



# Walking with God

from Chester Cathedral

# Walking with God

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Front cover image: 'Virgin and Child' by Harold Gosney, 1997.  
Credit: Gareth Rainsforth.

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# Walking with God

*'O my God... Enkindle your love in me and then walk with me along the next stretch of road before me. I do not see very far ahead, but when I have arrived, where the horizon now closes down, a new prospect will open before me and I shall meet it with peace.'*

## St Theresa Benedicta of the Cross

'It's amazing how you can gain so much by just putting one foot in front of the other!' These words were spoken by a man as he trekked on a sunny day along a well-trodden path in the Peak District. He was with his friends but he would not have said he was on a pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is mostly concerned with walking companionably along with others, talking and exploring with an end point which is connected with your faith. The final resting place which could be a shrine, a church or a particular landmark becomes symbolic of completion before another journey begins. Maybe each pilgrimage leads us to our final journey: 'We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.'

**TS Eliot, Little Gidding**

'Walking with God' contains a number of readings with contributions from representatives of local communities and the congregations. It has been collated for the year 2020 when Chester Cathedral chose the theme of 'Pilgrimage' along with the national theme '2020 Year of Pilgrimage'.

Each person was asked to choose a Bible passage and explain its significance in their personal or working lives. I am very grateful to those who undertook the task so willingly. The front cover of the statue of Mary teaching the toddler Jesus to walk, photographed by Gareth Rainsforth, helps us to remember that God's loving hands also guide us through life and are ready to catch and support us as we stumble along.

I wish to thank Nick Fry for helping to collate the booklet, Kevin Baxter for the design and those who contributed financially to enable it to be printed. It is hoped that on receipt of the booklet, people will offer a donation to the Alzheimers Society which is the Cathedral's chosen charity for the year.

As you read 'Walking with God' I hope and pray that you sense God's guiding hand in your life so that you are then able to offer the same helping hand to others and so share God's love widely in this world.

**Canon Jane Brooke**  
Vice Dean and Canon Missioner  
Chester Cathedral



CHESTER CATHEDRAL WILL FOLLOW CHRIST THROUGH

Discovery

Encounter

Faith

# Trevor Dennis

## Volunteer Cathedral gardener



### Chosen reference:

Genesis Chapter 1 Verse 2

And the earth was all *tohu wabohu*, all welter and waste, with darkness, raven-black, thick upon the face of the *tehom*, the fathomless Deep with a capital D; while the spirit of God, that gentle *ruah Elohim*, settled like a mist over the face of the waters, cradling them in her warm feathers.

*(My own very free translation of the Hebrew, with thanks to Robert Alter for the phrase 'welter and waste').*

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

I was taught Hebrew in the 1980s by none other than George Brooke, and when we first went through Genesis 1 I was blown away by its beauty. But how do you translate this verse 2? You have to play with it to bring out the poetry. I love the phrase *tohu wabohu* to describe the initial lifelessness of the earth, and then the mystery in the image of the 'spirit' or '*ruah*' of God. What is she doing? Settling like a mist? Or cradling the waters with her feathers, as birds on the nest protect their young? Why choose? The Hebrew can bear both meanings, but I especially like the second one. It reminds me of the ravens that once nested on the Cathedral tower when I was one of the Cathedral clergy. From my study window I could see the mother bird sheltering her young against February storms or soaking March rains. Without her they would have quickly died. And whenever I walked across to the Cathedral for Morning Prayer during the nesting season and looked up at the tower, she would give me a soft 'honk' of greeting. Sometimes God speaks raven.

# Clare Black

## Co-ordinator, Retreat House Chester

Image: Commissioned for Retreat House Chester and given as a gift.

Credit: W777 Photography by Will Hay.



**Chosen reference:** Exodus Chapter 3 Verse 5

Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

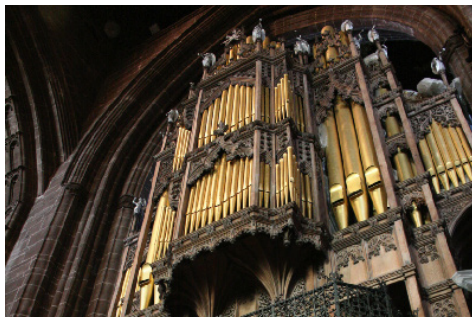
I love this invitation the Old Testament God Yahweh makes to Moses from the Burning Bush. On noticing a bush ablaze, Moses has 'turned aside' to see why the bush isn't burning up. To me, this speaks of the inexhaustible Mystery of God – a mystery which may be just within my sight, and to which I can turn by turning aside just a little. And having turned aside, I'm invited to remove the sandals from my feet.

