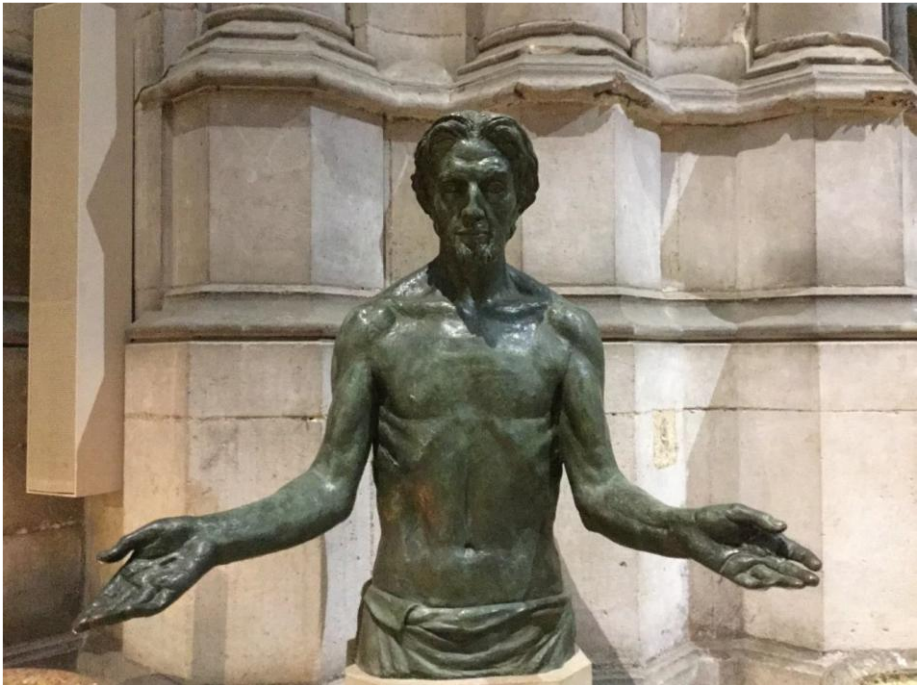




Why Cathedrals Plus?

Cathedrals Plus is an inclusive, ecumenical and professional organisation that aims to support the engagement of visitors not just to cathedrals, but to abbeys, minsters, greater churches, and other Christian sacred spaces – hence our name, Cathedrals PLUS.



Christus Statue, Hans Freibusch – Ely Cathedral

We aim to advance the education of history, architecture and the local environment through the study of all sacred spaces, including historic church buildings and pilgrimage sites, their people and their heritage.

We aim at the same time, to share the story of our Christian faith, promoting and advancing Christian values within our multi-faith society, through creative engagement with visitors, tourists and pilgrims.

Who are we and what do we do?



Cathedrals Plus is a fully democratic institution governed by a Council whose members are elected for a three-year term on a rotational basis at the Annual General Meeting. It is a registered charity with the Council Members acting as trustees and is responsible to the Charity Commission for the proper conduct of its affairs.



Bath Abbey



Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin



Bunyan Meeting, Bedford

We welcome members of all denominations from the UK, Ireland and internationally. Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin is a long-established member and we have very recently been joined by St Machar's, Aberdeen. Our members include several major churches and abbeys, including Great St Mary's in Cambridge, and Buckfast Abbey in Devon.

A letter from our Chair

I am delighted to introduce you to Cathedrals Plus, which started out as The Pilgrim's Association but became Cathedrals Plus in 1994. With an ever-increasing membership, we now have a Council of 15 members from across the British Isles and Ireland. The Council meets at least three times a year and tasks separate subgroups to plan our conferences or work on specific projects.



Many colleagues involved with Learning and/or Heritage often work alone or in small teams within large and complex organisations, so being able to network and share skills and inspiration, through our conferences and regional meetings – online and in person – has been identified as a real benefit of membership. Cathedrals Plus has six regional hubs which organise regular, supportive meetings and events. These meetings are very well-attended, and our members-only WhatsApp group continues to serve an important function as an informal support and ideas network with a fruitful exchange of ideas.

Our website offers an online presence for the public, where each sacred space can showcase its mission and provide key information and a link to its own website. Colleagues contribute blog posts to share aspects of their work or raise important issues. For members, we also offer an exclusive online Resources Hub where colleagues can share and download templates, documents, photos and materials to support best practice in community engagement or educational outreach.

The Cathedrals Plus website also has a useful Job Vacancies page which our member organisations are welcome to use free of charge. As regards social media, we have a public-facing Facebook page which attracts a great deal of interest and is growing its reach and followers. Using this platform, members can advertise upcoming events at their sacred spaces.



