

Liverpool Cathedral's Social Impact: A Stakeholder-Informed Framework

Abstract

This paper looks at shaping a framework to understand the social impact of Liverpool Cathedral. Cathedral studies have highlighted that cathedrals are a source of spiritual capital, a unique phenomenon of sacred space and common ground, where the boundary between the sacred and the secular is softened and becomes fuzzy. To fully understand the social impact of cathedrals a framework is needed to map the benefits across, place, activities and people. For Liverpool Cathedral the benefits of knowing and understanding the social impact offers an opportunity to contribute to the improved well-being of individuals and the local community, undertake better-informed strategic decision-making, more effective communication and improved access to funding. This paper considers the significance of the critical factors needed to shape an effective framework to measure social impact, the place, activities and people and concludes with the outline of a framework to measure the benefits across the four factors.

Contact:

Dr Ann Casson

Insights Lead, Liverpool Cathedral

Senior Research Fellow - KTP Associate, Lincoln Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Visiting Scholar in Spiritual Flourishing - National Institute for Christian Education Research, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK

Email: Ann.Casson@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

The Light Before Christmas – the Gift 2025: Visiting Voices

Abstract

This presentation draws on findings from a participatory case study of The Light Before Christmas – The Gift 2025 at Liverpool Cathedral, conducted from 28th November to 3rd December. Ethnographic observations recorded a strong presence of intergenerational family groups, particularly parents and grandparents accompanying young children, during the peak evening sessions on 29-30 November. Participants exiting the Cathedral after the show were invited to share their immediate impressions, favourite features, thematic reflections, expectations, and overall satisfaction. The results from 71 participants indicate that the light show provided a highly immersive and spiritually enriching experience. Most participants were satisfied, and many remarked that the festive atmosphere rekindled childhood memories of Christmas, whilst the lighting of candles helped them remember loved ones who had passed away. The Cathedral's missional impact was also recognised. Around 90% said they would attend other Cathedral activities. Suggestions for improvement included enhancing accessibility, increasing seating capacity, and adding more narrative elements to emphasise the Christmas theme.

Contact:

Dr Celeste Y.M. Yuen

Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Educational Policy and Leadership, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, HKSAR, China

Visiting Reader in Intercultural Education, World Religions and Educational Research Unit (WRERU), Lincoln Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Email: celesteeason@gmail.com

**National Days of Prayer in New Zealand:
Royal Jubilee Observances 1887 to the Present Day**

Abstract

As part of a wider study of National Days of Prayer (NDOP) in New Zealand, this presentation focusses on the Royal Jubilee observances that took place from 1887 to 2022. Three of these events may be categorized as NDOPs, those of Queen Victoria in 1887 and 1897 and of King George V in 1935, while the subsequent Jubilees of Queen Elizabeth II were distinctly lesser events. Viewed as a whole, several transitions can be identified. Up to 1935, observances become more Imperial in scope, there is increasing official involvement and a growing awareness of Empire and the attachment of religion to Empire, with celebrations and thanksgiving services being high on universal. With subsequent Jubilees, however, the religious element devolves to a single official service, the Commonwealth element diminishes and celebrations all but disappear. Correlating with the wider study, these transitions underline a watershed transition from 1947 during which the decline of the British Empire appears to be a significant factor in the decline of NDOPs in New Zealand.

Contact:

Mr David John Eason

PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Email: godinhistory@yahoo.co.uk

The Church Isn't Really Growing: Perhaps That's Not the Problem

Abstract

The Church in Britain is not growing, despite decades of optimism, initiatives, and carefully curated narratives to the contrary. This paper confronts the uncomfortable reality that much of what passes for “growth” is a statistical illusion or the reshuffling of existing believers. Beneath this lies a deeper problem: a theological capitulation to the metrics of success, where attendance figures are taken as evidence of God’s activity. Such assumptions distort the gospel and burden leaders with expectations they were never called to carry. Rather than asking how to reverse decline, this paper argues that we must first tell the truth: something is ending. Drawing on the biblical motif of exile, it suggests that the Church is being stripped of power, privilege, and self-importance. This is not a failure to fix but a dislocation to inhabit. Instead of striving for institutional success, it argues for a reorientation toward faithfulness, honesty, lament, and love as marks of authentic Christian life in a post-Christendom context.