In this invitation, I used to hear Yahweh asking Moses for respect; now, the invitation has grown to mean so much more. Now, I hear an invitation to stay awhile with Yahweh, this mysterious presence, not to move on quickly to something else; I hear an invitation to sensitive connection to the ground beneath my feet; I hear the risk of vulnerability. I believe that all ground can be holy ground, and this invitation is made by a loving God.

The invitation to turn aside, like Moses, to be curious and attentive and responsive, to stay a while, sensitive, risk-taking and grounded – all of this inspires my understanding of the importance of retreat times and underpins my work at Retreat House Chester. It's about authentic encounter.

# Philip Rushforth

Chester Cathedral  
Director of Music  
and organist



**Chosen reference:** Ruth Chapter 1 Verse 16

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

My first job after university was as Assistant Organist at Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire. Working at the Minster as Bursar was my future wife, Louise. We began seeing each other in 1999 and were eventually married at Christmas 2001 in the Minster. Louise suggested that these words from Ruth were put on the front of the order of service as they spoke of love and companionship and about our shared ideals of family and commitment. In 2002 we moved to Chester with our daughter Laura on my appointment as Assistant Director of Music at Chester Cathedral. Louise left her family behind in Nottinghamshire and, Ruth's words – although in a different context – were again relevant. As a professional musician, a career path taking me regularly away from home was an option available to me. Many musicians live a life touring the globe, but it was a life I did not want to contemplate as I have always prioritised family life above personal ambition. Louise and I have seldom been apart for any length of time and, for us, Ruth's words remind us to be true to ourselves and no matter what we must deal with in our professional lives, family comes first.

# Patricia A Faraday

## Cathedral Volunteer Coordinator



**Chosen reference:** Esther Chapter 7 Verse 1-4

So the King and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted." Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

### **How this verse has helped me in my life:**

I discovered the Book of Esther soon after starting my journey back to faith after many years being 'too busy with work' to consider how God fitted into my life. It was also a time when I had a job opportunity in what was traditionally a male dominated profession. I was struck by this attractive, courageous woman who was prepared to die to save her people. In obedience to her cousin Mordecai, Esther used her privileged court position to ask King Xerxes to save the Jewish people.

Although there is no mention of God in the Book of Esther, Esther's beauty and power were gifts from God, gifts which she used to save her people. Although my life has never been at risk, Esther's response to a life threatening situation challenged me to review my life and how my Christian beliefs fitted into it.

During my career I was privileged to receive my 'Gifts from God' – business training and skills - which enhanced my career and ensured I had a comfortable life. Now my working career is over I am able to offer these gifts to the service of God and to my role as a volunteer at Chester Cathedral.



# Mark Mitchell DL

## High Sheriff of Cheshire



### Chosen reference:

1 Samuel Chapter 2 Verse 30

But declares the Lord, “Those who honour me, I will honour them.”

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

My favourite verse in the Bible was written about 600BC - 2,600 years ago. It appears in the Book of Samuel, a book which narrates powerfully the story of the history of Israel and God’s chosen people, the Israelites and founders of the Jewish nation.

The boy Samuel was the child whom his mother, Hannah, never believed she could have. She was barren and unable to conceive children. From his birth, Hannah vowed to God to give Samuel back to Him and from his very early years, he lived with Eli, the priest in The Temple.

“Those who honour me, I will honour” were the words spoken by a prophet, a messenger from God, to Eli. They talked then as they do today of living a God-centred life. What does “honouring God” mean in everyday life in 2020 ? Well his son, Jesus, makes for the ultimate example to model this. And His word, the Bible, makes for the ultimate guidebook for us to read regularly and see us through the challenges of life. As people who find a personal faith with fresh and new perspectives, in good times and bad, Christians can respond to God’s calling and direction in every part of life - at home, at school or college or at work.

This immensely special verse has become significant for the wider Mitchell family and sits as the motto on our family Coat of Arms. It is my prayer that this verse will continue to be as powerful and impactful for future generations as it has been for me.

Across the City of Chester and the County of Cheshire, let’s commit to a renewed focus on honouring God in our own lives today.

