

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

Teachers' Support Notes

Page 1 – This page is an introduction to the cathedral. Please remind students that they are in a place of worship – please remind them about appropriate behaviour (acting respectfully, no running, eating or drinking in the cathedral and not to use phones please).

The cathedral has been a place of worship for over 1400 years. During that time many hundreds of thousands of people have passed through this place as worshippers and visitors.

A “who’s who” on this page helps the students appreciate the scale of work that is involved in running a cathedral.

There is space for pupils to pupils to record their thoughts and reflections.

Page 2 – The plan on the front cover of the workbook will help you find your way around the different parts of the cathedral.

Start outside at the west end of the cathedral. From here you can see Rochester Castle which was built at the same time as the nave of the present cathedral (by the Normans). The castle is now a ruin because it is no longer used for its original purpose (protection / defence). The cathedral is not a ruin because it is used every single day for prayer and worship and has been maintained over the centuries.

Above the great west door there is a carving of Jesus surrounded by angels. There is a space for pupils to draw part of the carving.

The first cathedral, started in 604 A.D. by the Saxons, was a very small, plain church compared with today’s cathedral. Evidence of the first church can be seen on the road immediately outside the west front (two strips of cobbles mark where the walls were) and, inside, two brass strips in the floor just to the right of the small west door as you come in mark the position of the apse (east end) of the original church. A photo on the notice board by the Welcome Desk shows a picture of a church in Bradwell, Essex, built around the same time as the original church in Rochester and thought to be similar.

In pairs, the students may gauge the size of the first church. To check their findings they could look at the Lady Chapel, which is probably roughly the same size as the original church.

Page 3 – The Nave The cathedral is built in the shape of the most important Christian symbol – the cross. In fact Rochester Cathedral is built in the shape of

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

a double cross, with the Nave and its transepts forming one cross and the Quire and its transepts forming a second cross. This can be seen on the plan on the front of the workbook.

The Nave is the largest “room” in the cathedral, and is used for large services, King’s School Assemblies, concerts, leavers’ services, award and degree ceremonies. The word nave comes from the Latin word *navis*, meaning ship / boat. Look at the shape of the roof and imagine it turned upside down. It would look a bit like a boat’s hull.

While you are sitting here you might see the vergers going about their duties; possibly the choir and / or organist rehearsing; the welcomers at the desk greeting visitors; shop staff serving and, during services, members of cathedral clergy.

Sitting at the end of the nave you will see the font, the pulpit (where the preacher stands), the altar (the table where the bread and wine are blessed during the Holy Communion service) and a lectern (which holds the bible). [Note – the altar and the lectern are sometimes moved to other locations].

The Font – The font is near the West Door (at present, although there is a plan to re-locate it by the North Door where the fresco is situated). Fonts are usually near the door of the church because during the ceremony of baptism (or christening as it is also known) the person is being welcomed to a new family (the family of God, or Christian family). At home people are usually welcomed into your family at the door.

Water is used daily for drinking (for life – if we / animals / plants didn’t have water we would die) and washing. In baptism the symbolism of water being poured over the head of the person being baptised is that of ever-lasting life (Christians believe that when they die they will live for ever in heaven with God) and washing away the bad things in that person’s life, making them a “clean” new person. People may be baptised at any age, although conventionally it is when people are babies or quite young that they are baptised (or christened).

Page 4 – Now move back to the centre of the nave and look at the arches and pillars. Most of the Nave is built in Norman, or Romanesque, style, with rounded arches which have typical Norman decoration. The Norman cathedral, started around 1080, took about 50 years to build. Since the Keep of the castle was built around the same time the same shape of arch and style of decoration may be seen there too.

Because of the damage done by two serious fires in the 12th century, a new cathedral was started in the early 13th century, in the then new style of building known as Gothic or early English. New building techniques allowed architects to

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

use more slender pillars and pointed arches, giving a soaring feeling of reaching to heaven.

