funding for upgrades to Cathedral House, a key property for us to maintain. 2025 saw internal refurbishment including painting and window improvements, and we are working on securing long term tenants for 2026 onwards.
- We continue to feel exceptionally supported by the Friends of St Nicholas, both in their help with events but also recognising that the maintenance of the Cathedral is a huge priority for us. They have paid for painting of visitor facilities, access improvements and we are currently working with them on building a plan for 2026 fabric spend (including roof repairs).

As ever, the whole team have worked incredibly hard this year against a backdrop of increasing compliance, tighter organisational processes, embedding new staff successfully and continuing to support each other. They remain passionate and focused on ensuing that Newcastle Cathedral is a place which is well-run, financially prudent and home to all our community. Of course, we could not have done it without the support of the congregation, Chapter and the Friends of St Nicholas Cathedral.

Please note, our annual audited accounts will be available on our website later in the summer.

Kate Sussams
Chief Operating Officer

	Newcastle Cathedral Management Accounts: 2025	Budget 2025			Q4 2025			Variance
		Income	Expenditure	Surplus / (Deficit)	Income	Expenditure	Surplus / (Deficit)	Surplus / (Deficit)
A	Core Activities:	£	£	£	£	£	£	
	Mission & Ministry:							
1	Collections	111,000		111,000	108,313		108,313	(2,687)
2	Donations	5,500		5,500	9,229		9,229	3,729
3	Fees & Charges	69,000		69,000	56,204		56,204	(12,796)
4	Grants	430,820		430,820	535,052		535,052	104,232
5	Mission & Ministry		(38,900)	(38,900)		(19,594)	(19,594)	19,306
	Total Mission & Ministry	616,320	(38,900)	577,420	708,797	(19,594)	689,203	111,783
6	Music	114,097	(229,834)	(115,737)	120,378	(221,247)	(100,869)	14,868
7	Clergy Expenses		(15,540)	(15,540)		(150,211)	(150,211)	(134,671)
8	Clergy Housing		(54,000)	(54,000)		(50,644)	(50,644)	3,356
9	Vergers & Sacristy		(135,963)	(135,963)		(130,239)	(130,239)	5,724
10	Fabric		(240,896)	(240,896)		(184,160)	(184,160)	56,736
	Total Music/Clergy/Vergers/Fabric	114,097	(676,233)	(562,136)	120,378	(736,500)	(616,122)	(53,986)
11	Mosley Street	117,625	(94,900)	22,725	119,805	(109,567)	10,238	(12,487)
12	2A Holly Avenue	12,600		12,600	11,760		11,760	(840)
	Total Investment Property	130,225	(94,900)	35,325	131,565	(109,567)	21,998	(13,327)
13	Investments (Share Portfolio)	75,900		75,900	57,191		57,191	(18,709)
A	Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	936,542	(810,033)	126,509	1,017,931	(865,661)	152,270	25,761
B	Trading Contributions:							
14	Retail	23,500	(13,700)	9,800	18,273	(11,535)	6,739	(3,061)
15	Café - Licence to Occupy	7,500		7,500	9,375		9,375	1,875
16	Events & Hire	113,000	(63,000)	50,000	118,623	(25,316)	93,307	43,307
B	Trading Contribution	144,000	(76,700)	67,300	146,272	(36,851)	109,421	42,121
C	Surplus / (Deficit) Before Overheads	1,080,542	(886,733)	193,809	1,164,203	(902,512)	261,690	67,881
D	Overheads:							
17	Administration		(265,236)	(265,236)		(273,982)	(273,982)	(8,746)
18	Finance		(43,660)	(43,660)		(54,958)	(54,958)	(11,298)
D	Total Overheads		(308,896)	(308,896)		(328,940)	(328,940)	(20,044)
E	Surplus / (Deficit) After Overheads	1,080,542	(1,195,629)	(115,087)	1,164,203	(1,231,452)	(67,250)	47,837
F	Special Projects/Grants							
19	LI Project	92,000	(92,000)	0	235,047	(64,927)	170,120	170,120
20	Heating Project				50,000		50,000	50,000
21	Sustainability Grant No 1 (2018)		(68,911)	(68,911)		(68,911)	(68,911)	0
22	Sustainabilty Grant No 3 (2022)		(46,500)	(46,500)	2,694	(28,611)	(25,917)	20,583
23	Sustainability Grant No 4 (2023)		(36,500)	(36,500)	4,115	(19,071)	(14,956)	21,544
24	Sustainability Grant No 5 (2024)		(44,500)	(44,500)	2,092	(639)	1,453	45,953
25	Sustainability Grant Nr 6 (2025)				63,625	(31,360)	32,265	32,265
26	Sustainability Grant Nr7 (2025)				0	0	0	0
G	Underlying Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	1,172,542	(1,484,040)	(311,498)	1,521,776	(1,444,972)	76,803	388,301
27	Organ Project - Phase 1	6,000	(247,500)	(241,500)	7,750	(160,451)	(152,701)	88,799
28	Depreciation		(44,000)	(44,000)		(53,257)	(53,257)	(9,257)
H	NET Surplus / (Deficit)	1,178,542	(1,775,540)	(596,998)	1,529,526	(1,658,680)	(129,155)	467,843