# Peter Bamford

## Honorary Cathedral Librarian



### Chosen reference:

Job Chapter 2 Verse 10b

If we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?

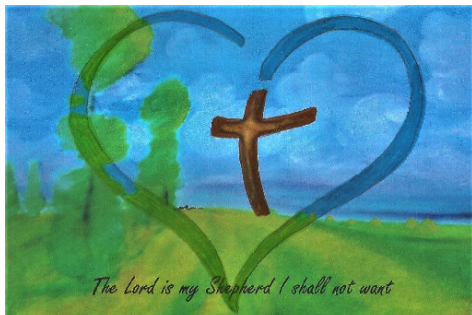
### How this verse has helped me in my life:

This verse is one of the ones that have struck a chord with me throughout all the difficult times in my life. It has helped me through events in my adult life such as the deaths of my parents, and also helped me to make sense of the ones in my earlier years, which occurred before I was familiar with it.

Paradoxically, however, it has been most helpful in more recent years, when those sorrows are safely behind me and life seems to be going smoothly. That is because I realised, after some initial soul-searching, that it is legitimate to turn Job's words on their head and feel that, having come through the various trials, there is no need for me to feel guilty about enjoying my present happiness. My situation may change, but I shall be ready for it.

# Laure Reed

## Cathedral Gift Shop Manager



### Chosen reference: Psalm 23 Verse 1-6

The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

Psalm 23 gives me comfort and strength in my faith, and I always want to share with others how much uplifting joy can be found in those wonderful words. The promise from our Lord that we are created for a good life, never alone, always embraced and cherished by His fatherly love, guiding us to eternal life. Psalm 23 is the everyday encouragement and reminder to never ever let go. It is so powerful that, by learning it, I am always ready to draw strength from it. Please read it aloud like an affirmation it will change your life too. Be bold, life is good with our Lord.

# Julia de Newtown

Member of the  
Pastoral Care Team



**Chosen reference:** Psalms 37 Verse 3 and 4

Trust in the Lord, and do good;  
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.  
Delight yourself also in the Lord,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

At a time when I was feeling restless and dissatisfied with my 'lot' in life the Lord highlighted these verses to me, showing me how to have peace and contentment.

To trust in the Lord is placing myself in God's hands, believing that His love will provide, protect and direct me. Doing good is trusting that God directs me in my daily life as I give myself to Him.

The 'land' is where I reside right now, God has provided my home, my neighbourhood and its location for me to live in and serve Him.

I feed on His faithfulness as I believe His promises. As I take His word into my thinking and attitudes, 'consuming' them into my life, then I experience more of His love and nature.

As I take delight in the Lord - loving Him, getting to know Him and loving to walk in His ways, then He inspires me with desires that are from Him and in accordance with His plans for my life.

Verses 7 & 8 go onto say, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him... Do not fret, - it only causes harm'.

I pray you'll find your contentment in God too!

# Christine Williams

## Cathedral Receptionist



### Chosen reference:

Psalm 46 Verse 1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble; therefore we will not fear.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

When I was 13 my parents were divorced. It was a very traumatic time. Amongst my pain and anxiety I had an increasing feeling that something or someone (which I couldn't explain) was looking after me. On my daily journey home from school I walked past a Christian bookshop. One day a plaque which was displayed in the window caught my eye. It was the photo on it that initially attracted me. Then I read the words 'God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble.' It all made sense. I wasn't on my own.

In times of trouble during my life and tackling problems physically, mentally and emotionally (and often all three), I have held on to those words.

They bring me comfort and remind me that I am not alone and to trust that I will always be guided. After 45 years that plaque still hangs on my wall and those words are a reminder every day.

# Jean Markham

## Eucharistic Assistant



**Chosen reference:** Psalm 46 Verse 10

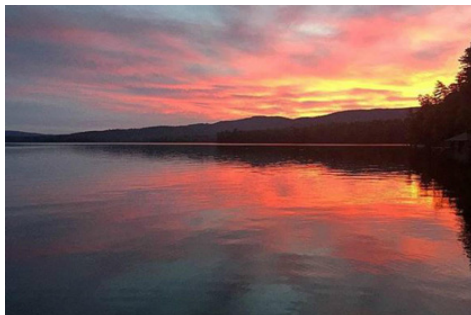
Be Still and Know that I am God.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

I have found this mantra 'Be still and know that I am God' has provided strength and reassurance. During my life I have had many periods of doubt and uncertainty both physically and spiritually, and at such times, this mantra is particularly helpful. Be still, stop and reflect - give due consideration to the problems at hand, but at the same time, know God is there.

