



**Cathedral  
Annual Reports  
2024**

**Annual Congregational  
Meeting  
2025**

**Newport Cathedral  
Church of St Woolos**

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## ANNUAL REPORTS OF CATHEDRAL 2024 ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

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# Annual Cathedral Congregational Meeting 2025

## Introduction from the Dean

Firstly, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the reports for this year's annual congregational meeting, and all the dedication and commitment that lies behind them. Reading through them will give a fuller flavour of the Cathedral's life and ministry in its various forms.

Not many people read the full published annual accounts, not least because they give the full movements in funds and that's not the same as whether income matches day to day expenditure. At the beginning of those accounts each year, I write a comprehensive trustee report on what the previous year has entailed. To make this more widely available – and perhaps read – this year I am reproducing below the main substance of that report. Apologies in advance, this is quite a long read!

2024 brought significant changes to the life and ministry of the Cathedral. Changes in the funding formula for the support the Cathedral receives from the Representative Body of the Church in Wales took over the direct funding of clergy posts, with the exception of housing and training costs. This meant that the Dean and one full-time residentiary canon were directly funded. An additional post was created, to be determined in conjunction with the Bishop. These changes enabled a refocus of the ministry in the Cathedral to be able to appoint a Canon for Worship and Congregational Life (a new post), and a Canon for Mission and City Chaplain, working 40% internally focused on the Cathedral and 60% externally, extending the Cathedral's ministry into the city of Newport and working in partnership across Ministry Area boundaries. Canon Andrew Lightbown moved into this refocused role as 'missioner' and, after advert and interviews, Canon John Connell was appointed to the post of Canon for Worship and Congregational Life. This change took effect in the summer and we were delighted to welcome him in July. Both Canon Andrew and Canon John have written about their new roles later in this document.

The Director of Music, Emma Gibbins, after 9 years moved on to take up the role of Director of Music at Chelmsford Cathedral, in the Church of England. After advert and interview, we were pleased to appoint Tom Coxhead as the new Director of Music. He started at the beginning of September, which meant there was no need to make interim arrangements. He has built on the foundations left by Emma. The boy and girl choristers have been brought together into one line and the older teenagers formed into a new youth choir, with the adults providing the lower voices for both sections. We have been grateful for support from the Cathedral Music Trust. In May the choristers were given a special opportunity with members of the choral group Genesis Sixteen leading them in a workshop in the Cathedral. Tom has written more about his first few months with us.

The Cathedral is open each day from Morning Prayer until Evening Prayer – usually 8.00am to 5.30pm. Footfall was around 37,000 (2024: 36,000). Events were restricted due to the disruption caused by the internal lighting works limiting availability during the summer and autumn.

The heartbeat of the Cathedral is its worshipping life. This continues to grow, in both the core liturgy and also different styles when the choir is on a break and there is no visiting choir. The liturgical diet has been expanded at Christmas to both address the capacity congregation for the Festival of Lessons and Carols, and offer an informal service of carols, what has become known as the ‘Christmas Jumper Service’.

Average worshipping attendance has increased with 129 adults and 24 children on Sundays. There is a faithful congregation at both Morning and Evening Prayer and the daily Eucharists. Even though the Cathedral does not have a parish, there were 6 baptisms in the year and we are frequently asked to host funerals for those with a civic or high profile connection, or which other churches would not be able to accommodate. There is still a high level of association with ‘St Woolos’ as the ancient parish church for the city. The increased use of Welsh language in both the liturgy and at special services has continued with a Welsh language Choral Evensong in the summer.

The Diocesan Choral Festival is becoming an established feature in the Cathedral year, drawing together choirs from around the diocese. In May the Cathedral choir joined with the choirs of Llandaff and Brecon Cathedrals for a Welsh Three Choirs Festival in Brecon. The Cathedral hosted the Sacred Synod for the confirmation of the election of the Bishop of Bardsey during the April Governing Body, held in Newport. The Cross of Wales was brought to the Cathedral for this service and one of our choristers was privileged to carry this at the special service of Choral Evensong.