Capital Receipts

	Capital Receipts						
	Legacies - Restricted	0		0	0		0
	Legacies - Unrestricted	0		0	0		0
	Total Legacies	0		0	0		0
I	Capital ReceiptsTotal	0	0	0	0		0
J	Surplus / (Deficit)	0	0	0	1,529,526	(1,658,680)	(129,155)
	Gains / (Losses)						
	Realised	0		0	3,952		3,952
	Unrealised	0		0	72,562		72,562
K	Total Gains / (Losses)	0	0	0	76,514	0	76,514
L	Revaluation of Properties	0	0	0	116,600	0	116,600
M	TOTAL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR				1,722,640	(1,658,680)	63,958
N	Drawdown	(300,000)		(300,000)	0		0
O	Retained Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	1,178,542	(1,775,540)	(596,998)	1,722,640	(1,658,680)	63,958

Split of net assets between funds	1st Jan 2025	Q4 2025	Q4 2025	Q4 2025	31 Dec 2025
Restricted funds	717,414	924,520	(912,083)	12,437	729,851
Unrestricted funds	1,308,113	650,148	(753,046)	102,898	1,205,215
Endowment funds	2,353,147	154,419	0	154,419	2,507,566

Fundraising and Development

It has been a challenging year in many ways, although not without its highlights. The transfer of grant agreements and funding for the Lantern Project, that were previously held by the Cathedral Trust (and who we are grateful to for securing three years of support for the work) took considerable coordination at a time when the work of the Project itself was below capacity due to staffing changes. It was, however, lovely to meet a lot of other projects supported by the Lantern's main funder at a 'Meet Up' event in Darlington. All are working to empower and protect some of the most vulnerable in society in different ways, and the work being done despite difficult circumstances is truly inspiring.

Another highlight was the CAFA Conference at Peterborough Cathedral, where many thought-provoking discussions were had, although sadly, no one offering a 'magic bullet' to the financial challenges now facing some 75% of English cathedrals. It was great to meet colleagues and peers in such a fantastic setting and recognise that we are stronger finding solutions together. In a similar vein, I have also been supporting the Bishop's Income Generation and Innovation Group as the Diocese seeks to address its own deficit. The group has just been renewed for another year, and I look forward to building on the work done in 2025 to understand the powerful social and community impact that is delivered by parishes across Northumberland.

Fundraising

We have been successful in a number of applications to trusts and foundations, through the year, although this is an increasingly challenging area with competition high and funders resources further stretched than ever before. There have been some applications we have been unable to make due to the staffing not being in place to deliver the corresponding activity, but with these positions now filled, I am looking forward to reviewing our approaches going into 2026.

In light of the Cathedral's deficit position, the focus has been on funding that can be applied towards existing costs in the budget. We have been successful in securing multi-year support either wholly or in part for a number of roles at the Cathedral, as well as contributions to volunteer and maintenance costs – this work is not glamourous but is vital. We are grateful to the Diocesan Society, Friends of Newcastle Cathedral, and Hadrian Trust for their support.