# Linda Banahan

Member,  
Chester Branch Guild of  
Health and St Raphael



**Chosen reference:** Psalms 46 Verse 10 and Psalms 37 Verse 1

Be Still and Know that I am God.

Do Not Fret  
Do Not Be Afraid

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

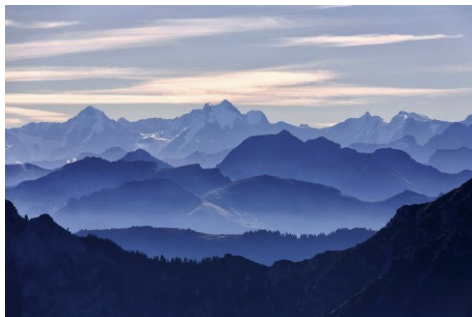
With joy I looked forward to retirement and volunteering where I could help support others so was not expecting to suffer illnesses with increasing experience of mental and spiritual pressures. Just this past year, I experienced hand surgery; bereavements, hospitalisation of close family and friends, and an elderly family member diagnosed with cancer.

I fell into the depths of despair where no usual support structures worked and spiritual foundations on which I'd built my life no longer sustained me. I came to the low point where I was not coping and felt on the verge of breakdown. Then someone suggested I needed to ask people to specifically pray for me so I quietly approached several spiritually mature, experienced and trusted friends and am extremely grateful for their upholding me in such a way. I also asked for prayer from Guild members and found caring support amongst them too.

So.... I Know He IS God and I am endeavouring to learn how to be still and not to fret, be anxious or afraid. A life time's learning I'm certain! Maybe it's when you are at your most vulnerable you begin to learn, He IS God.

# Derek Jackson

Honorary Membership  
Secretary of the Friends of  
Chester Cathedral;  
Sidesman.



**Chosen reference:** Psalm 121 Verse 1 and 8

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

When I was a teenager we were friendly with a couple, Will and Florence who were members of the Pentecostal Church. They were both in their 50's. As long as we had known them Flo was confined to bed with TB and had been in and out of sanatoria and had been told it was incurable. Various people had prayed over her and miraculously one day she got up from her bed and, within weeks, was walking round as if she had never had a problem. At the age of about 60 Will and Flo went as missionaries to the Congo, where they worked for about 10 years in conjunction with the Anglican Cathedral in Kinshasa - before retiring back to the UK. Throughout her illness Flo always said these these verses from Psalm 121 had kept her going.

We all go through good and bad times and when life is at a low ebb – these verses are very much a comfort - a reassurance that God is always with us.



# Bill & Maggie Amos

## Cathedral Welcomers



**Chosen reference:** Psalm 122 Verse 1-2

I was glad when they said unto me “Let us go into the house of the Lord.  
Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

### **How this verse has helped me in my life:**

These verses immortalised in the joyful anthem by Parry have meant much to us because of our love of beautiful buildings and music. Because of the welcome which we received when we arrived at the cathedral, it seemed appropriate to join the Welcome team to greet visitors and in a small way help them in their experience of God’s house. It has been a great joy and privilege to talk to the many people coming to the Cathedral, answering questions and sometimes providing a listening ear. There is a sense of pride when visitors express their appreciation of what they have seen and heard. We also value the fellowship and humour of other Welcomers which makes the time so rewarding.

The verse which speaks of our feet standing in the gates is literally true and gives encouragement to our welcome, (especially on a cold wet January afternoon!)

# Tony Barton

## Cathedral Architect



### Chosen reference:

Proverbs Chapter 24 Verse 3-4

By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

In this verse I am reminded of the many generations who have made what we have in our care today. Their stones embody the beauty of the monument, the history of our city and the spirituality of a special place of gathering and worship. Chester Cathedral is always changing and in making decisions for the future we are informed and inspired by its precious past.

# Angela Brodbelt

Head Sidesman,  
Chester Cathedral



**Chosen reference:** Isaiah Chapter 9 Verse 2 and 6

For behold darkness shall cover the earth.

For unto us a child is born.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

Bible texts come alive for me through their direct or indirect association with the very many choral works I have sung with a major UK Choir, and also with smaller groups too.