The Cathedral’s civic ministry has continued with the annual civic service and Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, as well as hosting a meeting for the Homewards project, the initiative of the Prince of Wales to make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable. Homelessness is an issue which comes directly to the Cathedral door and a protocol has been devised for how these guests are welcomed and cared for along with their possessions while in our grounds.

At the beginning of August, with the disturbances around the UK, the Cathedral clergy organised and hosted very quickly within 24 hours a Peace Vigil. Interfaith, ecumenical and civic partners attended and were very grateful for the invitation and for the offering of the space for the city to come together. This drew on the work that has taken place to strengthen ecumenical and interfaith connections.

It has been a busy year for concerts and events. With the sudden announcement of a General Election in June, BBC Radio 4 contacted us at short notice to host a live broadcast of ‘Any Questions’. This was because they had been here before and were impressed with how smoothly the Cathedral staff worked with them. In November BBC Radio Wales came for a broadcast of their Sunday Celebration. In addition to the regular monthly Music@StWoolos

concerts, showcasing young musicians from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and performers from further afield, a varied programme has been staged. The partnership with St Woolos Sinfonia as orchestra in residence provided a liturgical rendition of Bach's Cantata 'Nun Komm Der Heiden Heiland' on the second Sunday of Advent. We were honoured that the Salvation Army International Staff Band and Songsters came to give a concert in the Cathedral as part of their celebration weekend in Newport in July.

A key aspect of the Cathedral's role is to host diocesan services and events. In addition to the annual ordinations and Chrism Eucharist, the Cathedral supported the bishop's ministry. We welcomed schools from around the Diocese for the annual Church Schools year 6 leavers services, and a conference for headteachers. Various schools have come to the Cathedral for educational visits.

The first ecumenical canon was installed when Captain Kathryn Stowers, from the Salvation Army, was appointed. Three diocesan clergy were also installed as canons, Revds Sally Ingle-Gillis, Justin Groves and David Matthews.

Everyone who works in the Cathedral is highly dedicated and we are very grateful for their commitment. We have to be mindful to ensure that capacity is not exceeded. The Cathedral's mission and ministry relies heavily on dedicated volunteers. Without the work of these volunteers, the Cathedral could not function and I would like to thank everyone for all they do.

The Cathedral is committed to working towards Net Zero carbon emissions and is working towards the silver A Roche Eco Church award. This has been assisted with the city council installing two electric vehicle charging ports in car parking spaces by the lychgate.

Works identified in the Quinquennial Inspection report have been progressed according to priority. The paving inside the Cathedral has been repointed to remove trip hazards. Work also took place to improve the rainwater goods where the East wall of the St Luke Chapel meets the chancel. Rainwater was overshooting the gutters and soaking the wall, leading the plaster to blow and also the ferrous work in the windows to rust, with consequent stone damage.

The deterioration of the Cathedral lighting led to a major refurbishment of the system. The works revealed that the installation required complete rewiring, a new control system, along with the replacement of the semiconductors in the light fittings. Some lights were repositioned to take account of the liturgical changes of recent years. The hanging light fittings above the Canons' Stalls were removed as part of this work. With the introduction of the Rood, these detracted from the visual and spiritual focus of the Rood and the Chancellor of the Diocese approved their removal. The fittings have had to be retained and a photograph of the chancel with the lights in situ is displayed in the corridor towards the kitchen so that the historic image is retained. This photograph shows the wonderful effect around mid-summer when the early sunlight shining through the East window creates a corona effect on the chancel floor. The lighting has improved visibility and versatility.

Plans were advanced on the external lighting to the paths and drive, to improve safety and security, and this work will take place during the Spring of 2025. Additional surveys were required as part of the civil planning consent, which pushed the start date for the work into the following year. Major tree work had to be carried out in the Cathedral grounds to remove diseased and dangerous trees.

The tower repairs have been progressed with further tests and a structural engineer's report. A beam inside the tower was discovered to be riddled with woodworm and had to be removed to prevent a catastrophic fall onto the bells as well as to remove the infestation. Dating of this beam proved inconclusive and nothing of it could be salvaged, such was the damage. A significant challenge for the larger project is the change to the Listed of Places Worship Grant Scheme, through which VAT on repairs is reclaimed, announced by the Westminster government in early 2025. Claims have been restricted to £25,000 per year and there is no guarantee that the reduction will be reversed, or the scheme extended beyond 2025/26. This leaves the prospect of 20% additional costs on major works.

