

foccus

Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States

February 2024

Dear Friends,

Save the Date! Thursday, April 25. The Feast of St. Mark. Visit of the Dean of Canterbury, the Very Reverend David Monteith. 5:30 p.m. Solemn Eucharist at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue (*corner of 5th Ave and W 53RD St.*) and Anniversary of the Consecration of the Church. Preacher: The Dean of Canterbury. Followed by a **Drinks and Canapés for the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the US at the Rectory.** RSVP for the reception (with numbers) to lhernandez@saintthomaschurch.org

On the morning of **Friday, April 26**, we will have a gathering with Dean Monteith and FOCCUS Board members to hear about the current work at Canterbury Cathedral and its needs; this presentation is open to all who are interested in learning more about Canterbury Cathedral. The presentation will be at 10:30 am.



Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York, is celebrating its Bicentennial as a parish. In American terms, that means we are very old; compared to Canterbury Cathedral we are in our infancy! I came to New York after fourteen happy years working in a medieval English Cathedral, so I was well prepared for the time and money it would take to care for a gothic church made entirely of Kentucky limestone, with historic stained glass, and a major music program and choir school.

When Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Goodhue designed the present Saint Thomas after the devastating fire of 1906, they said that it would be true gothic. It can never be described as ‘Gothic revival’ because, in architectural terms, it is the ‘real thing.’ As John Andrew famously said, *“Not neo-Gothic. Gothic. Mysteriously, the flame of Gothicism had leaped five centuries and four thousand miles, to burn gloriously on Fifth Avenue.”*

I mention all of this because it highlights for me the urgency of our support of Canterbury Cathedral. If it is a struggle here in New York to meet the needs of a building only 100 years old, with its residential choral tradition, and the particular cost of being open 365 days a year in the middle of Manhattan, imagine the demands placed on the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral! As the pandemic seems to be well and truly in the ‘rear-view mirror’ now, it is time for FOCCUS to re-energize itself in its support for Canterbury.

Over the coming year, the Board of FOCCUS intends to re-engage with its membership and expand that membership, raising awareness of the importance of Canterbury not only for the Anglican Communion, but for all the churches. We are hoping that the Archbishop of Canterbury will visit us during 2024, so that we can share with him our support of Canterbury Cathedral and its mission.

In recent months, there have been questions raised about the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, particularly with the strains being felt in the Anglican World over issues such as the role of women in ministry and human sexuality.



Suggestions have been made that might separate the relationship of the leader of the Anglican Communion with Canterbury. It is true, that there will always be a tension felt by any bishop who has responsibilities in his or her diocese while fulfilling an international role. Whatever decisions are made, if anything, our work will be even more important; the ministry of Canterbury Cathedral will continue whether or not the next Archbishop is leader of the Anglican Communion. The care of the building; supporting its vision and mission; raising awareness of its place internationally; these will be as important as ever, and you can help us with this work.

- We want to grow our membership and raise awareness of the needs of Canterbury Cathedral. To that end, if you would like to bring a friend with you to the gathering in New York in April, please feel free to do so.
- We hope to re-invigorate the scholarship program. Dean Monteith will be spending time at Virginia Theological Seminary before his visit, based at the Center for Anglican Communion Studies, whose Director is Professor Kathy Grieb, a member of our Board.
- We hope to re-start pilgrimages to Canterbury, and encourage parishes to join together to visit what was once one of the greatest pilgrimage destinations in Europe.
- We want to improve communication with our members; we have so many members for whom we have no email address! We will be reaching out to you to improve our database and set up more regular electronic communication, while improving the materials available on our website.