We hold annual residential conferences which offer colleagues relevant professional development. Each conference features notable speakers, practical professional workshops and invaluable sharing sessions about Education/Learning or Visitor Engagement led by members for their colleagues.
Welcome to Cathedrals Plus!

Anthony Cane
Dean of Portsmouth; Chair of Cathedrals Plus

Opening Doors – Visitors, Tourists and Pilgrims

In 2023, our Cathedrals were visited by over 8 million people (AEC/Church Commission), but other sacred spaces, such as shrines, holy wells and ruins also attract visitors. Many are tourists, exploring our history and heritage, and many are pilgrims, seeking spiritual comfort and inspiration. Some people may arrive as tourists but leave as pilgrims because of the effect of the sacred space itself, or the impact upon them of the people who work or volunteer there.



Pilgrimage by Sister Benedicta Ward (SLG)



Pilgrims walking the Thames path



A prayer angel, Rochester Cathedral



Pilgrim Passport at Peterborough Cathedral

In 2022, two members of the Cathedrals Plus Council, inspired by the pilgrims' Camino passport, decided to produce one for the UK. They drew together photographs from members and collected perceptions, past and present, about Pilgrimage. The Pilgrim Passport, published by CPO, is now available in most cathedral shops and visitors can request a stamp or sticker for their passport.



Pilgrim token, Sheffield



St Alban's Shrine

Opening Minds – Education and Learning



Adult Learning - an Icon course

At least half of our Cathedrals Plus colleagues work with schools, colleges, families and adult learners. Trying to engage visitors and young people who do not come from a faith background is increasingly challenging because they do not possess the language and vocabulary that underpins the Christian story.

Colleagues tread a fine line between sharing the story in an inspiring way but without proselytising. Visiting the sacred space is clearly central to the educational experience but both adults and young people enjoy engaging creatively with the story, from icon-writing, to making stained glass crosses.



Finger lights to study a shrine



Sheffield Cathedral



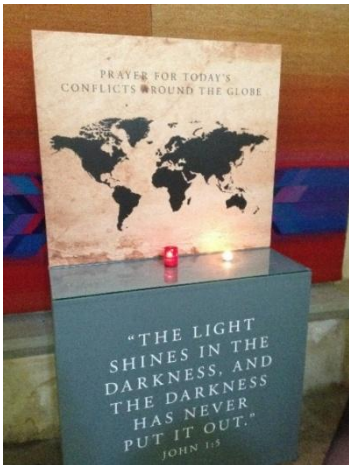
Making crosses



Our Lady of Walsingham - the Anglican shrine

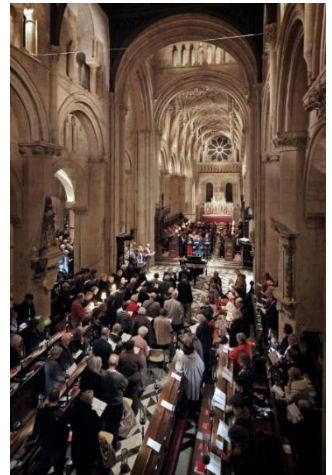
Opening Hearts – Outreach and Community

In order to encourage engagement with worshippers, local people, and visitors, most sacred spaces now use events, community projects, performances and family activities to draw in a wider-ranging public.



Prayer

These events can generate much-needed income, but they are designed primarily to reach out to a wider demographic and to share the Christian message with as many people as possible.



Worship



Cathedral Volunteers at Hereford Cathedral

Through guided tours and presentations on a wide range of local, national and international issues, education & visitor colleagues work closely with local community groups.

Opening Eyes – Creativity and The Arts



Peace Doves, Peter Walker



Threads Through Creation, Jacqui Parkinson

God is, of course, the ultimate and infinite Creator, and creativity and craftsmanship have been dedicated to God's glory for more than a thousand years. Creativity continues to be celebrated within our sacred spaces and our members are regularly involved with events such as Sons et Lumières, Art Exhibitions and Installations, concerts and dramas, all of which draw in new visitors.



*WW1 window, Nicholas Mynheer
Southwell Minster*



Inside the Organ, Portsmouth

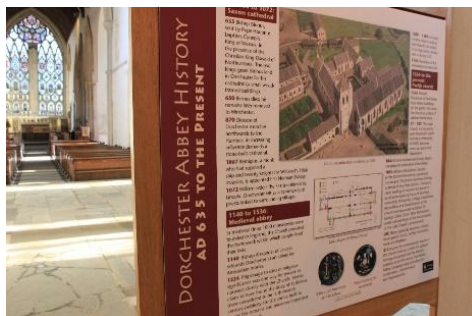


The Passion, LAMPS Collective

There are many other artists, including Peter Ball, Luke Jerram and Roger Wagner whose work has become associated with our sacred spaces.

