

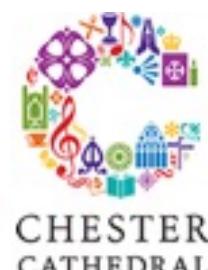
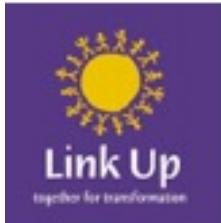
Curating Spaces of Hope™

Unlocking the Potential of Performance in partnership



This report details proceedings and legacy from the Curating Spaces of Hope™ Symposium on the 7th of June 2017 at Chester Cathedral.

This event introduced Spaces of Hope™ as a model and definition for Faith Based Organisations and facilitated interdisciplinary dialogue that unlocked the potential of performance in partnership between Chester Cathedral and networks and partners from across the city of Chester and the Diocese of Chester.



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Vice Dean of Chester Cathedral, Canon Jane Brooke

I am delighted that we were able to host Curating Spaces of Hope™ at Chester Cathedral. There were a lot of people represented from the city of Chester and from further afield. We came together to listen to experts and discussed ways forward for smaller or larger projects and ways in which we can work in partnership and ways we might develop projects together, all for the sake of Christ.



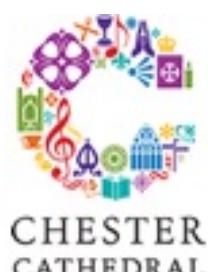
Bishop of Stockport, Rt Revd Libby Lane

The Spaces of Hope™ Symposium at Chester Cathedral is building on work done elsewhere in our Diocese, really successfully, whilst recognizing that there are already really powerful partnerships in the city of Chester. This is an opportunity for some of the threads and conversations to be drawn together in ways that can help us identify better working partnerships and better ways to serve that will help our city to flourish.



William Temple Professor of Religion and Public Life, Chris Baker

It is my great privilege and I am really excited to have participated in and contributed to the Spaces of Hope event at Chester Cathedral. We explored not only some of the techniques that are emerging around partnership, but also some of the common values, beliefs and ethics that are driving this new, what you might call, relational form of partnership. We are thinking that this is going to be a more resilient and long lasting form of partnership because it is based on what really drives people and what really motivates people.



Curating Spaces of Hope™ at Chester Cathedral

Curating Spaces of Hope™ has been invited to Chester Cathedral following the success of the Spaces of Hope™ Symposiums at St Thomas' Church in Stockport in October 2016 and St Mary's in the Marketplace Stockport in April 2017. The symposium approach of cultivating connections in a way that identified common ground and vision for curating a culture of hope, was very attractive and is a highly relevant and welcome programme. The connections that exist between church leaders from different areas of the Diocese of Chester meant that sharing stories of success allowed this new work to be shared, and to emerge on the opposite side of the Diocese at Chester Cathedral.



Chester Cathedral has a 2 year strategic plan in place for 2017-19. This approach to planning combines a change in personnel at Chester Cathedral with a programme that comes under six headings: 'Worship and prayer', 'Learning and Discipleship', 'Welcome and Hospitality', 'Serving our city, region and diocese', 'Sustainable and Ethical Business Operation' and 'Conserving and Developing our Buildings and Heritage'. Within these areas, the aim to offer a glimpse of the glory of God in Cathedral worship and opportunities to all to grow in Christian faith and learning.

It is hoped that Curating Spaces of Hope™: Unlocking the Potential of Performance in Partnership, will trigger the renewing and revitalising of relationships with all local Christian communities to further the mission of Chester Cathedral. We can then begin to populate the programme and formulate agreed ways forward together which may include a new project or plan but will focus on furthering the mission of Christ in the city of Chester and beyond.

It is wonderful to be able to share this vision with faith networks from across the city, who all share a vision for the role of the Christian faith in our shared projects, places and networks, as well as our towns, cities and regions.

Thank you to Diocese of Chester, Transforming Lives Together, Link Up and Salt of the Earth Network for creating connections and offering support for the Curating Spaces of Hope™ project. Thank you also to University of Chester and William Temple Foundation for sharing their research and their esteemed researchers, who are delivering, shaping and guiding the Curating Spaces of Hope™ work.



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Curating Spaces of Hope™: Unlocking the Potential of Performance in Partnership.

Delegates from communities and sectors across Diocese of Chester attended Chester Cathedral to participate in a rich and innovative event capturing our current context and curating space for contemplation, connection and cultivation.

