

Chelmsford Cathedral – Announcement of a Visitation

1. A great deal has happened in recent years that impacts the life, mission and ministry of Chelmsford Cathedral in light of which we have agreed that it would be both timely and useful to undertake a pastoral Visitation.
2. A Visitation last took place at the Cathedral at the request of the Dean and Chapter in 2017. The Visitation was commissioned to monitor progress on the strategic plan and the Chapter's direction going forward. It led to a number of recommendations which have been consistently reviewed since.
3. In 2019 Chelmsford Cathedral underwent a Peer Review which was broadly positive and encouraging.
4. Like all other churches and cathedrals, living through the pandemic and adjusting to new ways of relating and different patterns of worship has been deeply challenging for Chelmsford Cathedral and all who work and worship there. But we are convinced that this period also represents opportunities which we are eager to capture, develop and learn from.
5. In recent months Chelmsford Cathedral has been without a permanent Chief Operating Officer. Plans are in place for the appointment of a COO in September 2022.
6. With the departure of two residentiary canons in recent months, the number of full time clergy is lower than ideal and it would be useful to explore ways of ensuring the Cathedral is best placed to consolidate any new appointments.
7. There is some confusion in the make up and role of the College of Canons and a certain lack of clarity over the precise number and names of honorary canons. It would be helpful to be able to find a way of addressing this situation.
8. The new *Cathedrals Measure 2021* will have a significant impact on the Governance Structures of Chelmsford Cathedral. Work is currently going on to prepare the Constitution and Statutes for the new Measure which will come into force sometime in 2023. At present, Chapter is being reshaped and expanded and other changes are being made to conform with the new Measure. A Visitation at this stage will help us prepare well for the changes ahead.
9. In view of all the above, we are arranging for a pastoral Visitation to take place that will consider broadly the life, mission and ministry of the Cathedral and their alignment with the developing life of the Diocese. The pastoral Visitation will be a general one that will consider, in particular, areas of Governance, Operations, Culture and Relationships (internal and external), worship, and the role of the Cathedral in the life of the wider Diocese.

10. The reviewers will meet with and interview staff, volunteers, congregants, and people who serve on committees and boards to listen to their experience and understanding in order to develop a rich picture of the cathedral, its strengths and weaknesses and its opportunities for development and further effective service.
11. The Panel undertaking the Visitation will be led by Bishop Tim Stevens, Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and formerly Bishop of Leicester. He will be joined by two other Panel members whose names will be announced once confirmed. Mr Nathan Whitehead, our Diocesan Head of Service Delivery, will act as clerk to the Visitation, offering administrative support.
12. The Visitation will commence early in November 2022. Precise dates yet to be decided.
13. The Panel will write a Report to be received by the Bishop who will consult with the Dean before considering the most appropriate ways of sharing findings and taking forward any learnings. Our aim is to be as transparent and open as possible.
14. As Bishop and Dean, we:
 - a. Invite the wider Diocese to commit to praying for the Cathedral and all involved during this period
 - b. Ask that all those who will be engaging in the process, do so in a spirit of openness and honesty, kindness and gentleness.
15. Our primary aim is to arrive at a place where the Cathedral has every chance to move forward well: as the seat of the Bishop, as the Cathedral for the Diocese and as a Parish Church. We are hopeful that the Visitation will provide the opportunity for harnessing all that is positive, learning where needed and leading to a renewed commitment to be a symbol of the presence of God in our community, worshipping faithfully and looking outwards to serve the people amongst whom it is placed.

The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Bishop of Chelmsford

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The Very Revd Nicholas Hensall
Dean of Chelmsford

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