In particular, we need to ensure that a new generation of Americans discover the joy of Canterbury Cathedral and how it can touch so many parts of our lives. Let me end by returning to Ralph Adams Cram, the great American architect who was inspired by the architecture and the mission of Canterbury Cathedral over 100 years ago. Writing about the newly-built Saint Thomas Church in 1914, he wrote these wonderful words. I share them with you because they also represent what Canterbury means to so many of us, and I particularly refer you to the very last line of the piece:

“Architecture was, as always, the beginning;
 but it was far from being the end.
 Stone carving came to floriate shaft and cornice,
 pinnacle, panel, and niche;
 Sculpture to crowd every aperture with saints and angels;
 Painting and gilding to make all burn with radiant fire;
 Glass-making to pierce the opaque walls and
 set there fields of apocalyptic glory;
 Needlework to hang rich arras over cold stone, to clothe altars,
 shrines, and priests in iridescent vestments;
 Mosaic to sheet arch and vault in burnished gold
 and azure and vermilion;
 Metal work to fashion screens and candelabra of iron
 and bronze and brass;
 Joinery to raise wainscot of intricate tracery;
 Goldsmithing to furnish shrines and reliquaries and sacred
 vessels of precious metals and precious stones;
 Poetry to create great hymns and canticles;
 Drama to build up a supreme ritual;
 Music to breathe the breath of divine life into all.”

And there is the key - **Music to breathe the breath of divine life into all**. As I said earlier, Canterbury is no museum, but a living community brought into being by the breath of God that fills that sacred space, and connects people to it in an organic way.

I hope that many of you will make the visit to New York in April. If you cannot be present in-person, you can watch the service and join the presentation the next day on-line via the Saint Thomas Church, FOCCUS, and Canterbury websites.



The Rev. Canon Carl F. Turner
 Chair of FOCCUS

VOICES FROM CANTERBURY: Gina Grubb, Head of Visitor Experience

Interviewed By The Rev. Dr. Anne Gavin Ritchie

Gina, please tell our FOCCUS readers about this new program of welcome and how it shapes visitors' experience of Canterbury Cathedral.

Canterbury Cathedral has been a site of pilgrimage, worship and learning since 597. Throughout that history the Benedictine ministry of welcome has sat at the core of all we do. The current program of welcome builds upon that storied history to create a place where all are seen, heard and welcomed. All visitors to Canterbury, be they worshippers, sightseers, pilgrims, students or local residents should experience a welcome that exceeds their expectations.



The new program of welcome focuses on developing stronger working relationships with our local, national and international communities to develop a holistic visitor experience that holds the Cathedral's stories at its heart. From Augustine to Becket, Bertha to the Black Prince and beyond, the visitor experience will be shaped by these core stories, which will be delivered through on-site exhibitions, digital interpretation, and our extensive program of specialist guided tours.

We are looking to attract a more diverse audience by hosting new and exciting events such as candlelit concerts, immersive light shows and outdoor theatre. Not only will these widen our engagement with a local, national, and global audience, but they will also allow us to generate the vital income we need to ensure we can safeguard the future of Canterbury Cathedral.

We are also fortunate to be able to extend our warm welcome into hospitality at our unique hotel, Canterbury Cathedral Lodge, situated in the heart of the cathedral grounds. If you're planning a visit with us, please do look at our beautiful hotel and restaurant, where you will be sure to experience our new programme of welcome first hand.

What is your role in developing this program?

As the Head of Visitor Experience, my responsibility is to ensure that the strategic direction of our programme of welcome is aligned to the wider Cathedral objectives and mission. My remit covers several teams, including Library & Archives, Schools, Retail, Lodge, Admissions and Volunteers, to ensure we are all working under a shared set of core values. In my first months here I established a set of standards called "Pride in Place" to empower both Front of House and off-stage colleagues to take pride and ownership of our shared space and to be enlightened and proactive custodians of Canterbury Cathedral. In developing our program of Welcome, I seek to build relationships, and explore new opportunities to diversify our audience and ensure the highest standards.

In your own life, how has being welcomed shaped your sense of God in community?

Feeling welcomed, respected, and understood is fundamental to the ability to open yourself up to new opportunities, people, views, and create shared spiritual experiences. Throughout my personal life, I have often experienced how churches, heritage sites, museums, galleries and theatres have enabled this and how profoundly it has impacted me. I am deeply privileged to have facilitated this in some incredible places, none more so than the Canterbury Cathedral community and our extended family.

MESSAGE FROM THE RIGHT REVEREND DR DAVID MONTEITH, DEAN OF CANTERBURY

Dear Friends,

My first year as Dean of Canterbury has been much fun, a whirlwind of new faces and a steep learning curve to try and understand how this place operates. There is much that is familiar but also much that is new.