The Cathedral signboard was replaced. This had been in a dilapidated state for a long time. Money for this was raised by members of the congregation from the proceeds of the monthly Coffee, Cake and Chat on Saturday mornings. This provides a valuable opportunity for people to come together from the community and spend time in one another's company. The board now gives a fitting welcome to those arriving at the Cathedral and displays that this is a place of vibrant, open and inclusive welcome.

The Cathedral has welcomed a number of exhibitions this year. The artist Elizabeth Gray-King brought her paintings under the title 'Open to all', reflecting on the inclusive love of Christ. This was in partnership with Open Table Network. During Lent a snakes and ladders boardgame was brought into the Cathedral, which provided an opportunity to reflect on what helps us ascend the spiritual ladders and what causes us to slide down the snakes. For Advent, the train set returned for the Newport Posada, this year incorporating a mini 'Christmas tree festival' with local businesses providing a decorated tree reflecting their business and support for the community.

Various talks, study days and discussion groups have been organised through the year, allowing opportunities to deepen faith and engage with particular issues. Again these are mentioned in reports that follow.

Along with the annual Chartists Convention, the Cathedral hosted a number of events to support the campaign for a Statue for Lady Rhondda to be sited in the city centre. We were given a plaque on the statue when it was unveiled in the city centre. We joined with Newport Pride, offering a stall at the event and held a service in the Cathedral on the eve of the main day. Many commented on the importance of seeing the rainbow flag flying from the tower. The Cathedral aims to be inclusive and provide a welcome space for all.

The Cathedral community has a passion for justice and social care. This is displayed through continued support for refugees, food hunger projects in local schools, the foodbanks and provision for the homeless. Sadly, the MIND support group, which met in the hall on Mondays without charge, had to close due to cuts in their funding.

The Congregational Committee has continued to meet throughout the year and be a congregational voice for the promotion of the Cathedral community's life and ministry. A communications committee continues to look at ways to develop and improve communications within the Cathedral and to those who visit.

There is a steady flow of people coming in to visit, to pray, find a still space in which to sit, or looking for assistance and finding an open welcome. This is one of only a very small number of religious buildings open in the city all day and every day. The Cathedral has been a beacon on the hill for 1500 years, and we trust in God's grace that it will continue to be so for many generations to come.

I am very pleased to commend the following reports to you.

Very Revd Ian Black  
Dean of Newport,

## **Baptism Card Report 2023**

On behalf of the Cathedral, Mothers' Union send baptism anniversary cards to children up to and including the age of 4 years from the first anniversary of their baptism. Those over the age of 4 years, including adults, are sent an age-appropriate card on their first baptism anniversary only.

During 2024, 26 cards were sent, of which 9 were sent their final cards. One card was returned 'not at this address'. Unfortunately, an 11-year-old candidate was not sent a card because the MU shop did not have an age-appropriate card in stock. MU advised that such a card would not be available before February 2025. An internet search at the time did not reveal a suitable result, nor the Cathedral shop

Sixteen candidates will be carried forward and including the 6 baptisms which took place in 2024, a total of 22 cards will be sent during this year.

*Sandra Toulson*

## **Bellringers' Report 2023**

We have continued to ring quite steadily through the year, ringing for 49 Sunday morning services, 37 Sunday evening services and held practices on 50 Tuesday evenings. Unusually a Sunday was missed due to tree cutting, but for the first time in many years Clevedon can be seen from the South tower window!

On the 14th September we took part in the CADW Open Doors day event. The tower was open in the morning for any visitors to see ringing demonstrations, have a look at the bells, and of course the view from the roof.

Notable services that the bells were rung for during the year included half muffled ringing for Remembrance Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day, the Patronal service in June and the Ordinations on the 29th June. On Sunday 29th September we rang for the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Canon Jenny Mole, a former member of our band, and also for the Rev David Neale.