The music team have been supported with grants for both salaries and our School Singing Programme, with funders recognising the important work my colleagues are doing to create high quality musical opportunities that are accessible for all. Not Just a Pipe Dream continues to run and add to our organ restoration pot; pipe sponsorship seemed to be a popular Christmas gift for those hard-to-buy for musicians in people's lives, and one lucky person was a recipient of the 'Grand Organ Experience'. There are a few applications made in 2025 that we're awaiting decisions for – hopefully my 2026 report will bring good tidings!

Partnerships

2025 brought a new partnership with Newcastle City Council to host an artist at the Cathedral who worked with members of our community who are asylum seekers and refugees – the project culminated in an impactful Harvest Festival with artwork shared digitally and gracing the orders of service.

We hosted our second Gala Dinner with Newcastle Cathedral Trust and with Alfie Joey guiding us through the evening; it is always spectacular and inspiring to see the Cathedral filled with over 120 people from the business community, our local universities, and other charities in the city. The evening raised vital unrestricted funding for the Cathedral but will rest in 2026 as the Trust review and refresh their scope and purpose.

The year closed out with Christmas – with another beautiful tree donated by Bowmer and Kirkland, and a commitment to continue supporting the Cathedral in this way for some years to come. A reception before the choir's popular Candlelit Carols gave us the chance to celebrate and thank some of those who love the Cathedral as we do, including members of Chapter, the Friends, and the Trust.

Ashley Bell
Head of Development and Fundraising

Marketing and Communications

2025 was a year of relative stability for Marketing and Communications, following several years of significant change both at the Cathedral and across the wider Church of England. With a full complement of clergy, I was pleased to support the Dean's work on the new Strategic Document – articulating the Cathedral's vision for the next three years.

Alongside this strategic work, the year still brought considerable operational demands. I designed and shared job packs for 14 vacancies (all either grant-funded or replacing existing staff/choir). I also picked up various tasks where posts had not yet been filled.

Core marketing/communications activity continued throughout the year, including website and social media management, third-party listings, advertising, press releases, and e-newsletters. All of this was delivered within a tight budget, even as the costs of services such as printing have increased significantly.

Worship and Music

The year was bookended by the installation of Non-Residentiary Canons: first, the Rev'd Canon Dr Kelly Brown Douglas, and later, six Honorary Canons at our Patronal Festival in December. Both services were bookable via TicketSource for RSVPs and were very well attended.

In Lent, I coordinated a marketing photoshoot that captured a range of acts of worship and reflected the diversity of our worshipping community.

During Holy Week, I supported the Diocese by photographing the Chrism Eucharist. I also helped promote the Choir's Easter Day service on BBC Radio 3, attracting a large in-person/online congregation. Services that gained local press coverage included May's Danish Memorial/VE Day service, September's Armed Forces Covenant signing and November's Armistice Day Act of Remembrance.

I continued promoting the 'Not Just a Pipe Dream' Organ Appeal by organising a 'Pop Music on the Organ' recital featuring TikTok organist Matt Walters. The event raised several hundred pounds and attracted dozens of first-time visitors, as confirmed by questionnaire responses.

'Small Sounds', the Cathedral's music-making group for children aged 0–5, returned for a second year. With financial support from the Cathedral Music Trust, I ran a targeted marketing campaign that included a photoshoot, press release, and social media aimed at local parents and carers.

Later in the year, the Choir received media recognition for the Cambiata Voices partnership with Dame Allan's School and the release of 'O Nata Lux', the Choir's new album.

I continued to meet regularly with the Diocese Communications team, represented the Cathedral at conferences and on calls with other Dioceses, and contributed original articles to 'Link', the Diocese's magazine.

Events and Activities

2025 marked my fourth year overseeing the Cathedral's quarterly 'What's On' leaflet. With 45,000 copies distributed locally, the leaflet remains a key tool for increasing regional visibility. Producing it requires coordination with colleagues to collate programming information in line with copy/print deadlines.

In the absence of a Learning & Activities Officer, I oversaw the delivery of several exhibitions, including liaising with partners, co-designing interpretation panels, managing print, and supporting installation.