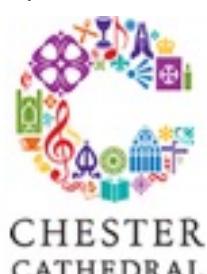
"What does the term Spaces of Hope™ mean to you?"

On arrival, our delegates were asked this simple question. We were encouraging everyone to share from their beliefs values and world views as the catalyst for shaping the way engage in the world. We received an array of answers that spanned the tangible and the intangible, which set us up to consider: "*learning and sharing*", "*place to be... place to question... place to grow...*", "*welcome for Jesus*", "*food and drink*", "*having difficult conversations safely and inclusive of all*". We were also joined online. @apjwilliams said "*these spaces can produce experimental forms of care and politics based on mutual aid and solidarity*". @apjwilliams continued using #SpacesofHope "*these spaces embody an ethics / politics that cuts through and calls time on neoliberal moralisations of deservingness and responsibility*".

Matthew Barber from University of Chester and Diocese of Chester delivered the first keynote address, introducing Faith Based Organisations as Spaces of Hope™. Matthew presented Spaces of Hope™ as new infrastructure, offering a literary guide to how they have been derived, as well as sharing a new definition: "**Spaces of Hope™ are missional, outward facing and partnership driven expressions of how we serve each other to shape our public space**".

Matthew used themes of austerity, localism and coproduction to locate Spaces of Hope™ within the current social and policy landscape. Matthew also used patterns of the post-secular, the spiritual turn, spiritual capital and the spatial turn, to give shape to Spaces of Hope™ that relates our personal experiences of the world around us to the systems and structures that shape it.

Matthew helped us to see the possibility of Space of Hope™ everywhere, capturing the themes and patterns shaping our public sphere. They will be known by their fruit (Matthew 7: 15-20). What Matthew meant is that they will manifest differently based upon the things that comprise the spaces that we share and how they are nurtured in each project place and network we inhabit. Matthew related our understanding of Spaces of Hope™ to the transformational work of St Chad in the 7th century, practicing prayer and worship whilst sharing his faith across the kingdom of Mercia, and William Temple, who located public service at the heart of the welfare state. As we come full circle, there is chance to help reimagine once again. You can hear Matthew's presentation in full at www.spacesohope.co.uk



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Professor Chris Baker from University of Chester and William Temple Foundation

Prof Baker began by highlighting the issue of language. Chris spoke from a sociological, policy and theological perspective. Prof Baker built upon the foundations that Matthew laid, by unpacking the key patterns that frame our Spaces of Hope™; the post-secular, spiritual capital and progressive localism. Prof Baker then introduced the Spaces of Hope™ tool kit; social enterprise, leadership and coproduction.

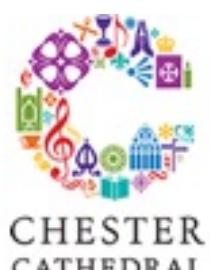
The post-secular was identified as an observed shift at the beginning of the 21st century, as we see trends that simply were not envisaged in the prevailing views held in the 20th century. We can see this in the way in which belief, values and worldviews are shaping the public space. What might seem like a counter cultural understanding reflects the connection between what is happening globally and the way that it impacts us locally. We can see this both statistically and socially. One example is by looking at the '*religious noes*' or those not affiliating with any religion. Within this grouping there are many that have an interest in religion and spirituality, but they simply do not affiliate with a specific organisation or institution.

Prof Baker shared Spiritual Capital with us. "Spiritual Capital is the deep-rooted beliefs, values and worldviews that shape the way that we interact with others." Simply put, Spiritual Capital is the *why* that drives our *what*. Prof Baker helped us to understand that what we do, the space we are in and the source of our drive and energy we have are interrelated and contingent upon the way that we interact with each other. By embracing difference, we can enter a mutual learning process that can transforms our public spaces.

Progressive Localism was Prof Baker's final theme. This is a localism that is made up of groups and institutions that are outward facing, not inward facing. It is an attitude of mind and creates affinities that are expansive in their reach and cross boundaries; physical boundaries, ideological boundaries and professional boundaries. This theme helps us to understand the potential that is there for new relationships to form.

Prof Baker concluded by introducing the toolkit of social enterprise, leadership and coproduction. This tool kit represents practices that are already out there, but can be the mechanisms by which we are able to make a critical difference in our shared spaces.