Our tower outing took place on 5th October to the Hereford area with the highlight being the opportunity to ring at Hereford Cathedral.

There were 2 successful full peals during the year. This included the first peal on THE PAUL 10 by a local band, using the new treble bell.

The bells have been well used in the year, Ringing for 85 services, hosting the Monmouth branch ringing course, hosting 4 Llandaff and Monmouth Assn. 12 bell practices, visiting bands of ringers for peals, quarter peals and general ringing from outside the area. Notable

visitors were from the Oxford University tour of the area, and visitors from the Swansea and Brecon Assn. We also hosted a YOUNG RINGERS EVENT in November.

Following an initiative by Anne Hayman as Branch Master, our ringers are involved in starting a new band of ringers from scratch at Bedwellty. This involves both teaching at Bedwellty and a silent bell session at St Woolos before our main practice on Tuesdays.

The annual Bellringers Dinner day was held at the end of November, the meal was at Newport Golf Club, attended by 17 people, including the Dean. The Association quiz night was held in St John's church hall and was hosted by the St Woolos ringers. Thanks to Gemma and Adam for again organising the quiz.

Following the project to install the extra treble bell in memory of Paul Williams, we have settled into a routine of using our new light 10, both for practice and Sunday service ringing. There have also been two quarter peals on the new front 6, which are both interesting and unusual.

Among our near future projects that are in their planning stage is the installation of sound control/sound reduction in the bellchamber, to help improve the facilities the Cathedral can offer as a training centre. There is also the inspection and probable replacement of all the bearings of the ring of 12, which have not had their bearings touched since their installation in 1967.

We are very appreciative in having such supportive clergy and staff within the Cathedral and we can nearly always allow requests for extra sessions from both local and visiting bands to come and ring on our exceptional bells.

*Barry Hayman  
Tower Warden*

## **Canon for Mission and Chaplain to the City of Newport**

Over the course of the last twelve months the cathedral has continued, indeed has scaled up, its service to those living in food poverty in Newport and beyond. As a cathedral we support the Stow Hill Food Bank, the Welsh Refugee Agency and the Student Village. We also – through Pantry on the Hill – distribute in the region of 100 packets of cereal per month. The cereal is donated to The Gaer Food Bank, St. Teilo's School Breakfast Club, and the Food Pantry at St. Stephen's Pill. I am grateful to all who contribute so generously week-by-week.

We continue to support St. Woolos School and are participating in their exciting plans to form a community-based CIO, serving the Stow Hill and Baneswell areas of the city.

The cathedral continues to be actively involved, as a lead participant in the Royal Foundations Homewards programme, to be involved in a range of initiatives to counter homelessness in the city. I am hoping that opportunities will emerge for members of the cathedral community to become actively involved as volunteers. We continue to support Eden Gate, practically,

prayerfully, and through my involvement as trustee. One of the members of the cathedral community provides health care support on a weekly basis.

Sadly, Mind on the Hill, ceased in January 2025. This was solely due to a substantial reduction in funding for Mind (from NCC), which resulted in Mind reducing the number of services on offer. We continue to look for opportunities to serve mental health agencies in the city.

We have recently been able to start, in partnership with Canon Kathryn Stowers, the provision of chaplaincy and worship in the Student Village. We are extremely grateful for the support received from Brian Cox and Rotary.

Newport Cathedral has a commitment to serving the ecumenical community. We do this in numerous ways: ecumenical services (both in the cathedral and at other churches), the monthly Urban Pilgrims prayer walk, and through the provision of spiritual friendship to church leaders. Our ecumenical partners and friends also play a crucial role, alongside the Newport Forum, in helping enrich our distinct charism: Urban Spirituality.

We are also committed to interfaith engagement. It was wonderful to hold the Peace Vigil in the community in the summer, and it was also a real privilege to attend a Community Iftar. A small group from the cathedral visited Hill Street Mosque. We are hoping to provide further opportunities for interfaith engagement and education.

The cathedral is committed to providing educational opportunities and this has been undertaken through a regular 'In Conversation with....' series. Guests have included Helen Roper from the Royal Foundation, Canon Ian Loynd, and Ruth Jones MP.