I continue to manage the Cathedral's TicketSource account, supporting bookings for tours, workshops, concerts and services, and extending its use to the Diocese's 'Theology &…' seminars. Through questionnaires, we gained valuable insights about attendees. Highlights of the year included sold-out 'Churchyard Mysteries' tours during The Late Shows and Northern Proud Voices/Rock Choir concerts, which exceeded booking expectations. All income from these 'Give as You Feel' events went directly to the Cathedral.

Working closely with the Commercial Enterprise Manager, I supported venue hire clients by listing events on our website and other channels. For the first time, I secured sponsorship for all four editions of the 'What's On' leaflet, as well as on-site digital advertising, generating approximately £3,000 – equivalent to a significant proportion of the annual marketing budget.

I also continued to support Newcastle Cathedral Trust, the Friends of St Nicholas, and the Chorister Alumni Network, designing materials, including the Trust's Gala Dinner programme. Additionally, I supported the Dialogue Society with graphic design for their Iftar held at the Cathedral.

Living the Lantern

Events which highlighted the Cathedral's work with vulnerable and marginalised communities continued to attract the greatest attention. The Women and Child Removal exhibition, marking International Women's Day, received BBC coverage and drew 176 attendees to its launch. Later exhibitions, including 'Your City: Your Recovery' and 'Seeking the Disabled Christ', were co-marketed by the Association of English Cathedrals and featured well-attended launches and workshops.

With changes to personnel, 2025 was a year of reflection and adjustment for the Cathedral Lantern Project. The appointment of a new Lantern Officer, at the end of the year, to support the Lantern Project Lead makes me excited for this strand of the Cathedral's work to play an even more prominent role in 2026.

2025 in Numbers

- 45,000 – What's On leaflets distributed across the region
- 3,378 – Mailing list subscribers (up 21.7% from 2024)
- 2,003 – Online viewers across Petertide Ordinations – our most viewed live-streamed services
- 17% – TicketSource bookings by people who had never visited the Cathedral before.
- 16 – E-newsletters, including Friends of St Nicholas communications
- 14 – Job vacancy documents designed and advertised

Peter Cumiskey
Marketing and Communications Manager

Events, Front of House and Retail

2025 has been the hardest year since we reopened to the public post-project. As financial challenges for the Cathedral are reflected in the wider economy, the everyday reality for many people is lower real term income and the concomitant smaller horizons. Under these circumstances offering a positive visitor experience whilst generating much needed income for the Cathedral has been difficult. However, we have achieved it.

Events continue to be the widest-reaching means of engagement with the people of the city and region, with tens of thousands coming to attend the increasingly varied offer in 2025. For many of these people, a church door is a barrier rather than a gateway to worship, heritage, and cultural events which our 'commercial' activity can remove: those conversations with people of the Northeast which begin 'I never thought to come in here….' or 'I've walked past this place my whole life…' and end with a new-found declaration of affection or awe, can make the drudgery and stress manageable.

The appointment of Sophie Moore, in October, as Event Supervisor is proving to be a boon. This role came from a restructuring of verger hours – 20 hours per week to be dedicated to staffing events – in recognition of the fact that the event side of the Cathedral's commercial enterprise has necessarily grown. It made sense to have a dedicated role under the line management of the newly created Commercial Enterprise Manager role and this is proving to be the best decision made in 2025.

Retail performed poorly. However, nearly 15% over budget for donations through the till. Likely due to the coaching completed by Jennifer before she left the role in April which gave many of the retail volunteers more confidence in their skills.

Due to ongoing issues with paid staffing for the retail space in 2025, it's amazing that we achieved what we did. This was due, almost exclusively, to the commitment and generosity of the retail volunteers.

Event hire
Budget £98,000
Actuals £109,706
% above 11.94
49.6% of the budget income was generated in the last quarter of the year

External bar hire
£6,482 in the first 6 months of the year
£12,813 in the first 10 months of the year
31.7% of total in November and December
£18,762 against a budget of £21,000

Friends Bar
Run by volunteers from the Friends of St Nicholas who donate their time and energies to raising donations which go directly to the Cathedral.
First year with line on the budget.
Budget £1,500
Actuals £4,454
% above 196

Retail
Achieved less than 80% of £21,000 budget for sales
Achieved nearly 15% over budget for donations through the till

Please note that figures may vary once the audit is completed.