*For Prof Baker's full presentation follow the media tab on
www.spacesofhope.co.uk*



Canon Prof. Elaine Graham from University of Chester and Chester Cathedral

Cathedral provided our final keynote. Prof Graham's presentation helped us to understand how we might view our faith through the lenses and prisms of Spaces of Hope™ and understand the difference that we can make by delivering our faith in today's world.

Against many expectations, religion has not vanished from Western culture. If anything, it exercises a greater fascination than ever before. Yet society is nervous about the public engagement of faith groups and whether it is right to (re)incorporate the vocabulary of faith into our common life. Prof Graham related this critique to the recent acts of domestic terror on Westminster Bridge, at the Manchester Arena and in Borough Market and the response that was offered in the wake of these attacks.

People are troubled and fascinated in equal measure by this new visibility of faith, not least because those who 'speak of God in public' are now in a minority. Prof Graham said, "faith is a vital element of understanding identity, culture, politics and radicalisation ... in ways that a generation ago, no one could have foreseen."

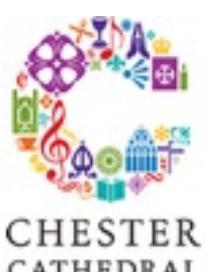
Elaine's lecture considered the implications of this for the public witness of Christianity. She suggested that this entails a retrieval of the practice of apologetics, in terms of Christians being prepared to defend their core principles and convictions *in public*. This entails a three-fold process: of discerning the actions of God in the world, participating in God's mission and bearing witness to the theological convictions that underpin that praxis.

Rather than being an adversarial or argumentative process, however, the apologetics of presence is an invitation to dialogue and to the rejuvenation of the spaces that make up public life – such as local activism and community development – as a way of enriching our shared commitment to the common good.

Prof Graham concluded by suggesting that whilst it is inevitable that people will disagree over the way in which faith is understood and delivered, it is "less a fight to the death over Christian doctrine, but a narration from the inside of how the practice of faith builds a world of value, meaning and relationship and how that can be manifested in the world at large."

Prof Graham pointed to the need to combine debate with practice, to create the opportunity for values and motivations to be drawn together in a way that illustrates a shared path forward in practice.

*For Prof Graham's full presentation follow the media tab on
www.spacesofhope.co.uk*



Curating Space of Hope™: Performance in Partnership, in Practice

Following on from our keynote presentations, we stepped out into the marketplace. We did this in two ways, viewing the Spaces of Hope™ framework, through the lens of existing projects, partnerships and networks.

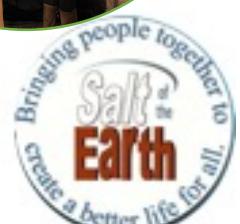
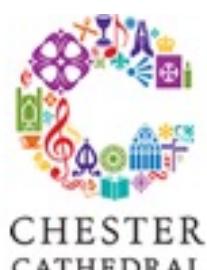
Claire Henderson Davis spoke to us about her work at Chester Cathedral. Claire's remit as 'Contemporary Performance Artist & Theologian in Residence' at Chester Cathedral is to extend public engagement with the life of the Cathedral, and to help the Cathedral to become a more welcoming public space at the heart of the community. Claire described the public workshop series she has developed, which addresses themes that are shaping the city. These workshops run on a regular basis and are open to new attendees. Claire also discussed the joys and challenges of her work in light of the overall theme of the event and showed a short film of one of her performance pieces. Claire described her piece as capturing the "small everyday gestures of relationship and connection in the face of disaster". The piece included contributions from the Cathedral choir and volunteers. We are delighted to be able to share a video of Claire's presentation and her short film "Golgotha, Lament" at www.spacesofhope.co.uk

Claire's presentation was followed by entering the marketplace and immersing ourselves in the myriad projects that we can already see in our city and further afield. This provided an opportunity for reflection and consolidation, before engaging in our facilitated conversations, producing themes and recommendations to take this shared work forward.