Pupils may join together to see how many it takes to encircle a Norman pillar. Each pair of Norman pillars is different. They were necessarily chunky to support the weight of the arches. Each mason working on the cathedral had his own mark or signature and he would mark his work so that the Master-mason could check the quality of work and determine his pay. Some of these marks can still be seen today. Look on the 4th pillar on the right hand-side (as you face the organ) to see masons' marks.

Also on this pillar you can see graffiti or sketches used for the brightly painted scenes of bible stories which would have adorned the pillars and arches at that time. These pictures would have helped the mainly illiterate population learn their bible stories and were sometimes known as "the poor man's bible". The pictures were destroyed during the Reformation, when beautiful images and statues in churches were thought to be Popish (too catholic), distracting people from their prayers.

Page 5 – The Fresco The fresco in Rochester Cathedral is the first true fresco painted in an English cathedral for 800 years. It brings back the tradition of telling stories through pictures used in the early cathedral. A fresco is painted on wet or "fresh" plaster and the paint sinks right into the plaster making it a very durable painting.

The theme of the fresco is baptism. In the upper half of the picture we see the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan. In the lower half, on the left, is the baptism of King Ethelbert, the King of Kent at the time of St. Augustine's arrival in 597 A.D. On the right we see King Ethelbert looking on as the people of Kent are baptised in a local river. Because of the baptismal theme it is hoped to re-locate the font to this spot and create a new baptistry here.

High up on the walls in this area are carvings of many faces. These are decorative, and may have been faces of masons or other local people. There is one new face here (to the left of the fresco), that of Edward Shotter, Dean of Rochester until 2003.

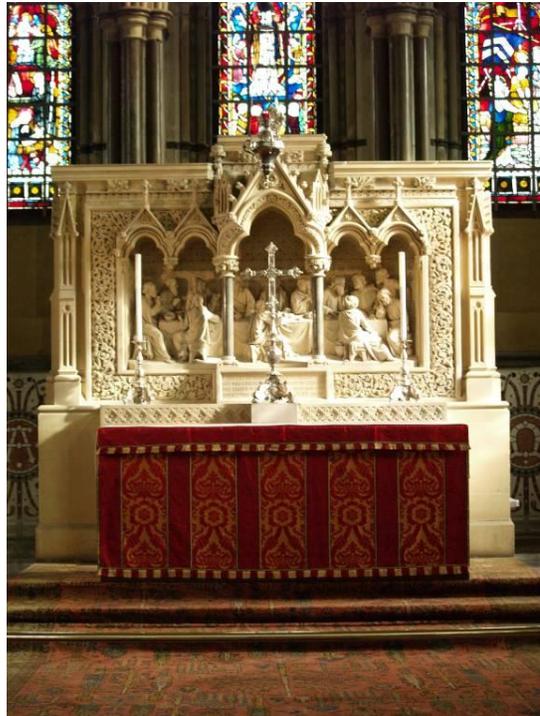
Page 6 – The Quire and Presbytery The Quire is a more private part of the cathedral. During the time when the monastery was here, this was where the monks would hold their services – they didn't want to be disturbed by the ordinary people of Rochester. In fact, during the 14th century, relations were so poor between the monastery and the town that another church was eventually built (in the 15th century) beside the cathedral for the people and they were only allowed in the cathedral for special services such as at Easter or Christmas. St. Nicholas' church is still there beside the cathedral, but today it is used as offices for staff working for the Diocese of Rochester.

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

The Quire is where the monks used to sing their services and where, today, one of the four choirs at Rochester cathedral sings during services. Around the Quire are the coats of arms of many bishops since Norman times including John Fisher, who was martyred by Henry 8th in 1535 for refusing to agree to the formation of the Anglican Church and Nicholas Ridley, martyred by Queen Mary in 1555 for refusing to revert to Catholicism.

The Bishop's throne (Cathedra – Greek word for throne) is what gives the cathedral its designation. Beside the cathedra is the bishop's Crozier (like a shepherd's crook) reminding us that the bishop is a successor of Jesus, and like Him, shepherd of the people. By happy co-incidence the shape of the hook at the top of the crozier can be made into the shape of the letter R for Rochester!