Opening Windows on History and Contested Heritage

Churches and cathedrals are places dedicated to the worship of God, and to welcome, but many visitors come to learn about our history and heritage. Through guidebooks, interpretation panels and volunteer or multi-media guides, visitors can usually access information of the breadth and depth they seek.



Studying monuments

However, for a variety of reasons, members of certain communities may not always feel welcomed. One reason could be the presence of statues or memorials commemorating people responsible for the oppression of others, slave traders for example. A number of churches and cathedrals are already in the process of researching, consulting and considering how best to present this aspect of our history.



Artist Victor Ehikhamenor makes final adjustments to his artwork, Still Standing, in situ in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral, alongside the monument to Admiral Sir Harry Rawson

© Graham Lacdao

Most valuable were the informal conversations and the thoughts about how to approach contested heritage.

Matthew Pollard, Ripon Cathedral [talking about the 2024 Cathedrals Plus conference]

Opening Professional Development – Exploring Best Practice

Recent themes for our annual conferences have included REACHING OUTWARDS (2023); WORKING TOGETHER: Sustainable partnerships (2024); and JOURNEYS: Travelling Together Through Faith (2025).



The opportunity to bring together both clergy and laity who have responsibility for the care of visitors and education is invaluable for members.



I have always found [the conferences] by far the best source of training available to those of us who work in this most unusual environment.

Laura Arends, Westminster Abbey



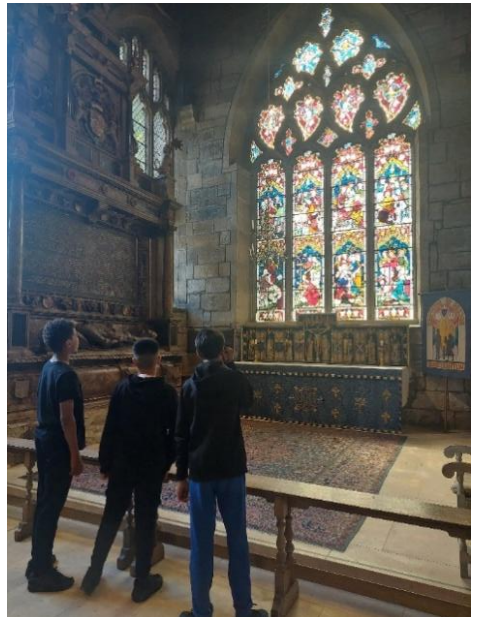
It gives me a bit of space to think about the overall direction of the learning and public programmes. I find talking to my colleagues from other places really inspiring and supportive

Lisa Power, York Minster



Opening Ourselves – Using our Senses

We encourage visitors to use their senses to appreciate the beauty of our sacred spaces, designed to glorify God.



Oh God, we pray. Turn our eyes from worthless things. Help us to fix our eyes on worthy things, on Your Word, on what matters most in the world. Turn our eyes toward looking at that which is pure and right and excellent and praiseworthy. (Psalm 119:37)

Opening Networks



A prayer labyrinth in the community



Lincoln Cathedral



Adult Courses

Organising partnerships, staging events and being open all day every day can mean that there are competing demands for time and space between the needs of the worshippers and clergy; the goals of the learning programmes; the pressure of exhibition set ups and visitors; and the expectations of tourists and event attendees.



With limited budgets and minimal staff rations, our sacred spaces depend on working collaboratively with local partnerships and networks and a veritable army of volunteers.

Cathedrals Plus

Today, our cathedrals and churches are still at the centre of Christian life, still serving their local communities and the thousands of people who visit them each year. To these present-day pilgrims, they offer a welcome, provide hospitality, and a place of prayer, quiet reflection or meditation to people of all faiths or of none.



Cathedrals are a focal point for the communities they serve and are there to be enjoyed by everyone!



Angels from Christ Church, Oxford and Salisbury Cathedral

Our Partners:



McCabe
PILGRIMAGES

We would like to thank McCabe Pilgrimages for their generous contribution towards the cost of printing this booklet.

Cathedrals Plus is indebted to Ecclesiastical Insurance and The Benefact Trust for their continuing support and sponsorship for our annual conference.



We also work closely with the Association of English Cathedrals (AEC) and CPO who publish the Pilgrim Passport.



www.cathedralsplus.org.uk