We are also committed to advocating for the poor, the marginalized, and the discriminated against. This is part of our prophetic mandate. Our engagement with Pride in The Port, the Campaign for the Statue for Lady Rhondda, Citizen's Cymru and others are all indicative of our commitment. Members of the clergy and cathedral chapter also use opportunities to use our status as a cathedral to speak on behalf of marginalized groups both within the Church in Wales and in the public square. I regularly use my Argus article to challenge behaviours and patterns of thinking that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization.

The cathedral continues to support the civic, cultural, sporting and political life of the city.

*Canon Andrew Lightbown.*

## **Canon for Worship and Congregational Life**

My first six months here at St Woolos Cathedral, Newport has seen a number of significant changes, not least in the Music Department, for which I have overall responsibility. On my appointment I asked Dean Ian and Bishop Cherry if I could start my new role before our much-loved Director of Music, Dr Emma Gibbins, left for her new post as Director of Music at

Chelmsford Cathedral. I felt it was important to be around to help bridge the gap between Emma's departure and the arrival of our new Director of Music Tom Coxhead.

Having been in post for nine years, Emma had been responsible for giving girls the same opportunities as boys to be choristers in the Cathedral. This year we will celebrate 10 years of girls singing here and Tom has invited Emma to take part in that service. We can rightly acknowledge the contribution girls and young women make to our musical life at a special Evensong on the Feast of St Cecilia when a newly commissioned work will be sung - watch this space for more details!

The arrival of a new Director of Music, with new ideas and an enthusiasm to provide new opportunities and wanting to get the best out of our choristers, inevitably means that it takes time as the choristers and choir members to get used to new ideas and a different approach to directing them. At our Advent and Christmas services we were privileged to see a new confidence in many of our younger singers, with several singing solos or forming part of a small ensemble. The formation of our Youth Choir and the amalgamation of the boy and girls has given us a new flexibility where the older choristers can learn new repertoire and the younger choristers step into the shoes of the older choristers and find a new confidence. The results can be heard on Sundays at the Cathedral Eucharist and at Choral Evensong on Wednesdays and Sundays. The Choir's ability to sing unaccompanied repertoire is a reflection of their increasing skills and confidence as singers. We look forward to new things in 2025 and the recruitment of new choristers to boost our ranks.

Day to day my role involves preparing all the liturgies for the worshipping life of the Cathedral, meeting regularly with Tom and Jeremy as the Music Department to plan music for the coming term, choosing the hymns, supporting choristers and their families. It is a busy but exciting part of my dual role here at the Cathedral, and I count myself as privileged to be working alongside such talented musicians – from our youngest choristers to the back row as well as Tom and Jeremy. May I express my thanks and appreciation for all that they do together to enhance our worship and to lift our hearts and minds to the heavenly places.

As Canon for Congregational Life my main task in 2024 has been getting to know members of the congregation, visiting those who are unable to be part of ongoing Cathedral life due to illness or because they are housebound, often taking Communion to them at home. I am grateful to established members of the congregation for keeping me informed when they hear that someone is unwell or been taken into hospital – please never think that someone will have already told me about a person in need. I would rather be told ten times that someone is in need of a visit, rather than not being told at all! I officiate at the majority of funerals here at the Cathedral and it is always a privilege to walk alongside a family as they commend a loved one to God's care and keeping.

Preparing candidates for Confirmation on the Feast of the Epiphany in 2025 was a joy in the busy run up to Christmas and a group of choristers were enthusiastic learners, as well as a more mature member of the congregation, who greatly enjoyed their company at the Confirmation.

In the coming months I hope to explore how we can identify and train pastoral visitors to help provide wider cover and care for at the congregation at the Cathedral and to discover in what ways we can grow together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is wonderful to have been welcomed with such kindness into the Cathedral family from my colleagues and the congregation alike and I look forward to working with everyone in the coming year to build on the generous and inclusive welcome we offer to all.

