Fearfully and wonderfully made…

As I look back over my internet browser history this week, I notice that Karen Rooms is interested in spa breaks; Radio 2 music and live gigs; health foods; flying and travelling in Europe; that her job involves accounts, and she may have an interest in persuasive technology. Oh, and she might be a Christian given she looks up Bible texts. This is by no means all of who I am, but I know that it will be added to the data about Karen Rooms that GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft) hold about me.

2 billion human beings – all of us who use the internet with any regularity – have a digital avatar: data about our preferences, interests, where our eye is drawn and how our mouse moves around the windows on our computers. Our avatar, or digital profile, is augmented daily. This data directs the way the Google search engine prioritises the right pages to show us when we search, and the way YouTube queues the next video we might like to watch: it is different for each of us. In effect every time we go online there is a supercomputer pointed at our brains programmed to keep us there for as long as possible, and in the end, to sell us something which we may, or may not, have gone online to purchase.

The news in recent weeks has presented us with the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the ethical questions about its development. Is it ‘great but in need of work to contain it’ as the resigning developer of AI at Google, Geoffrey Hinton, says? Is it as Anna Korhonen, Professor of Computer Science and Linguistics, University of Cambridge says, ‘not going to outsmart’ human beings? AI and autoregressive transformers like ChatGPT are incredibly powerful as they process huge amounts of data in milliseconds and can be put to all sorts of good uses, and bad. What is evident is there is a new ‘asymmetry of power’ between technology and humans. Edward O. Wilson said, “The real problem of humanity is the following: We have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions and godlike technology.”

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. 
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; 
you discern my thoughts from far way. 
You search out my path and my lying down 
and are acquainted with all my ways… Psalm 139.1–3

Technology is god-like in terms of the sheer power of super computers, and you might argue, in terms of the omnipresence of computers amongst humanity. It also has the power to fascinate and transfix us because we see ourselves in its mirror. From the building of the Golden Calf in the wilderness whilst Moses was on the mountain, we humans have been drawn to worship what we make. ChatGPT and AI looks like us, so we become mesmerised and it has become an idol. Like when we are driving a car, our phones have become a tool which becomes an extension of ourselves. Theologian Simon Oliver, from Durham University, reminds us all in the digital world we live in, to notice our addiction to the technology which validates us, and to remember who we already are. Human beings are glorious and amazing: intelligent,
compassionate, social beings who dream of a better world and new possibilities (which AI cannot do – it works on probabilities calculated on existing data), but we have a low view of ourselves so get hooked on ‘likes’ so very easily. He argues we need an adequate sense of the mystery of ourselves to not fall for it.

Our starting place to theologically understand ourselves is Genesis 1.27. Human beings are made in the image of God. We are creatures with origins and purpose. Our beginning and our end is God. We embody the divine image and embody cognition and are not predictable like programme driven machines. We are living beings, free moral agents and have vocations as co-creators with God, making new things. We experience inwardness in our feelings, thinking, striving, perceiving and sensing from a first-person perspective.

The first letter of John reminds us: *Beloved we are God’s children, what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we will see him as he is.* (1 John 3.2). God is full of mystery, as are we, and other people. We long to know the mystery of ourselves, other people and God. The answer is not found, however seductive it is, online. We are who God says we are: beloved children, living beings embodying the image of God.

*Canon Karen Rooms  Acting Dean of Leicester*
News from Leicester Cathedral

Skegness!
For the Community day trip on Saturday 17 June, please meet at the Cathedral between 8.00–8.15am so we can leave at 8.30am exactly.
You may need to bring some snacks for the coach as the journey’s about two hours (though we will be stopping for a toilet break and stretching of the legs for 10 minutes).
The coach will pull into Skegness at the clock tower and probably pick us up back there.
We will leave Skegness at 5.00pm, so please be back at the location where we get dropped off for 4.30pm. I shall give more instructions on the coach.

Nathan Morley

Peacock Lane Closure
On Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 June, Peacock Lane will be closed, with the diversion route turning right out of New Street, past the clergy housing and the Richard III Visitor Centre, to turn onto Grey Friars.
Cathedral Book Club

Our Cathedral Book Club meets online once a month over Zoom. In June, we will be reading *Hope and the Nearness of God* by Teresa White.

New members are always welcome – please email Jude (jude.taylor@leicestercofe.org) to be added to the Book Club mailing list.

Thursday 22 June
7.00–8.30pm | Zoom

Our Cathedral Book Club meets online once a month over Zoom. In June, we will be reading *Hope and the Nearness of God* by Teresa White.

