

WORKSHOP:

**Yesterday's Faith and Heritage in today's 21st century society. Can we really crack it? – interpreting cathedrals for visitors and schools
National Cathedrals Conference, Manchester
18 September 2018**

- Union Jack flag
- Bishop's mitre/cross
- Teresa May mask

I felt very pleased at first when I was asked to contribute to this conference, we were snowed in at the time back in deepest Norfolk. So it all seemed ok... but well, the confidence dwindled as the date drew near. First there's the fact that many of my fellow cathedral educator colleagues from across the land are here and I do ask them please to hold on to the rotten tomatoes they have in their bags until the end and to keep harassment to a quiet minimum.

So... I thought perhaps I'd be sharing the stage with a sister cathedral or abbey, then I found out I was to share it with The House of Commons...Parliament ... Crikey me...so you can understand why I still haven't quite decided on my props

Bear with, bear with please..... Union jack flag, Bishop's mitre (you can't go wrong with one of those, Teresa May mask, well if you can't beat em, then I thought....
How on earth, what in the name ofwhat? where's the link ?? what can we crack? What needs cracking? Who came up with this title? BUT TO TOP THE LOT, we get given the graveyard after dinner slot..... so I hope you'll stay awake!

Well, it turns out that Dave is a very nice chap... so anyway, here is our quest this evening, to joyfully present yesterday's faith & heritage in today's 21st century society. CAN WE CRACK IT?

Slide 2.

So what on earth do we have in common?

I turned to a couple of photos for help.....and lo and behold they are mirror images aren't they? I actually discovered recently that our East window tracery work is based on the window in Westminster Hall!

Norwich Cathedral - that's the one on the right – could be any of your wonderful cathedrals or abbeys, or shrines or greater churches.... FOR IN A WAY THIS IS AS MUCH YOUR STORY AS OURS Just look at them.

The height, the width, the breadth, the towers looming up to the skies...

Yes they're both old.

They are both made of stone..... they both stand for something don't they what do they say to us? They are proud and strong. Deliberately designed that way.

Just ask yourselves for a short moment.... What is it about the building you work in that makes you stop and look when you get close to it first thing in the morning? What does it say to you and does that matter with regards to the work you do within it?

(time for a few shares)

Slide 3.

YES they are both dirty great **structures!**

In their design they are impressive, they both hold within that structure a great air of grandeur. The way they are made does have an impact on what we do within them.

The Normans who visited us in 1066 liked Norwich as it was already a growing, thriving city so they wanted to put their stamp on. Bishop Herbert de Losinga took on the task of building a great palace

for God to show God's glory and strength and majesty to all. But they also wanted to say – look at us, God is on our side, we are conquerors and we are here to stay!

The importance of having faith and of religion being part of the lives of everyone became absolutely central to everyone's lives.

This is something we are asked more and more to explore with GCSE and other exam students at secondary school level and beyond.

That in itself is often hard to get across so we use our great cathedral structures and what is held within them TODAY to help the students to try and step back in time and somehow get into the mind-set of that medieval man or woman – it is hard because today...is religion central to our lives?...are we still concerned daily about whether we'll get to heaven or not when we die? Has our approach to life changed dramatically?

Equally we could say the same about learning about our democracy/our Government structure when visiting Parliament...has the whole things shifted from the governing of yesteryear to now?

Can we get this across effectively ...have you any experience of this challenge yourselves ----- discuss for a moment.....your dilemmas/success of this? (have short report back)

Slide 4.

So ... back to those mighty structures.

Visual impact is so important isn't it?

The structure on the outside then more so inside once they get in there have an immediate impact on the senses & emotions and in cathedrals etc of course on the SPIRIT.

They are part of our nation's historical story and of the story of faith and values.

The building of Norwich Cathedral began in 1096, Westminster Hall 1097 – that's pretty close!

Slide 5

But who cares? I am sure education colleagues in cathedrals, churches and other heritage settings will agree that time and time again we come up against obstacles....

So many pressures now to deliver literacy, numeracy, achieve those learning targets, who really cares out there about these places? – in the counties I serve especially at secondary level time for RE trips and even history is often axed and senior management tell RE teachers that they simply cannot warrant giving valuable curriculum time and budget over to trips out to cathedrals! It is soul destroying for those staff who are trying to deliver RE with academic rigour and to us at the receiving end when visits are cancelled.

I'm sure we've all been faced from time to time with those visits when staff from other departments in school are accompanying groups on an RE trip and they wander aimlessly playing on their phones while the students have not been shown the focus to adopt on the visit. It makes our job on the day even harder.

Slide 6

Well the answer is quite simply **WE CARE!** That is why we are here.

At Norwich Bishop Herbert cared in 1096

The Benedictine monks cared who came to establish the monastery.

Those craftsmen and stone masons cared when they often fell to their deaths building it all.

So we will not be defeated – it matters more than it ever has done for us as professional educators and enablers to interpret our stories and the essence of SACRED space with vigour and passion. If we do then this it will always infectious and the students will respond. Trust me. You will all have superb examples of that I am sure!