Amy Carrithers
Commercial Enterprise Manager

Fabric

As usual, the Cathedral team ensures that planned maintenance is high on the agenda. This includes things like gutter maintenance (biannual gutter clearance and checking), annual equipment servicing (such as the Building Management System which allows us to control the efficiency of the heating in response to the wider Cathedral environment), security system maintenance and fire detection maintenance. We ensure that budgets are allocated to this work and that the maintenance is scheduled. In 2025, we undertook fixed wiring testing (carried out every 5 years).
We have been working with the insurance company about fire detection and have undertaken consultation with other cathedrals about upgrading our Nave fire detection to a new beam system (which will be in place in 2026); we have also installed new smoke detection in the Nave aisles and South Quire aisles.
Other areas which have been looked at by the Cathedral Architect have included fixing loose mortar around some of the ledger stones (which have been re-bonded with slightly more dense mortar) and air bricks fitted into areas of the walls in the Education Centre to alleviate damp issues in the stairwell and Icon Room.

We are very grateful to the Friends of St Nicholas Cathedral who continue to be extremely supportive in grant-aiding some of our maintenance, including painting of some of the Cathedral Hall communal facilities and helping us to repair the North Porch handrail.

Lantern Tower - we continue to work closely with our Newcastle City Council colleagues on what will be a significant period of scaffolding (possibly 2 years; as of April 2026 we are awaiting news as to when this might be put up) and repairs to the stonework on the pinnacles and the lantern itself.

The biggest project coming up in 2026 will be the replacement of the vestry heating system. Chapter's commitment to Net Zero has meant that the Cathedral Architect is focusing on replacing the defunct gas boiler with a more ecologically sustainable solution. We secured funding from the Church of England's 'Quick Wins' grant scheme at the end of 2025 and are working up a more detailed plan of heating requirements/ output/ running costs; we are really fortunate to be supported by the Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee on this (a retired heating engineer!).

Kate Sussams
Chief Operating Officer
on behalf of Scott Lindsay, Cathedral Architect

Deanery Synod

Newcastle Central Deanery Synod has met three times in the past year and continues its work of thinking about how best to use our resources to enable our parishes and the people within them to flourish in mission and ministry to their local communities.

Meeting in March 2025, the synod considered what motivated people to attend church regularly. These responses included not just worship but also a desire/need for community, to see our friends and companions on the way, and many of us simply do it out of habit. Motivation for giving money to church was also considered: we may do this out of a gospel imperative, to be generous as our God is generous, but other factors include just wanting to keep the place going or seeing it as a community asset to be used in service of others. People are often keen to support their local church, but it is less clear that they wish to support the work of the wider Diocese through the giving of money by parish churches in Parish Share.

This meeting also thought about the 'Seeking' element of the Diocesan vision, about where we see God at work. Answers included the preaching of the gospel, but also in how we share in community, as well as in nature and examples of care, love and forgiveness in the world around us, in the ordinary things of life, as well as the more dramatic.

Finance and vision were on the agenda again as we met in the Summer, with the synod receiving an update on Parish Share contributions and parishes being asked to start thinking about what they would be able to offer in 2026. The Diocesan vision was spoken about by Canon Ric Whaite, the Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry, who shared with the meeting the Diocese's plans for moving from 'Seeking' to 'Sharing'. This included the focus for the Deanery planning process for 2025 to 2028, which would be on three areas: New Worshipping Communities, Buildings for Mission and Growing Closer to God.

The synod did not meet again until January 2026, when the meeting received a further financial update on Parish Share payments. There was also an update from the Area Dean on the Deanery Planning process. A

plan would need to be drawn up for the deanery, to be presented by the end of June, based on what we perceived God is calling us to do and where He is calling us to go. The synod will be meeting again to think about what this looks like in practice.
The Deanery synod also received regular reports on business at the Diocesan Synod, including the recruitment of a new Diocesan Safeguarding Team, and from meetings of General Synod, keeping us linked into the thinking of the wider church and how we can best support its overall mission in the world.

Katherine Govier
Deanery Synod Representative

Friends of Saint Nicholas (FoSN)

The FoSN is an independent charity (registered no. 1053260) whose mission is to raise funds to maintain, preserve and beautify the Cathedral building. Funds are generated by the membership fees (£20 single, £35 couples). There are currently 150 members. There are no staff salaries to pay, and administrative costs (printing, postage and insurance) are low. The Executive Committee (10 voluntary trustees) meet three times a year and there is an annual general meeting in May.