Our world seems ever more chaotic with conflicts casting a heaviness over us all. Elections here and in the States add more uncertainty.

I'm learning much about our wider context here in East Kent where there is enormous deprivation especially in our coastal towns. Dover, well known for the white cliffs, is also the focus in England for the refugee crisis as desperate people seek to find a new life or sanctuary in the UK. There are repeated deaths in the English Channel, and they often are connected with people smuggling rings and modern-day slavery. These matters perhaps are not the things which come into mind when people think of Canterbury, but they very much set the scene for our Christian witness and worship.



We then take all of that into the daily heartbeat of prayer and worship. Significantly, after several years of discussion, we have changed the way we recruit boys to our choir and have tried to ensure a greater parity of treatment between our girls and boys. This also means that we have begun a music outreach project in local schools; introducing hundreds of children to singing with all the social,

educational and spiritual benefits that offers. Local people now have a new pass scheme which means they can use the cathedral regularly. We are generally trying to ensure greater openness as there was a local feeling that we seemed a bit shut off from the wider world. For example, visitors with dogs can now bring them in. We are going to have a trial to see if letting the public have access to the Precincts will enable more engagement. In the meantime, we still need to raise £30,000/day to fund our annual revenue budget without grants from the Church of England or the nation.

The changes brought in by BREXIT have meant that we now have fewer visitors from the continent, and in particular the many teenagers who used to visit Canterbury for English classes are absent. It seems that COVID has a long tail of influence. Overall, we are at about 80% of our usual visitor numbers including significant numbers of Americans who are travelling again. Thank you! Before I got here and in order to keep the doors open, the Cathedral Chapter had to take out multi-million loans as well as making 25% of our staff redundant. So things are not easy.



Many of our churches and most of our cathedrals are all having to adapt greatly and to think outside of the box to find new sustainable ways for the future. Currently, we are working to clarify what we do, to be clear about who we are and what we offer, and then to identify a sweep of prayer, worship, activity and service which flows from that. When we get further on with that, I hope to share that with all our friends and supporters.

Thank you for all your support through your visits, donations and through your prayers and engagement with us online. It cheers me enormously to know we have such friends. Nothing delights me more than meeting new friends. We need you all to make sure that this amazing place can flourish for the sake of God and God's kingdom.

Every blessing to you all,
Dean David

(Photo credits: Personal, BBC News, Gramophone, Wikipedia)

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WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

Canterbury Cathedral is one of the oldest Christian structures in England and forms a part of a World Heritage Site. As one of the most famous Cathedrals in England, headlines and events about it are widely reported, both on Facebook and in the media.

The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States (FOCCUS) maintains a Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/90862204701/> or

[Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States|Facebook](#)

If you are on Facebook, it is easy to join. Another way to engage with Canterbury Cathedral is to sign up for a monthly digest of relevant articles from the previous month. To be added to the list, email canterburyus@gmail.com.

Please feel free to join either or both.

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

By Joseph Britton

As a seminary dean, I led many student pilgrimages to Canterbury. But once I was back in a parish, with a group of J2A (Journey to Adulthood) teens who were preparing for their class trip, I wondered whether to suggest Canterbury as an appropriate destination.

We were a group of four adult sponsors and six senior high students at St. Michael & All Angels Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Previous J2A groups from the parish had made mission trips to more obvious places such as Juarez, Mexico, to help build houses with Habitat for Humanity. So we put the question to the teenagers themselves: where would you like to go?

As suggestions, we floated the idea of going to Mexico City to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, since she has so much resonance with life in New Mexico. Or, we thought they might like to go to the community of Taizé in France to experience its vibrant ministry with young people from all around the world. Or ... we threw out the possibility of going to Canterbury, fountainhead of our church's tradition and seat of the Anglican Communion. Of the three, I thought Canterbury would be the least attractive to them. It just sounded so ... old.

To my surprise, however, the kids did in fact choose Canterbury. It may have been because at some level they had in mind medieval knights and armor, something like the video games that so enthrall them. But I think it was also more than that: they intuited that it was a place where they might discover something about themselves, and about their religious roots.