Contact:

The Revd Graham Turner

Email: grahamcturner@gmail.com

Who Would be a Rural Vicar?

Abstract

The Church of England is experiencing a crisis in recruitment with many fewer clergy seeking new posts than there are posts needing clergy to fill them. Nowhere is this crisis more acute than in the rural Church. The perception that ministry in the countryside is more challenging because of the number of churches for which rural clergy are responsible is widespread. The research undertaken with 44 respondents from 9 rural dioceses attempts to interrogate the reality behind this perception. Building on the 'fragile church' model proposed by Revd Ann Lawson, many of the specific challenges faced in a rural setting are emphasised, including the burden of administration, the complexity of handling multiple budgets and the weight of being the custodian of several ancient buildings. Nevertheless, what surprises is the 89% satisfaction with ministry rate reported by the same clergy who highlight these challenges.

Contact:

The Revd Dr Greg Smith

Hereford Diocese

Honorary Fellow in Ministry Studies, World Religions and Education Research Unit, Lincoln
Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Email: rectorpontstip@gmail.com

Exploring the Changing Psychological and Demographic Profile of Women Attracted to the Ministry of Bishop Barron

Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 562 female participants attending conferences led by Bishop Barron in London in 2023 and 2025, this study examines the demographic and psychological profile of women attracted to this online ministry. Utilising the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS), the analysis distinguishes among three age cohorts: those under forty, those aged forty to fifty-nine, and those aged sixty and over. The findings indicate that the youngest cohort displays a profile significantly distinct from the older cohorts and from the traditional Anglican and Catholic congregation norms. Demographically, women under forty were characterised by high levels of education (93% graduates), singleness (73%), and ethnic diversity (73% non-White British). Psychologically, the data reveal a contraction of the Epimethean (SJ) temperament typically associated with church maintenance, and a corresponding expansion of the Apollonian (NF) and Promethean (NT) temperaments. This research interprets these findings through the sociological lens of 'waithood' and the psychological framework of temperament theory, arguing that this cohort seeks ontological stability and intellectual rigour within a hierarchical structure. The study concludes by assessing the ecclesial implications of integrating a female constituency characterised by a high-competence, high-agency psychological profile that may sit in tension with traditional parish roles.

Contact:

Ms Helen Frances Vaudrey

Honorary Research Fellow, World Religions and Education Research Unit, Lincoln Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Email: helen.vaudrey@lincolnbishop.ac.uk

A Comparative Understanding of Training in Christian and Islamic Seminaries

Abstract

Based on a literature review of wider field research in both Christian and Islamic seminaries, this paper reflected on comparative insights and some early prophetic dialogue between the two faiths. By comparing the training of Christian clergy and the training of Muslim ministers in the UK, new observations were offered by setting out terms for a prophetic dialogue. An overview of Islamic Religious Training in the UK revealed the previously non -accredited *Darul Ulooms* to be in contrast to accredited Islamic 'colleges'. This was then compared to the better-known Anglican Christian Theological Training Colleges in the UK, which have been more widely researched but not in comparison with its Muslim counterparts. A final reflection identified four types of Christian education that can be applied to Muslim theological education.