At the east end of the cathedral is the High Altar, the most special of several altars in the cathedral. It is called High because it is the main altar in the cathedral, but also it is physically the highest altar in the cathedral. It is at the east (or light) end of the cathedral and each day the light of the dawning sun reminds of us of resurrection.



The brass lectern, shaped like a golden eagle, holds a copy of the lectionary of bible readings used during services (for the pupils it is sufficient to say "bible").

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

The golden eagle is such a strong bird that it is strong enough to carry the word of God (the Bible) on its back, and it flies very high in the sky near to heaven.

Page 7 – Lady Chapel This was the last part of the cathedral to be built, but even this is over 500 years old! It was started in 1490 at the beginning of the Tudor period. In the Lady Chapel there is a series of windows telling parts of the story of the life of Christ (harking back to those stories originally told in the wall paintings!). The special lady to whom the chapel is dedicated is seen in all these pictures alongside Jesus – Mary, His mother.

The windows tell these stories

- ❖ the Angel Gabriel telling Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus (top window on left)
- ❖ the nativity (bottom window on left)
- ❖ and working along the rest of the bottom windows – the visit by the three kings / wise men
- ❖ the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Jewish temple (not his baptism – that was as an adult)
- ❖ the crucifixion
- ❖ and the ascension to heaven after Jesus rose from the dead at the first Easter.

On the west side of the Lady Chapel there is a rubber mat covering an engraved picture of the story of the Good Samaritan. The story, told in Luke's Gospel, chapter 10, beginning at verse 25, tells how a traveler is attacked and robbed and left lying, injured, in the road. A number of worthy people pass by the injured man during the day but no-one helps him. Later a Samaritan (a race looked down upon at that time) passed by and helped the injured man. The message on the picture is "Abi fac similie" – Go and do likewise.

The Crypt – Please be particularly quiet in the crypt, because we try as much as possible to keep this as an area for quiet prayer.

The crypt is the oldest part of the cathedral (you start building at the bottom!). The architecture down here is quite plain, and it is easy to spot the older Norman part of the crypt (to the left) and the slightly newer early English part. In the far north-east corner of the crypt there are remains of ceiling painting, whilst at the entrance to the glassed in chapel (The Ithamar Chapel) there is more graffiti showing Jesus with His disciples.

Sit quietly and look around.

The Rochester Cathedral Trail

Page 8 – Word list On the last page are some useful words. Here are a few more:

Altar – the table at which the priest or vicar blesses the bread and wine used during Eucharist / Holy Communion

Candle – candles are often used to help people concentrate when they pray

Prayer – talking to God

Bishop – a senior priest in charge of a group of churches called a Diocese

Pulpit – a small tower where the preacher can be seen and heard clearly

Martyr – someone who dies for their faith belief

You may also like to visit the garden before you leave, where you can see the remains of the Priory of St. Andrew where the monks lived and worked, from the foundation of the monastery by Gundulf in about 1083 to its dissolution by Henry 8th in 1540. You can see three big window apertures in the Chapter House, where the monks met each day to read a chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict and discuss the running of the monastery. The cathedral is still run by the Chapter (along with the Dean, the senior priest) today, but they now meet once a month.

The sculpture of the Virgin Mary and Jesus reflects the present dedication of the cathedral – The Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Before the Reformation (when Henry 8th broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and founded the Church of England / Anglican Church) the cathedral and monastery were dedicated to St. Andrew, because St. Augustine, who came to England in 597 A.D. to spread the word of God, had come originally from the monastery of St. Andrew, Rome.

The richness of history and worship from over 1400 years continues today, as the cathedral is carefully maintained and improved to 21st century requirements (it will hopefully be here for at least another thousand years!). There is a vibrant worshipping community associated with the cathedral. It is interesting to note that although the castle and the present cathedral were built around the same time the castle is today a ruin. It is no longer used for the purpose for which it was built (defence / protection) and is now an historic monument. The cathedral is still used for its original purpose and is a living, developing building.