Having sung in over fifty performances of Handel's great oratorio, 'Messiah', the magic is still there. The exuberance and joy of the birth of Jesus shines through and the music reflects the movement from darkness to light.

'Messiah' would not be complete without a reference to the soprano aria 'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth'. The text is from 1 Corinthians 15:20 and leads into the choir singing unaccompanied, 'Since by man came death', (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). The atmosphere created by these, can be, for performer and audience alike, emotional, spine tingling and maybe life-changing too.

With regard to Choral Works one must not forget the many Requiems and Masses written following the Catholic Church. My absolute favourite is the Verdi Requiem which I know very well: the 'Libera Me', especially when the soprano soloist sings over the choir singing very quietly.

'Requiem Aeternum' - rest and peace forever.

'Et Lux Perpetua' - light and peace shine down forever.

For me, there are so many verses brought to life by a composer that to choose one is almost impossible, but overall, the verses that give hope, comfort and joy stand out.

# Chris Jones

Cathedral Operations and  
Facilities Manager,  
Head Constable,  
Liturgical Administrator



Chosen reference: Isaiah Chapter 40 Verse 3-4

A voice cries:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

The words from the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 40: 3-4 has been an inspiration for me. It has helped me at different times of trial throughout my life. It reveals that God is ever there to support you - no matter how bad the road is or how troubled your journey, no matter how difficult and bumpy it appears, you will be calmed.

Keeping our eyes firmly on God allows us to bear that load which we often cope with in our daily lives. Our desert may be cluttered with the busyness of life that at times we forget to let God in. We often find tasks impossible to overcome and situations we find ourselves in become times of pain which we push away and fail to deal with. The burden deepens.

I pray this passage can speak to you as well as it does for me. At times of crisis when you feel that a mountain is before you and the path is uneven, allow God in and you will be amazed how much easier it is to climb the mountain you never thought you could get over and walk more easily over the rough road.

# Tom Jordan

Voluntary Chaplain,  
Chester Cathedral;  
member of Cathedral  
congregation



## Chosen reference:

Isaiah Chapter 40 Verse 31

But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

The first weekend in September 1976, was my first Residential Weekend on the North West Ordination Course, to train for Ordination and Ministry. Up to this point in my life, I'd spent over 20 years of my life working in Shipbuilding and Soap-making, and all my studies had been focussed on becoming a first class Mechanical Engineer. So, the world of theology and first class literature were a whole new world for me!

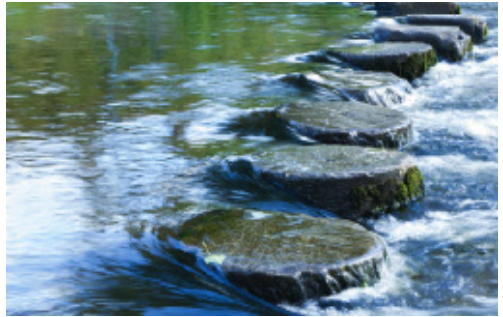
As the Course Chaplain spelled out what would be expected from us during the next 3 years of study in that 'new world' I was left reeling! Returning to my study/bedroom, I picked up my Bible, opened it at random; and my eyes lighted on my chosen text.

Next morning, I went to see the Course Principal (Revd Dr Peter Selby), and explained how overwhelmed I'd felt by what lay ahead. He was quick to reassure me, because having already done some preparatory work with me before I was accepted for training, he was confident that I would cope really well.

So, with his words of encouragement, and those from Isaiah, taking hold in my heart and mind, I continued on my journey of faith.

# Tim Macquiban

Honorary Chaplain,  
Chester Cathedral



Chosen reference: Isaiah Chapter 43 Verse 2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

We have had devastating floods in various parts of the country earlier this year. We know the damage and the anxiety that rising waters cause to those most threatened. Sometimes life is like that and we feel overwhelmed by the difficulties we encounter.

I remember a time when I was younger when I was at a crossroads wondering what God had in store for me. I was thinking about the possibilities of ministry and wasn't sure I had the right gifts. I went to Scargill, a wonderful retreat centre in Upper Wharfedale. There I took a walk which brought me to the banks of the racing river. There were stepping stones across but they were partially submerged. I felt afraid. But then I ventured out, trusting in God to get me to the other side. And he did! And I learned the lesson to commit to God and place ourselves in his hands, especially when we are anxious or undecided about the future.