New members are always welcome – please email Jude (jude.taylor@leicestercofe.org) to be added to the Book Club mailing list.

Janette at Christian Resources Leicester has again kindly offered us a **10% discount** on the book if you mention that you’re a member of the Cathedral Book Club. You can purchase a copy in store or place your order via email: enquiries@christianresourcesleicester.com

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Cathedral Walking Group

Summer is here and it’s time to enjoy the sunshine, so, mark your diary for Thursday 6 July when the Cathedral Walking Group will be visiting St Peter and St Paul’s Church at Preston, Rutland at approximately 2.00 pm.

But first, those who wish to join me for lunch will meet at the Horse and Jockey Public House, St Marys Road, Manton, Rutland, LE15 8SU.

A table has been booked and we are best to pre-order our lunch, but the pub is about to change its menu so a copy will be forwarded as soon as we can to all who book in.

This church is a delight, from its fine Norman arches, the beautiful chancel and its many interesting features this church deserves a visit. The afternoon sun lighting up the chancel through the southern windows is a fine sight. Interested? Book in now by sending an email to Mick.McQuade@ntlworld.com

After the visit we will go for a short ramble around local footpaths for about 1½ hours.

As usual, this is a pick-and-mix event, pick the bit(s) that you want to do.

Mick McQuade
Services this week

While the Cathedral is closed for building works, our services take place in St Martins House (Sunday mornings) and in St Nicholas’ Church, Leicester (Monday to Friday). The Cathedral will also be Together with other churches on some Sunday afternoons.

All are welcome to our services. Services of Morning Prayer are also live-streamed.

**MONDAY 19 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Eucharist  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Choral Evensong  (St Nicholas)

**TUESDAY 20 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Prayer  (St Nicholas)
- 1.00pm  Lunchtime Eucharist  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Choral Evensong  (St Nicholas)

**WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Prayer  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Evening Prayer  (St Nicholas)

**THURSDAY 22 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Prayer  (St Nicholas)
- 1.00pm  Lunchtime Eucharist  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Choral Evensong  (St Nicholas)

**FRIDAY 23 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Prayer  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Evening Prayer  (St Nicholas)

**SATURDAY 24 JUNE**  BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
- 1.00pm  Armed Forces Day Service  (Green Dragon Square)  (Parade from 12.15pm)

**SUNDAY 25 JUNE**  TRINITY 3
- 10.30am  Sunday Eucharist  (St Martins House)
- 4.00pm  Choral Evensong at All Saints’ Church, Shawell  (St Nicholas)
- 6.30pm  St Nicholas Eucharist  (St Nicholas)

**MONDAY 26 JUNE**
- 8.30am  Morning Eucharist  (St Nicholas)
- 5.30pm  Choral Evensong  (St Nicholas)
Together with

Our thirty-seventh service out with parish churches in the City and County, as part of Together with Leicester Cathedral, will take place on Sunday 25 June 2023.

Join us at 4.00pm for a Choral Evensong at All Saints' Church, Shawell (Church Lane, Shawell, Lutterworth, LE17 6AL).

We are enjoying our visits to other parishes on Sunday afternoons for Choral Evensong with our Cathedral Choirs, clergy and members of our Cathedral community. It is wonderful to connect with people across the Diocese and to make new friends as well as continue existing relationships. Do join us if you can and spread the word to your friends too! The next few dates are below.

- **2 July:** Choral Evensong for Petertide, at St Peter’s Church, Langton, 6.00pm
- **17 September:** Choral Evensong, at St Mary’s Church, Charnwood, 4.00pm
- **24 September:** Choral Evensong, at Benefice of Burrough on the Hill, 4.00pm

For information about future dates please visit the Cathedral website or contact Canon Emma Davies or Head Verger Bev Collett.
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I look back on the past several weeks spent at the Cathedral, I am filled with gratitude and joy. The formation process has been a transformative experience for me, one that has deepened my faith and helped me to discover my strengths, as well as my vulnerabilities.

I have learned so much during my placement at Leicester Cathedral. From the complexities of the liturgical rhythms of cathedral life and the rich beauty of the choral tradition that you are so rightfully proud of. To how the Cathedral enables discipleship to the wider diocese and practical initiatives around social justice. Plus, many other blessings too numerus to mention here. Myself and my abilities and have been encouraged to grow in ways that I never thought possible.