*Canon John Connell*

## **Cathedral Communications Group 2024**

The Communications Group, which reports to the Cathedral Chapter and to the Cathedral Congregational Committee, has met five times during 2024. Canon Caroline Woollard has taken over the Chair, with thanks given to Sian King for her work as the previous Chair. Three new members were welcomed, and newly-appointed Revd Canon John Connell joined the group in July.

**Publications** A review of cathedral leaflets/guides was undertaken, the outcome being:

- A new *Welcome to the Cathedral* trifold leaflet in English available at the Cathedral entrance to guide visitors round. A Welsh version is in preparation.
- A new *Visit Newport Cathedral* trifold leaflet for distribution in Newport, Monmouth Diocese and beyond (in preparation).
- Following discussions with the Dean and Cathedral Management Team, the *St Woolos Quarterly* has now ceased publication. This is primarily owing to difficulties of distribution.

**Cathedral Website** The website usage continues to grow. There were 15,958 users in 2024 an increase of 18 % over the previous year. In Autumn 2024, a systematic review of the c.70 pages on the website was carried out. This comprised replacement of some images, fact checking (with the relevant people) and link checking. The most popular pages were Worship Services, Who's Who, Concerts, Choir and Visiting.

**Narthex screens** These are updated weekly, and continue to be a useful source of information regarding all events and services for those entering and exiting the Cathedral.

**E-news** The weekly email to subscribers has undergone major revision, and has been re-branded as *Woolos Weekly* and now contains more news and more graphics. The number of recipients has risen to 160 owing to the inclusion of all electoral roll members. An upgraded version of Mailchimp has facilitated these changes. Newcomers can easily subscribe to e-news by clicking on a button the front page of the Cathedral website.

**Social Media** The Choir Facebook page is now active and updated by John and Tom. The Cathedral FB page is updated by the Dean.

**Streaming** Thanks were formally expressed to Canon David Neale and his team who continue to manage the streaming of Cathedral Services, a service much appreciated by many.

*Sian & Brian King*

## **Monmouth Diocesan Conference 2024**

The Conference was held at St Teilo's School on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Cathedral has 3 Diocesan Representatives elected for a 3-year term at the annual congregational meeting. All 3 of us, Robert Cornelius, Colin Walsh and Sian King attended the conference, as well as Fay Howe (Cathedral Warden) and the clergy team. A total of around 150 people representing 16 Ministry Areas were present.

Following the mandatory conference business, there was a presentation to Peter Lea who was retiring from his position as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance after 16 years. Earlier in 2024 he gave an excellent summary of the current state of the Cathedral finances at the AGM.

After the coffee break, accompanied by delicious pastries, the focus moved to this year's main theme of "Culture and Values". Bishop Cherry explained that she was now half-way through her 10-year term of office, and her attention was now turning to "developing a culture across this diocese that reflects the nature of God as we see it in Jesus Christ is the one thing that I see as being paramount...."

To develop this, a Culture Guide of some 15 pages was distributed to all those present, and then developed as practical applications through a series of 6 talks on the core values, namely:

<b>Courage</b>	Revd. Matt Davis
<b>Generosity</b>	Canon Caroline Woollard
<b>Integrity</b>	Peter Lea
<b>Humility</b>	Julia Durham
<b>Joy</b>	Revd. Canon David Matthews
<b>Love</b>	Sian Harvey

There was then the opportunity to have brief group discussions to consider questions around these values, and how to display them within our own churches and as individuals.

A full report, and recording of all the talks, can be found on the Monmouth Diocesan website at <https://monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk/en/news-and-events/conference-2024>

*Sian King*

## Cathedral Music 2024

Since arriving at the Cathedral last September, I have been extremely grateful for the warm welcome and support I have received across the Cathedral community as I settle into my role. My thanks also to Emma Gibbins for being so helpful and accommodating during the 'hand over' of the choir.

Since September, the Choir has tackled a large amount of new music, some of it from less familiar musical traditions, with aplomb and demonstrated our singers' burgeoning capabilities. This has included a fair amount of plainsong, and Renaissance polyphony, as well as music by contemporary composers too. In November, the choir returned from their half-term break early to record a service for BBC Radio Wales which was broadcast on Remembrance Sunday followed by an extremely enjoyable light party in the Cathedral. The Advent Procession had no fewer than eight soloist from our young singers, and all of the anthems (two of them new to the Choir) were unaccompanied and sung from different parts of the Cathedral. The usual round of Christmas services were a great success.