# Julia D McGuinness

## Poet in Residence



Chosen reference: Isaiah Chapter 43 Verse 4

Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

How this verse has helped me in my life:

I first heard these verses as a University student in the throws of relationship-rebound and study-stress. A college Chaplain quoted them in conversation. They immediately caught my attention and I went to look them up as I could not remember ever having read them in my Bible. They were a rich find, somehow opening up God's utterly unconditional love for me in a fresh and breathtaking way.

I started to spend some time each morning reading them and going beyond to other unfolding treasures in Isaiah. I'd read slowly and sit quietly, breathing in the prophet's words and absorbing the impact of their message. Looking back, it was a first stumbling discovery of contemplative prayer.

As the weeks went on, I gradually found myself feeling a new sense of peace and groundedness that would stay with me throughout the day.

Many years later, whenever life is especially demanding or stressful, or I feel myself spiritually adrift, I still return to these verses. They never fail to restore my perspective and deepen my sense of being held. Life looks very different when you know you're loved.

# Ken Walker

## Chair of Churches Together in Chester City Centre



Chosen reference: Isaiah Chapter 65 Verse 17

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

I've always enjoyed meeting with Christians from different parts of the Church. I'm convinced too that in today's interlinked world we need to come alongside those from other faith backgrounds and all people of good will. We need fresh thinking for the good of one another, in working for our communities together, and for the sake of the planet.

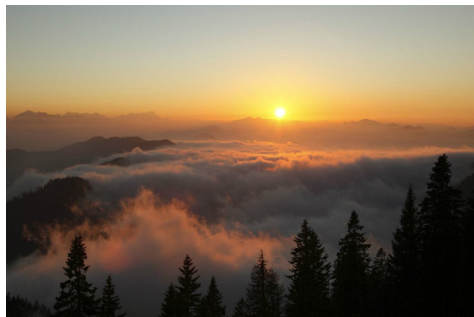
The Old Testament prophet helps me with this, announcing God's creation of new heavens and a new earth. The prophet's vision includes a city where there will be no more weeping, no infant dying young, everyone living out a long lifetime, a person's labour being rewarded with a secure home and provision for daily needs. It's a picture of a new Jerusalem, but it could be our city of Chester as we want it to be, with no-one left on the margins. If I keep such a vision at the heart of my thinking I will find many fellow travellers beyond any confines of creed and background.

It's a Bible text about God's gift of a new creation. Not something we'll achieve on our earthly pilgrimage but it's a great vision to inspire us and work together towards.



# Stephen Attwater

Honorary Chaplain,  
Chester Cathedral



## Chosen reference:

Jeremiah Chapter 1 Verse 5

Before I formed you in the womb I  
knew you, before you were born I set  
you apart. I appointed you as a  
prophet to the nations.

'Ah, sovereign Lord' I said 'I do not know how to speak I am only a child.'

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

As a young man I struggled with my faith and was bit of a rebel. However, music and my passion as a church organist kept me in contact with the faith I inherited. I never thought in those days that I would or could be an ordained Priest in the Church of England. It was only at the age of 35 that I realised this could be my calling and pursued a way forward.

This wonderful conversation at the beginning of Jeremiah's prophecy always reminds me of this and that God calls each one of us to serve Him in so many different ways - often much to our surprise!

After over 30 years in the ordained ministry I still am amazed that God has used me and others in this way. I still feel that 'I speak like a child' but I am called to remember that children often speak with innocence and poignancy, and that the statement 'before you were born I set you apart' assures us that God knows each one of us personally and can use us - if and when we respond.

# Adrian Durnell

Member of the Cathedral  
Finance Team



Chosen reference: Matthew Chapter 6 Verse 19-21

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:  
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:  
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

In life it is very easy to be drawn in to a competitive life style with material possessions becoming all-consuming e.g. the size of one's bank balance and house, exotic holiday's, one's career. The problem with this is if we pursue these things totally blindly - with no thought of our spiritual life - the perceived happiness we believe that will come with the possession of more and more is just a myth. What you end up with is a very shallow version of happiness at best, which will not sustain you long term.

Unfortunately it is a fact of life that we don't always enjoy good times, and it is during these less than good times that we discover that shallow happiness will not sustain us through a difficult period. If you have been mindful of your spiritual life, you at least have something to draw on. It will not be easy - but you are much more likely to feel an inner strength that will help sustain you.

