

Dear American Friends of St Davids Cathedral

November is upon us, and the chilly mornings of late autumn have often been rendered even more misty by the swirling smoke of the Cathedral groundsmen burning the billowing piles of leaves that fall at this time of year. From the Song School, in the undercroft of the 14th century St Mary's College (now the elegantly refurbished Refectory), the Choir can be heard working on the repertoire for Advent and Christmas.

So the new church year is almost upon us, and we shall begin as always with the wonderful Advent Procession service, that makes its way from darkness to light, and from the West end, up the nave and through the quire, to the presbytery, before the high altar. It reminds us of our own journeying, so often recapitulated within our lives, into the greater fullness of life to which we are called in Jesus Christ, and always before us the promise of the fullness of heaven, where we shall see him in all his glory.

In small ways we are looking forwards to sharing in a greater experience of his glory, as we look to 2020. Our project, with York University's Centre for Christianity and Culture, to install faith-based historic interpretation, continues. By St David's Day we hope to have at least some of this installed, so visitors will be offered better resources to help them engage with both our building, and the faith and worship it has encapsulated, through past ages and in our own time – with encouragement for them to consider their own response to our Lord and Saviour who in every age extends to all his invitation and call 'Follow me'.

Next year the Church of England is celebrating 2020 as 'Year of Cathedrals – Year of Pilgrimage' and we are expecting that the publicity for this will helpfully overflow to the Welsh Cathedrals too! Canterbury Cathedral will be marking the 850th anniversary of Thomas Becket's murder in 1170, and 800th anniversary of moving his remains from the crypt tomb to the specially built shrine (destroyed at the Reformation), and this too will have resonances here, since our own Thomas Becket chapel has roots going back to 1171 when Henry II prayed here on his way to Ireland.

Pilgrimage today is very different from pre-Reformation times, and pilgrimage here from David's own time to the Norman era was probably different again – but there is still the sense of human beings compelled to go questing, within and without, in search of ourselves ... or so we might think. St Augustine understood the true destination of that search, when he famously said 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.' Thanks be to God that in this place so many people experience such a sweet foretaste of that rest, and then as they go home or wherever life next takes them, also go on to grow in that knowledge and love of God, whose gift of peace passes all understanding.

Wherever you are, wherever life's inner and outer journeying is taking you, may you know the Peace of the Christ-child this Christmastide, and grow in resting in him in the year ahead, and in sharing his peace with those around you.

With my love and prayers, from Tyddewi

Sarah

The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones

Dean of St Davids