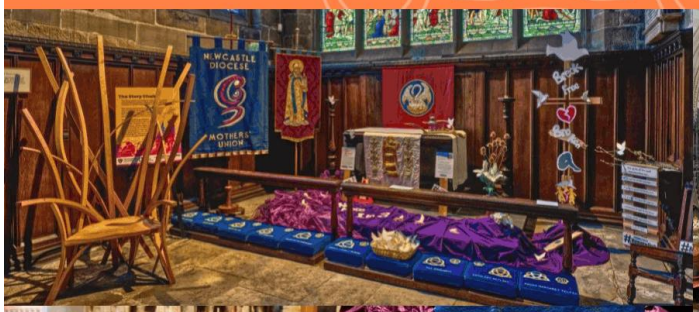
This year FoSN have funded the repair to the North Porch handrail, replacement of the Vestry sink and the painting of the basement and first floor corridors and toilets.

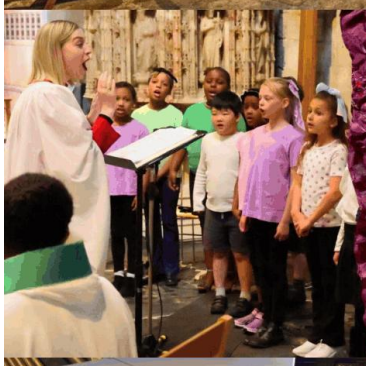
An initiative in 2025/26 established The Friends' Bar, (co-operating with the Commercial Enterprise Manager and the Finance Manager) resulted in raising total donations for the Cathedral of £2,904 (actual turnover £4,404).

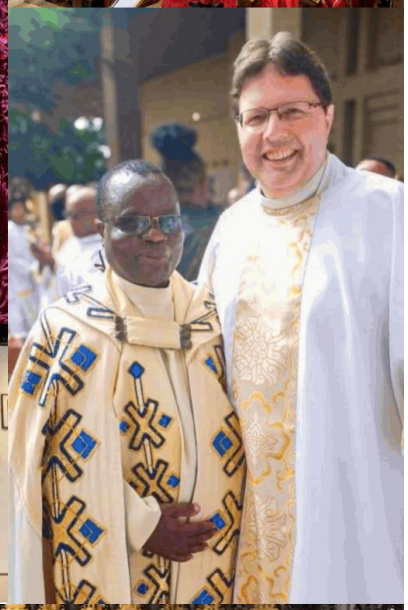
We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Peter Cumiskey (Marketing and Communications Manager) without whose valuable help the charity would not be publicised and promoted so effectively.