Looking ahead to the final year of my study, I feel both excited and apprehensive. The road ahead may be difficult, but I am confident that I am well-equipped to face whatever challenges come my way. The lessons I have learned and the support I have received from the congregation and the wider cathedral team will serve me well, and I am eager to continue growing, both personally and professionally.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with me. I am grateful for your support and encouragement and look forward to seeing where this journey will take us all.

Blessings,

Stuart Voce
Updated time lapse video shows progress during May

Updated video from the time lapse camera outside the Cathedral shows the specialist groundwork subcontractors constructing, in stages, the double basement for the new visitor and learning centre extension. The lift shaft is clearly visible.

The video can be seen here.

Updated video from the time lapse camera inside the Cathedral shows continued work on the floor boxes providing power and data connections and installation of a limecrete screed to cover the underfloor heating coils. This will need to dry and cure for a few weeks before work can begin to lay a new limestone floor. The footage also shows stonework repair and restoration to the southwest columns (see Project Director Update 9 June 2023) and removal of internal scaffolding in the Sanctuary.

The video can be seen here.

Simon Bentley
Project Director
simon.bentley@leicestercofe.org
In Leicester Cathedral several images of foliated heads can be seen. This architectural motif is often known as the Green Man because the face is made up or completely surrounded by foliage normally spreading out from the centre of the face. The images shown here are aspects of the Green Man with a foliated head that can be seen on the right hand side of the tower arch. They are part of the 19th century Victorian Gothic restoration at St Martin’s.

The Green Man is one of the most common decorative images to be found in medieval churches and cathedrals in Western Europe today. This medieval sculpture can be seen on such as capitals, corbels, roof bosses, fonts, tombs, tympana, screens, misericords, and bench ends.

The foliated head, or leaf mask, from which the Green Man derives, appeared in Roman art during the second half of the 1st century AD and the many variations developed during the second century. The image below is a sketch of a later carving on the base of the lid of St Abre’s tomb in the 4th or 5th century in Poitier, taken from: Kathleen Basford The Green Man (Thetford: D. S. Brewer Ltd, 1978).

The Green Man in the form of foliated heads first appeared in this country during the early 12th century and derived from France. It became widespread throughout Europe in the Romanesque and was especially popular in the Gothic Architecture of the 13th to 15th Centuries. There are several Romanesque examples of Green Men in
Leicestershire and Rutland. At St Margaret’s Church in Leicester there is a fine example of a medieval Green Man, although the date is not known. Taken from The Good Gargoyle Guide – Medieval Carvings in Leicestershire and Rutland (second edition), Bob Trubshaw (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 2004).

Originally a pagan symbol of the old god of fertility and rebirth, the motif became a bridge between the new beliefs of Christianity and the pagan beliefs it replaced. The Green Man is regarded as a symbol of rebirth and resurrection, tying together the old ancient symbol associated with spring with the Christian Faith – i.e. the belief of the Resurrection and the Everlasting Life. Various academic authors such as Roy Judge (1979) and Ronald Hudson (1991) argue that the link between medieval green men and fertility gods is entirely a recent invention, because modern distinctions between Christianity and paganism only emerged in the last one hundred and fifty years. Due to the recent revival of interest there is a late 20th century example of a foliate face at Lyddington.

In the Great South Aisle at Leicester Cathedral, the figures are now standing on 19th century corbels with a foliated head or Green Man.

The original medieval statues stood on corbels with faces depicted on them as seen on the left in John Throsby’s sketch dated 1791, taken from his book ‘The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester; attempted by John Throsby’.

A completely different representation of everlasting life can be seen in St Katharine’s Chapel in the centre panel of the beautiful reredos behind the altar. Jesus is the central figure on the cross, with the Virgin Mary on the left and St John, the favourite Disciple of Jesus, on the right. Above the head of Jesus the letters INRI are nailed on the cross. The letters stand for ‘Jesus Nararenus Rex Iudaeorum’ – Latin for ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’. There is a skull at the foot of the cross which denotes Golgotha, the place of the skull. Foliage can be seen growing out of the cross, representing the everlasting life. Nearly all the other crosses on display in Leicester Cathedral are empty to symbolise the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Dearly Beloved Brethren (yes, that is you!), grace and peace and much love to you all from what was today a very sunny Lest-ah, but is now overcast with heavy black thunder clouds, although as yet, no rain. It is still and humid. Even our cats know things are not quite right. Sally Ann refuses to go outside and water the garden and therefore I fear it will not rain... we shall see what transpires.

