



The cathedral defines Salisbury. The city has grown around it and it is one of Western Europe's greatest mediaeval buildings. For me, as the still quite new bishop, there is great pleasure in getting to know it. Every time I go in, not quite daily but several times a

week, I look for something new. I don't think it will let me down as there is so much detail to discover as well as the grandeur. It is a delight. There are breathtaking moments within it. The cathedral is great architecture, certainly, but it has a transcendent beauty that lifts our hearts to God as well as being a taste of heaven on earth.

I am impressed by the way the cathedral tells its story. It is not a museum or a visitor attraction; it is a living, working place of welcome and hospitality, worship and service. It is a lively place telling the story of God come among us in Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit energising God's people. Day by day, week by week and at the major Christian festivals, the cathedral is the major focus of the Church of England in the diocese. The music is glorious and many of the youngsters who have grown up singing in the choir come back because they continue to feel themselves to be part of the cathedral community. So far, I have presided at two Confirmation services in the cathedral, confirming over a hundred people. These are great occasions for the individuals, their families, friends and parish churches, and they are also great occasions in the life of the cathedral and diocese.

There's a great range of activity in the cathedral. Just before Christmas I found Jethro Tull rehearsing for a folk/rock concert which was a sell-out. Often there are children taking part in education programmes. Always there are visitors from around the world. There is an intercessions book that gets

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placed on the altar every Tuesday morning so that the prayers of visitors are offered to God. This is a Christian place with an unusually wide and deep reach.

The cathedral serves the diocese for the greater Church gatherings and it meets the needs of its many and varied visitors. Of course it has its regular congregations but the work of the cathedral is much greater than they could sustain on their own. So the cathedral needs its many friends and especially its committed Friends who pray, love and remember it.

In John's Gospel Jesus said to his disciples, "I no longer call you servants but friends". None of us want to take our friends for granted and all of us need critical friends who will tell us the truth lovingly. The definition of friendship I like most is Karl Barth's: A friend is someone who in the end is for you.

Thank you for your support, prayers and above all for your friendship. You are helping to sustain a remarkable holy place.

+ Nicholas Sarum