After months of fundraising and planning, we set off on our pilgrimage to Canterbury. Most of these kids had not been outside of New Mexico before, much less the United States. So we started with several days in London, just letting them experience life in a big city with a very different culture—things such as the Tube, and Indian restaurants, and architectural monuments like Buckingham Palace and St. Paul's Cathedral nearly overwhelmed them! One of our chaperones was eager for us to expand our horizons in a multi-religious direction as well, so we visited the London Central Mosque. Sitting on the floor inside, we talked for a long time with one of its members about what it means to be Muslim.



The J2A pilgrims with the St. Michael icon in the crypt chapel of the ruins of St. Augustine's Abbey.

Then it was time to take the train to Canterbury. We carried with us a small icon of St. Michael, a gift from one of our parishioners with the charge that we photograph ourselves with it in as many places as we could. Once we arrived, Canterbury began to work its magic on these young teenagers in the same way I had seen it do for adult seminarians, and so there were many places where they wanted to take a photo with St. Michael. The sense of antiquity was, of course, amazing to them. But even more so, the spirit of welcome and hospitality with which we were greeted, and the sense of our pilgrimage's spiritual importance that was conveyed by everyone we met, impressed upon them that we were in a unique place.

As a kind of “scavenger hunt,” I sent everyone in search of their own “hiding place” in the Cathedral, asking them to find the spot that spoke to them most deeply. When we gathered to share our choices in the hidden All Saints Chapel (reached through an almost unnoticeable door and then up a narrow flight of stone steps), some named a quiet off-the-beaten-track chapel, some the dark spaces of the crypt, and others the grandeur of the nave or quire. But everyone found some place that touched them personally.

Of course, not all our time was spent so solemnly. We had a lively tea in the deanery garden, and at the suggestion of the Dean, made a trip to the beach on the following day, which was particularly warm and sunny. Even the sight of the sea was an amazing discovery for our group of desert dwellers. And pizza in the garden of the Lodge was a welcome taste of familiarity for the teenage appetite, after valiantly trying things like stewed tomatoes and toast with Marmite!

I had to leave the pilgrimage after our time in Canterbury to return home, but the group continued on to visit a variety of places in the south and southwest of England, including Salisbury, Stonehenge, and the coastal churches of Cornwall. Yet when the students reported to the parish back home about their trip, they were all agreed that the time in Canterbury was most meaningful to them, and had put them in touch with a spiritual lineage of which they had previously been entirely unaware. For me, that experience of making connection is what Canterbury is all about.

NEW FOCCUS TRUSTEES

Dr. Thomas M. Conroy is a gifted musician, currently studying in the Master of Divinity program at Virginia Theological Seminary, class of 2024. He earned a doctorate of musical arts from Rice University, TX, and has served on the music faculties of San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Texas A&M, the University of Houston, and Ball State. In a varied career, Tom has been a teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Homeric Greek, and music history, while also having been a church organist, music director, composer, and professional actor. A member of the Compass Rose Society and the Center for Anglican Communion Studies at VTS, he brings unique and valuable perspectives to FOCCUS outreach.



Rev. Mark L. Fitzhugh has been rector of St. John’s of Lattingtown, Locust Valley, Long Island, NY, for the past eight years, his third rectorship. A native of Mobile, AL, and a graduate of the University of South Alabama, he earned his Master of Divinity from General Theological Seminary in New York. He worked at Baylor University in the sports media world for ten years and three more in Birmingham, AL, in the State’s family support structure before following the call to the ministry. Since then, he has served with distinction in churches in New York City; Anniston, AL; Greenwich, CT; and Ft. Walton Beach, FL, where he consistently brought to bear special interests in clinical pastoral care and formation.





FRIENDS *of*
CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL
in the UNITED STATES

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Becoming a Friend

Enclosed in this Newsletter you will find an envelope we hope you will use to become a member of Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States. Membership includes such benefits as free admission to the Cathedral and personalized tours, notification of FOCCUS events, as well as priority consideration for a place on future pilgrimages.

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