Contact:

The Revd Dr Howard Worsley
Director of the Centre of the Child in the Church
Senior Research Fellow, Trinity College Bristol, Bristol, UK
Email: howard.worsley@trinitycollegebristol.ac.uk

The Spirit of a Community

Abstract

I've been attending the Postgraduate Learning Community for over four years, since joining the staff at Lincoln Bishop University, to work with Leslie Francis. It was seeing how the PGLC worked as a *community* that convinced me of the quality, depth, and breadth (stretching beyond the academy) of the research on education and religion that was so important to the university. My own work in religion and spirituality in education, and on the character of schools as learning communities, led me to write of 'the spirit of the school' – almost twenty years ago. Coming to Lincoln, and across the Pennines to Liverpool, convinced me to work with Leslie to set up the World Religions and Education Research Unit at the university, an umbrella group to make the university's work less of a 'hidden gem' and more of a 'gem'. And it was the spirit of the community in Liverpool that convinced me of the significance of the PGLC.

Contact:

Professor Julian Stern

Professor of Education and Religion and Director of World Religions and Educational Research Unit, Lincoln Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Email: julian.stern@lincolnbishop.ac.uk

Liturgy as a Source of Meaning:

A brief examination of the chant Introits for Lent and their relation to the traditional Gospel texts for Ash Wednesday and the following Sundays to convey something of the scope and power of liturgical participation

Abstract

The evolution of Western chant and liturgy, especially from the fourth to the eighth century CE, reflects a conviction that participation in the liturgy is a life-changing encounter with the living God, both individually and corporately. From an introduction that noted the growing sense of moral confusion and uncertainty in the contemporary world, the presentation moves to look at the choice and treatment of scriptural texts and their chant settings. Some key findings: the contrast between the trustworthiness and faithfulness of God and the frailty and fallibility of creation; the experience of being held by the faithful God builds moral confidence and clarity; the journey through Lent is one of growing understanding and depth, rooted in a new appreciation of the divine initiative; and, above all, all this is experienced in the whole person by physical participation – it has to be done, not merely thought about.

Contact:

The Revd Peter Allan

Email: pallan412@gmail.com

**The Centre for Transatlantic Christianity and Liverpool Cathedral:
Linking Church and Academy for Reparatory Justice and Healing**

Abstract

This paper introduces the work of the Centre for Transatlantic Christianity. It argues that, when exploring and pursuing reparatory initiatives for the historic and continued legacies of trauma from the Transatlantic Trade in Trafficked Africans, there is a critical need for both Church and Academy to share leadership and responsibility if repair and post-traumatic growth are the aim. The Church needs the expertise and empirical research offered by the Academy to inform funding, focus, and programmes; and the Academy requires the faith, spirituality, and grassroots community engagement of the Church, if research is to have a meaningful impact and move from page to praxis. To this end, this paper provides a coherent rationale for the Centre to function in partnership with Liverpool Anglican Cathedral—representing “Church,” and specifically, the Church of England/Anglican Church, in a key historic city—with a group of concerned, international academics through the World Religions and Education Research Unit (Lincoln Bishop University)—functioning as “Academy.”

Contact:

Dr Sara Fretheim

Research Associate, World Religions and Education Research Unit, Lincoln Bishop University,
Lincoln, UK

Email: Sara.Fretheim@lincolnbishop.ac.uk

Is it Important to Have Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in the Curriculum for Wales?

Listening to Teachers' Voices

Abstract

This paper draws on the responses to a survey question from the Teachers' voice project – RVE in the Curriculum of Wales, styled as: 'Is it important to have Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in the Curriculum for Wales?' Teachers' responses to the question identify their understanding of the contribution and value of the subject to the Curriculum for Wales. The paper places the discussion within the wider UK context, identifying why such a development is significant and why it is politically sensitive. After reviewing the survey findings and placing them within the specific national context of Wales, the paper considers the advantages and disadvantages of bringing RVE into the curriculum. It concludes that it is difficult to see how RVE could sit meaningfully 'outside' the Curriculum for Wales in its current conceptualisation.

Contact:

The Revd Dr Tania ap Siôn

Reader of Religions, Humanities and Education, World Religions and Education Research Unit, Lincoln Bishop University, Lincoln, UK

Co-Director of the St Giles' Centre, Wrexham, UK

Email: smc.taniaapsion@gmail.com