Spaces of Hope™ Legacy for Unlocking the Potential of Performance in Partnership:

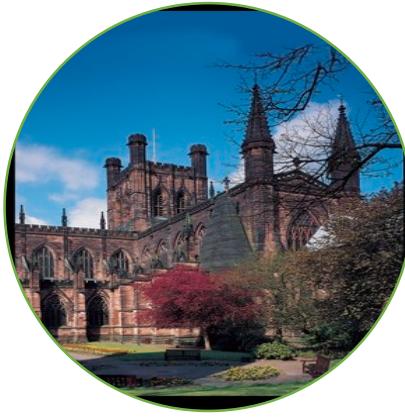
These next steps were produced through discussion by delegates, event partners and plenary speakers. Canon Brooke said that "[Chester] Cathedral can be a Space of Hope™ for everyone, and that is exactly what it should be". Canon Brooke urged delegates to contact either herself or Matthew Barber with thoughts, ideas or possible visions so that we can make something happen, creating Spaces of Hope™ in Chester and in the locality.

Matthew suggested that there is a simple process that we can use to shape our thinking. We can consider *prayer, presence and partnership*. Matthew continued, "*we are giving visibility to what is, to discover what could be ...this starts with prayer. It is not lost on me that we met [at Chester Cathedral] on [Pentecost Sunday, three days before the Spaces of Hope™ presence was established] and said 'Thy Kingdom Come' and can take that attitude and approach. Looking back, St Chad and St Werburgh were doing exactly the same thing in the 7th century, so we know that this is not new, but it is important*".



In view of this and Chester Cathedral as the mother church of the Church of England in the Diocese of Chester, renewing the vision for engagement at Chester Cathedral can comprise the renewal of every day practice of prayer, worship and fellowship as well as new agendas and streams of work.

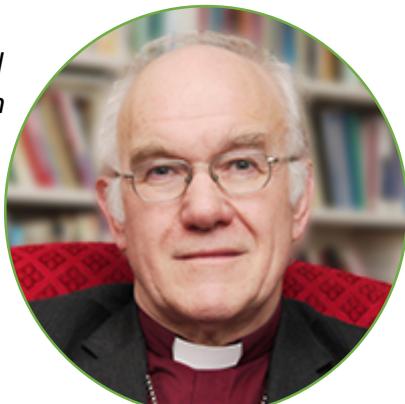
- There are daily services taking place at the Cathedral that are open and welcoming to all. There are also monthly public workshops taking place, which are coordinated by Claire Henderson Davis. Details of the programme of public workshops will be circulated to all Spaces of Hope™ delegates.
- There will be a new contemporary worship service including local worship bands starting in the autumn. The first service will run in October 2017.
- There will also be a new service to support those affected by suicide.



Bishop Peter said "*I read the preliminary material for the conference and the thing I was left with having read the introductory material was that verse from John's gospel 'I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness'. If I were trying to name in a contemporary spirituality what people in our society strive for, it would be something like that, 'life in all its fullness'. I think dialogue between people of different faith communities, people of no faith and people with an interest in human flourishing to gather together and to explore what human flourishing might mean in today's world and our society must be a good thing.*"

Prof Graham reminded us "*in some ways the future of our democracy is at stake and we are in for some tough times. Following on from what the Bishop said, we need to hold to what we value about human dignity and what makes a good society and we need to find the wellsprings of that hope and resilience and try and embody that for other people.* Prof Graham continued to shape this vision saying, "*if doctrine divide then let service unite*". The areas for service that have emerged are:

- Curating Spaces of Hope in the marketplace and in rural contexts
- Engaging issues of isolation and young people's mental health
- Developing the definition of Spaces of Hope™ and possible applications for it.
- Unpack the Spaces of Hope™ toolkit through partnership led engagements with Social Enterprise, Leadership and Coproduction.
- Deepening understanding of and engagement with spiritual literacy.



Prof Baker said that "*Spaces of Hope™ are encouraging a grassroots ecumenism that cuts across and transcends even church understandings of that word.*" He continued to say that following 3 successful Spaces of Hope™ Symposia across Diocese of Chester, he would urge investment in the Spaces of Hope™ technology and a deep exploration of its potential. This will initially manifest as follows:

- The formation of a Spaces of Hope™ steering group, which will convene in the autumn, to explore the appropriate next steps of the Spaces of Hope™ work.
- Developing the Chester Cathedral legacy of Spaces of Hope™ in Partnership across the Diocese of Chester as part of Interfaith Week (November 13th to November 19th 2017):
 - o Salt of the Earth Network Event on November 17th in Ellesmere Port, exploring a shared understanding of place and partnership.
 - o Utilizing Spaces of Hope™ technology in Cheshire East, on November 18th, considering community cohesion.



For full coverage of the symposium, please visit www.spacesofhope.co.uk