Lesley Lee
Honorary Secretary

2025 IN ACTION







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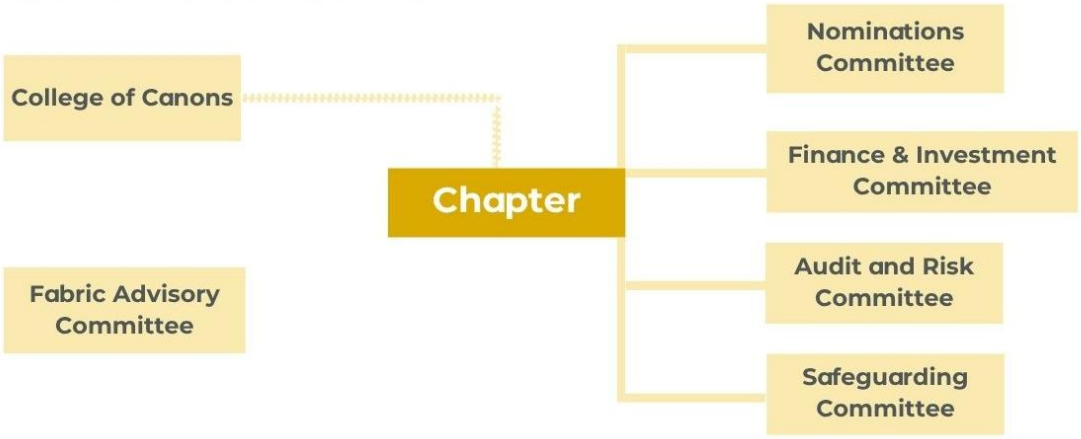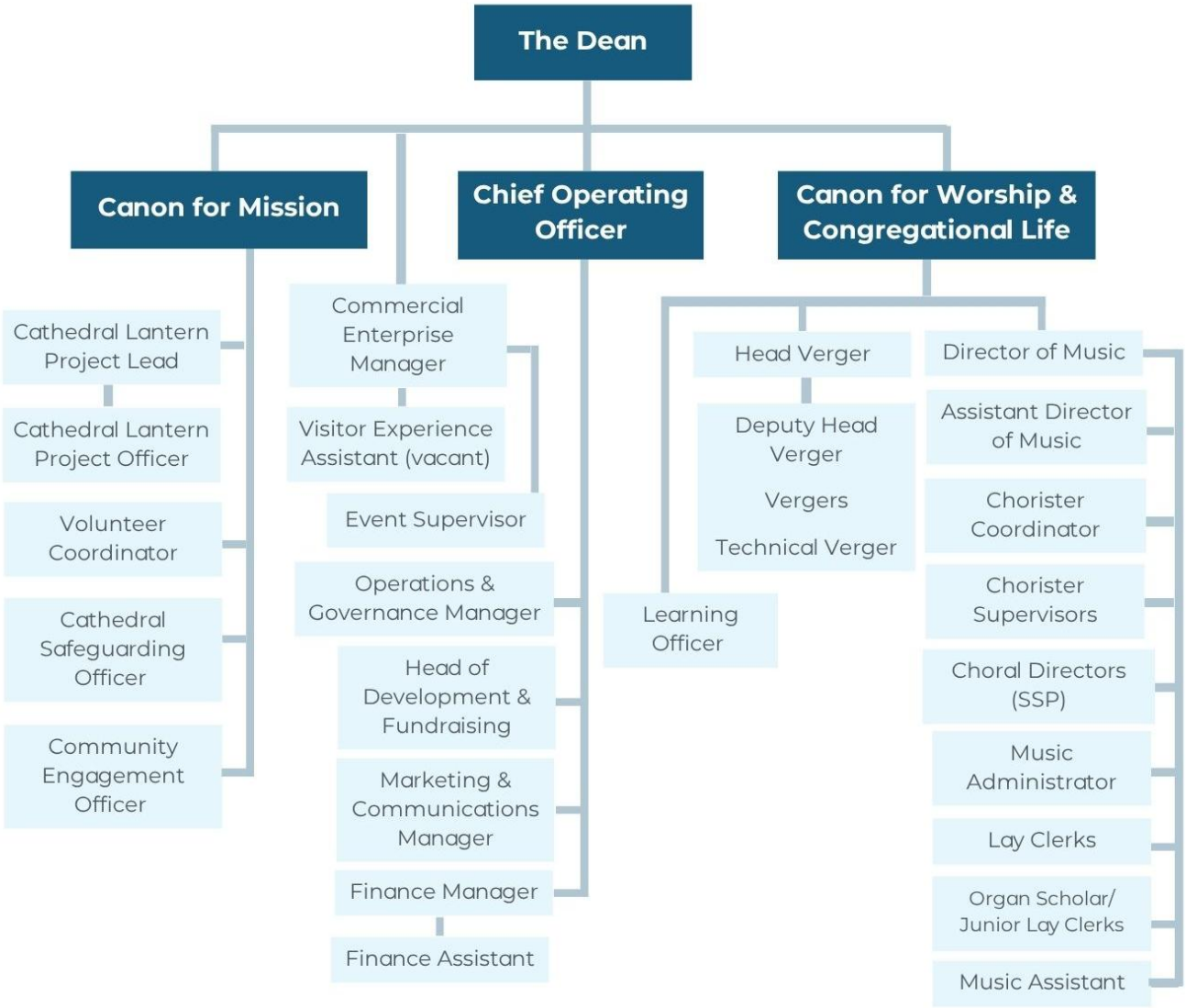
2026 ORGANISATIONAL CHART