In January, we restructured the choir, reforming the choristers into one mixed line of boy and girl trebles, and a new youth choir for our teenagers – allowing all our young people to be supported and challenged appropriately for their musical development. Both groups have responded extremely well to this change, and I hope their rapid progress is noticed! We held the annual Diocesan Choral Festival at Candlemas with a choir of over 70 singers singing music by Ayleward, Eccard, Mathias, and Stanford for Evensong. March saw the first of our Chorister Experience events, attended by some fifteen youngsters who rehearsed with the Choristers, and sang Evensong alongside the Cathedral Choir, before being rewarded with pizza and brownies – nearly half of whom have arranged an audition.

There has been much work behind the scenes in terms of organising the library, updating and improving our safeguarding procedures and practice, building up and strengthening our relationships with Gwent Music, the city council, and the Saint Woolos Sinfonia among others, as well as applying for grants to support the costs of our musical foundation.

My thanks are due to my clergy colleagues, particularly Canon John with whom I work closely making sure the music responds to the Cathedral's liturgy; my ever-reliable and supportive colleague, Jeremy Blasby, who accompanies the choir with great skill and provides thoughtful voluntaries at services; Phae and Lue in the office; to all our young people in the Choir and their parents for their time and dedication (and constant ferrying between home and the Cathedral) and the wonderful team of chaperones who look after ~~me~~ them so well; our committed and convivial adults on the back row for their support and good humour. I have always been heartened by the genuine gratitude and intelligent comments from the congregation about the music since I arrived – it is not all that common for a congregation to be so good at ensuring their musicians feel valued and appreciated.

Looking into the future, the Choir will be taking part in the Welsh Three Choirs Evensong at Llandaff Cathedral in May, and we are organising a special celebration Evensong to mark the tenth anniversary of girl choristers becoming part of the Cathedral Choir, with a new piece

commissioned by the Friends of St Woolos Cathedral by composer Ruth Byrchmore. In a new venture, the Cathedral Choir will also perform a fundraising Christmas concert with special guests in December.

*Tom Coxhead*  
*Director of Music*

## **Music@stwoolos 2024**

In the 2024 Music@StWoolos Series there were 12 Saturday mid-day recitals and two Thursday evening concerts. The Thursday evening concert planned for September was cancelled to allow for as much work on the lighting as possible to take place during daylight.

There was an unusually small audience for the Thursday evening concert held on 4<sup>th</sup> July, partly because of atrocious weather but possibly also because it was the evening of General Election Day. Nevertheless the average number in the Cathedral for the performances during the year was more than 80. (From February onwards the number recorded includes the performers.)

Students from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama entertained us on five occasions, including a Saturday recital by young musicians from the Junior Conservatoire. The Junior Conservatoire had been a regular fixture in our schedule for many years, in May and November, but sadly in 2024 it closed. It is hoped that Gwent Music students will take their place in the schedule of performances.

Several graduates of the RWCMD returned to entertain us again as did The National Youth Guitar Ensemble and Bethan Cole, a former Head Chorister in the Cathedral choir.

All the Music@StWoolos performances have free entry and a retiring collection. From the retiring collections in 2024, after the performers' expenses had been deducted, slightly more than £2,800 went into the Cathedral funds. Perhaps more importantly, comments frequently made by performers and audience alike indicate that this is an arrangement that all appreciate. Students enjoy performing at the Cathedral and they and their tutors see it as an important part of their professional development. Being able to perform in the Cathedral without payment of a fee gives students, community choirs like The Gwent Chorale, and other groups who might not be able to afford to pay, the opportunity to perform for an appreciative audience, who in turn are always well entertained and contribute what they can to the collection.

*Brian Cox*

## **St Woolos Mothers' Union 2024**

Meetings recommenced in February 2024 with the AGM at which a review of the year was given and a statement of our financial situation was received.

