

Dear Fiona,

Despite the immense strain and challenges that the pandemic places upon St Paul's, true to our spirit as a beacon of hope in times of adversity, we are continuing to undertake some wonderful and uplifting activities during these challenging times, which I thought I would take the opportunity to share with you.

As you are probably aware the Cathedral opened for visitors and worshippers once again in the summer and this has been followed last month with the return of the Cathedral choir. For many places lockdown has been the longest period without singing since the period of the Commonwealth in the middle of the seventeenth century when Oliver Cromwell's disapproval of choral services silenced the choir for a number of years. So the return of the Vicars choral on 1st September was a very special moment. They were joined by the Choristers on 6th September, who have returned with abundant enthusiasm and are in fine voice. The Choristers are temporarily living in Amen Court whilst the new boarding house at the Cathedral School – which was delayed by the lockdown – is completed. The building work is really taking shape and the boarding house is expected to be ready for the second half of the term.

Work on our new step-free entrance leading to the North Transept of the Cathedral was able to resume in the summer months and is now making good headway, we expect this to be completed at the end of the year. An important next phase of this project is the building of the RememberMe inner portico within the North Transept entrance. This portico of remembrance for the victims of Covid-19, will allow visitors to pay tribute to all those who have suffered and died as a result of the pandemic. We are fundraising in earnest to realise this very significant and poignant project and are most grateful for the support received thus far.

Work on the conservation of our magnificent 17th century Wren Library was also interrupted by the lockdown, but this too has resumed. We have been very grateful to receive a significant grant from the Wolfson Foundation over the summer, which will now enable us to complete the full scope of the works. The Library restoration presents us with a unique opportunity to transform our visitors' ability to engage with the Library's books and manuscripts, and our wider collections and archives. We are now actively engaged in developing a programme that will open up access to St Paul's treasures for a diverse range of visitors onsite, and to international audiences online – including tours, school learning resources, talks and conservation training.

Looking ahead to our autumn and winter schedule at the Cathedral, sadly many of our special events and services have had to be cancelled, but we are adapting our work to the current circumstances and I am delighted to report that we have some exciting broadcasts lined up. Last week we recorded two BBC Songs of Praise programmes, one to be broadcast on 20th December and the other to go out early in the New Year. Today, we are recording a service for the Church of England which will be broadcast for the feast of All Saints on 1st November. We are currently considering our Christmas events and what scope there might be to live stream things such as the Advent Carol Service, the Messiah and the Ceremony of Carols, so we will keep you updated on our plans for this.

Thank you for your continued support and fellowship, it means so much to us. We continue to pray for our great City, Country and its people in these challenging times.

Very best wishes
Sarah

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Fundraising Officer



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