I do love living in Lest-ah (really!) and today was a good example why – an early morning cycle ride to beautiful Aylestone meadows and then beyond along the Union Canal, swallows swooping low across the water to catch their breakfast in the already hot sun (there are at least six in the photograph above) – then disturbing a South African man doing some crazy (actually very wonderful) dance moves on the cycle path alongside the canal (he could not hear us coming up behind him as he had his headphones on!), an Eastern European father with his daughter sitting on a seat between his arms on the front of his bicycle (all very safe – she had a helmet on), closely followed by a southern Asian father carrying his daughter in his arms, a crowd of chattering East Asian people in the circle at the bottom of New Walk, West African families going to church, a German-speaking man in the coffee shop, and then finally the most beautiful East African family – and there were many more beside. God’s great diversity all on wonderful display here in the very heart of England.

And Evensong last Sunday at Peckleton was a true delight.¹ The location of the church on the top of a hill is outstanding, and the interior light, and spacious, and with great acoustics – a wonderful venue for music. And our Cathedral Choir and organist did not disappoint – Philip Moore’s Versicles and Responses I loved², and the Anthem, J.S. Bach’s five-part motet Jesu meine

¹ With many thanks to Mr and Mrs Chris Whitby et al!
² Recording here only partially captures the wonderfulness of our choir.
³ “Grown up music” © Alison Adams – indeed!
⁴ Commonly referred to as “those people” – it is a bit of a giveaway.
⁵ Now to be seen in a London Underground station – sorry, forgotten which one.
Freude was excellent.³ The words of the fifth movement complete last week’s Prayer Reflection:

Trotz dem alten Drachen,
Trotz des Todes Rachen,
Trotz der Furcht darzu!
Tobe, Welt, und springe,
Ich steh hier und singe
In gar sicher Ruh.
Gottes Macht hält mich in acht;
Erd und Abgrund muss verstummen,
Ob sie noch so brummen.

I defy the ancient dragon
I defy the jaws of death,
I defy the fear they cause.
Rage, World, and leap upon me.
I stand here and sing
In the calm of certainty.
God's power takes care of me;
earth and hell's abyss must fall silent,
however much they roar.

The third line really struck me. Fear is a very powerful emotion, which has its uses when escaping sabre-toothed tigers or velociraptors perhaps, but it should play no role in our relationship with people who don’t look, talk or smell like us.⁴ Now, this is much easier said than done and to illustrate, I recount another recent early morning cycle ride to Aylestone. As I was cycling along the path from Bede Park, a man staggered out of the bushes, shouting and screaming in some incomprehensible tongue and doing some less wonderful “dance moves”; he had obviously been sleeping in the bushes overnight. His hair was long and unkempt, his clothes very shabby. One trouser leg rolled up, revealed a very swollen oedematous and ulcerated lower leg. I initially cycled past giving him a wide berth; but then stopped. Others were cycling past, apparently ignoring this distressed person.

I was joined by a young Romanian. He suggested that an ambulance should be called (which probably was a good idea). I suggested we should together try to help the man, but he replied “No, I am scared”. “So am I!” I said (it was indeed a scary scene) but nevertheless I cycled off towards the man. As I introduced myself to him, and his eyes met mine, and then something strange occurred. Firstly, he stopped howling and then in a surprisingly very educated voice replied, telling me his name and then slowly, some of the terrible events in his life that had led him to this spot, in this condition. He appeared quite suddenly to be in his right mind; however, he refused all offers of medical help. I bought him breakfast at a local convenience store and we parted. I have not seen him before or since but I often think of and pray for him.

John tells us that “perfect love casts out fear”.

However, the choices I make are sometimes driven by fears, prejudices and even desires that are not of God; and there is no health in me.

Perfect love encourages, builds up, comforts and heals in order that others might sing their song.

A broadsheet after the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 put it like this!⁵

Indeed!

Have a lovely week and look forward to seeing you on our return from Finistère.

PS. it did NOT rain...

Martin
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SAFEGUARDING

THE ACTING DEAN and Chapter of the Cathedral are wholly committed to the safety, well-being and protection of everyone having contact with our community. We all share responsibility for Safeguarding.

If you have concerns about the welfare or behaviour of an adult, young person or child, please speak to one of the Residentiary Canons or to Linda Green or Kath Rowberry, our Safeguarding Co-ordinators.

The Residentiary Canons can be approached in person or contacted on 07399 523 330.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinators do not publish their contact details. Please speak to a verger if you wish to contact them. You do not need to explain the reason for your request.

All concerns will be responded to proportionately and with discretion.

All information is correct at the time of printing. If you have anything you would like included in this newsletter please get in contact with us.

Cathedral@LeicesterCofE.org | www.leicestercathedral.org