On St David's Day we were pleased to welcome the new Chaplain to the Missions to Seafarers, Rev. Rufus Noy and Ros Downes, a volunteer. Likening the life on board to our experiences of isolation during the Covid pandemic the members learnt about the life of a merchant sailor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A large number of beanie hats were given for the sailors on board ships arriving at South Wales Docks. Welsh cakes and cups of tea followed and members present received a mug bearing the logo of the Missions to seafarers.

In April we used the WDP service which had taken place the previous Friday.

Several ladies from The Welsh Refugee Council came to our May meeting and in June Rev Tim Clement spoke about his ministry to the farming community in the Diocese. Our July meeting coincided with General Election Day and our afternoon tea in Belle Vue Park Tea Rooms was brought forward to the Wednesday.

Wendy Diamond spoke to us in September about her life in music with wonderful audio illustrations and in October members celebrated National Poetry Day by reading their favourite poems.

In November Jean Hackett told us about her first three years as our Diocesan President and the December meeting had a festive feel with a quiz and mince pies.

Other events during the year included the Diocesan Lunch at the Parkway in August to commemorate Mary Sumner the founder of MU. The speaker was Ceri Hughes from Blackwood, a new trustee, who talked about her career in HR.

Members provided refreshments at the Memorial Service held by the Hospital Chaplain, Rev Carol Taplin in June.

At the Deanery Festival held in the Cathedral in September Sylvia was presented with a certificate to mark her 25 years service to MU. From January this year we are now grouped with Bassaleg Deanery to form the Archdeaconry of Newport which will have 7 branches.

We have continued to produce Toilet Bags syringe bags 63 hospital and beanie hats for the seafarers.

Our membership for 2025 stands at 13 and from those we average 6 or seven.

*Maureen Mahoney*  
*Branch Leader*

## **The Cathedral Shop**

2024 Was a better year for sales which is encouraging but we could do more with more volunteers to help. I have to be honest and own up that there are days when we have no visitors but it could be an opportunity to read a book or do a spot of knitting whilst you wait or just chat with your fellow helper for a couple of hours. As always, a very big thank you to those who give their time to help me.

We are having many more events held in the Cathedral and we try to open the shop if possible which has been a great help with sales. As we don't sell at the recommended retail prices people are beginning to realise that our prices are to their advantage.

I am trying to introduce different items but lack of space and limited income makes it difficult. Come and see our LED candles which make a fabulous present.

Thank you to all those who do support us so keep popping in and just browse if you wish. All suggestions are welcome.

*Christine Thomas*

## **Thirty-somethings' Group**

Once again, as Hon Secretary, I am happy to be able to report on the activities of the 30 Somethings Group for 2024.

As usual, everyone gathered in the north aisle of the Cathedral last February for the Annual General Meeting and Pancake Supper which was represented with a good attendance and all looking forward to the pancakes which were thoroughly enjoyed as always.

Garry did a lot of research into the cost of running a trip for the group but, inflation costs in general, particularly for the hiring of a coach which was vast and made the trip which would have cost in the region of about £70 per person, untenable to put into motion for 2024.

The Fish and Chip Supper in October was, as ever, enjoyable with Garry providing the evening's entertainment with a quiz. There were certainly questions to stimulate our brains when searching for the answers.

A thankyou goes to Garry for his time in putting the quiz together for us and for his patience when we kept asking him so often to repeat the questions.

We all travelled to Junction 28 last December for our Christmas Lunch with the exception of our Chairman, Canon Andrew Lightbown and Garry Smith who were both, unfortunately, unable to attend due to sickness but, we did have Canon John Connell who attended the Christmas function with us for the very first time and it was nice to welcome him into the Group. The meal was an enjoyable one supplemented by the Christmas ambience of Junction 28 and everyone having a good time in each other's company.

Overall, it has been a pleasant year for the Group. It would be nice if we might be able to encourage some of the younger element to participate in the 30 Somethings activities and we now look forward to another successful year, socialising and just enjoying sharing our time together.

*Jen Robinson*  
*Hon. Secretary*