Slide 7

I would put it to you that 90% of the wonder, awe, power, joy and the sheer kick start that we want to deliver when pupils of any age enter our buildings will be done by the structure, the building itself. Just think for a moment about the first time you stepped into your great building? The goose bumps and the feeling in the stomach that you got is what we want each one of our learners to experience and we need to help them capture that, record it, register it and analyse why it is that they felt like that.

Slide 8

So the remaining 10% is down to us and how, it has to be good – we have to then be the enablers to help those learners to process what is happening alongside the teaching and the story.

Of course we need to know what they want from coming there in the first place? What the teachers want....I know Dave will touch on this later. We have to ensure that we are tapping into the right curriculum areas and we have to be bold, be prepared to step out of our comfort zones in to the realms of creative arts, science, etc

There will be the information to share about what makes our place what it is of course... For the Houses of Parliament there will be a whole host of knowledge, all about laws and government, debating techniques etc to share and likewise in our sacred spaces there is a whole new vocabulary to share, along with information about sacraments, furnishings, lay out of worship space, vestments, liturgy etc.

All this is part of allowing our amazing structures speak today in the 21st Century - what we put in and what we train our teams and volunteers to put in has to be pretty damn good.

If we are not excited & passionate as we share our stories – the learners will not be either.

We all know there will be a raft of obstacles in our way.... I am sure many will come to mind now...

Organ practice

Flower arrangers

Visiting choirs

Politicians arguing

Vergers setting up staging

Outside practitioners setting up for a gig

Scaffolding and pneumatic drills

Streams and queues of tourists in our national heritage sites

The list can be endless....

It so easy to say I can't do this. But we have to burst through all that and deliver our positives despite the negatives.

Slide 9

I don't have to tell you about the ways we do this as there is some amazing interpretation and teaching styles going on in our sacred and heritage sites all over the UK.

We all make rainbows appear ...rainbows of discovery, of wondrous moments when children grasp something more than meets the eye... that's spiritual development and it does not have happen in a sacred space.

We use the things within our spaces, candles, water, light, statues, tomb stones, furniture, patterns and decorations, windows, books and more. We engage them with stories - real life stories and Biblical accounts. We enable discovery allowing the learners to encounter it all as they go on a pathway of discovery in our spaces.

And that is where the secret lies isn't it? Finding ever new and challenging techniques to do this.

Slide 10

We are doing - this..... and by the time we get into these realms be we working in a cathedral, a church, a museum, the houses of Parliament or wherever..... I remember the feelings I had of sheer awe when I first was taken on a tour into the house of commons – it does not have to be a cathedral to get this – we are trying, correct me if I'm wrong, to enable our learners of all ages to explore all these aspects... feelings, words, the links between science and faith, beliefs and their roots, what it actually feels like to be consumed by a belief, by worship... the power of stories of people who have changed our history by their actions be they politicians, theologians or just the lady who polishes the floor day in day out for 50 years.

Slide 11

So it certainly is not just about yesterday – when we interpret the powerful stories of yesterday and today when we pause and take time with children and young people to enable them to momentarily hold the world in their hands within our special structures, we suddenly meet with the past and the present and the future.

We discover then that we are in fact educators for humanity – and that is a huge and privileged task!

Slide 12

So we end up where we began – **we are educators for humanity.**

We must stand up and shout out just how important our roles are, in a market place of budget cuts, stressed out teachers and lack of time we have to continually keep shouting.

Slide 13

Can we crack it – yes we can but it isn't easy.

We might indeed need more than one hand.

We do need to continually remind ourselves that we are links in a chain. We cannot go it alone.

Sometimes schools out there just need someone to offer them the link and then it grows stronger.

Getting management of schools on our side is a first step.

Getting out there into our schools – taking the wonder of the structure out to them before we gain trust and inspire them to want to come to us.

Partnering up in our locality – even if we think the local model soldier museum or latest exhibition of Victorian tea pots at the local museum might not really gel with our stories – make those links, sometimes the most bizarre links and partnerships turn into some brilliant links with schools and great projects. We have to look outside the box I would argue. It does not mean we do not stay true to our core ethos, but we can be adventurous.

We have to share good practice with each other.

Slide 14 – END

We all have the chance to create a rainbow plan, a crazy paving of ideas and expertise.

4 years ago these three windows were designed and installed in the North aisle of Norwich Cathedral. When I came in 2014 they were brand new and I encountered a lot of different opinions, from Cathedral guides who hated them, too bright, too garish, too much, to those who loved them. They represent the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What is more, from a distance down the aisle they dye the arches with orange and purple reflected colour.

At first they shocked me but in a wondrous way....

Thinking back to the early days in the 12th century when the cathedral was plastered from top to bottom with colours, painted all over, it shocked the senses I'm sure when you came in.

So in the 21st Century we have to be prepared to let our buildings shock people again – shock them in a wondrous way so they can then enter into a journey of discovery.

We have to be the reflectors of those colours.

Janet Marshall

19 September 2018