What this verse also tells me is that we have a loving God, whose love for us is totally unconditional. No matter where you are in your life- he is always there for you.

# Ian Atkinson

## Intercessor



**Chosen reference:** Matthew Chapter 6 Verse 33

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

This verse is part of Jesus' teaching to a crowd gathered on a mountain 2,000 years ago, and yet it has guided all of the most difficult decisions in my life. Attempting to meet the needs of a son with severe learning difficulties for 40 years has constantly presented challenges. Unable to find similar examples to follow, my wife and I have found ourselves as trailblazers in the care of our son, totally dependent on God as a guide. As he promises, God had gone before and prepared us for the task ahead. Our engagement was spent sharing the training of a church choir whose favourite hymn was "Seek ye First the Kingdom of God", and they sang these words in the church we visited on our honeymoon. God must have known we needed to learn this lesson well to survive the bumpy road ahead!

Jesus knew how to speak to each of his listeners on that mountainside and to address individual concerns about food, clothing and a host of other things. In the same way I believe he speaks to each of us today about the things in life which can distract us from seeking his Father's kingdom.

# Ian Sanderson

District Judge

Chairman,  
Chester Mystery Plays



Chosen reference: Matthew Chapter 6 Verse 34

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

Over many years, this passage has reminded me that being unduly anxious about things in the future often proves to be unnecessary. Sure, today has plenty of problems of its own - work, home, life in general - which this passage, in effect, tells me to sort out first. Worrying about tomorrow or the future in general tends to add to the worries of the immediate and present, often without need. Sorting out the present, helping someone in the present, rather than putting it off is a message I got from this scripture since I first read it in my late teens. It is guidance that I have tried to follow in the course of my personal and professional dealings with people. It has also helped me to justify another mantra in the way I lead my life, namely 'Don't panic until you have to!'

# Stella Stiles

## Volunteer Verger



### Chosen reference:

Matthew Chapter 11 Verse 28

Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

My chosen verse is reassuring and comforting when I have been presented with challenging situations. My chosen verse's message gave me comfort in August 2004. Lying on a private hospital trolley in Johannesburg, South Africa, I awaited surgery. Fifty hours before, my forehead was cut open when a Nature Warden's vehicle drove into my transport when on holiday, one early morning touring a Wild Animal Park observing lions in Botswana. Following a journey to the park's gates, a helicopter arrived to fly me to Maun Clinic in Northern Botswana and then a small South African plane arrived to take me to the Milpark Hospital, Johannesburg. A further 20 hours assessment finally placed me receiving reassurance from a theatre sister.

Awaiting the placement of a titanium buckle inside my forehead to fix a sinus fracture I spoke to God feeling weary, tired and anxious. My request was that if it was the time for me to be reunited with my husband who died 28 years before then I was ready but whatever His will was, was acceptable to me. I survived and have tried to live to thank God for my rescue ever since.

# Chris Penn

Diocesan Director  
of Education



**Chosen reference:** Matthew Chapter 13 Verse 31-32

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

God has made each of us within his image, unique and individual, with our own gifts and talents, each special to him. Through our learning and through our education we can grow our knowledge and wisdom, and taking the opportunities presented to us we can make a difference in God's world. These do not need to be big grand gestures, but put simply by the Archbishop of York's Youth Trust 'to be the change you want to see'. People may doubt what we say - but they will believe what we do.

When we do something for God, it not only has mysterious and amazing potential, it also has the power to be exponential - it grows beyond our expectations! The power for our efforts to grow and expand is not in us, but in the seed being planted. We should always feel encouraged in serving and blessing others - God is at work in this! And so we should purposefully use our abilities and talents to bless and serve others - it has greater power than we know.

How many small things do we do for God that turn out to be big things? Thank God for our teachers and all who work in Education - for the time and commitment they show to each and every child but may never see the impact that each has in someone's life! What is God doing with the kindness we show others. Never underestimate the power of a smile, a kind word, or taking time to listen. Every person is capable of making a difference in the world, doing amazing things for God ... by doing small things for God!

# Jane Jones

Fundraising Coordinator,  
Cathedral Mission Group



**Chosen reference:** Matthew Chapter 25 Verse 35-40

I was hungry and you gave me food.

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

**How this verse has helped me in my life:**

I was hungry as a child and grew up to be grateful for the support of others and wanting to help feed people in need. All our mission work in the Cathedral involves feeding the hungry and at the same time all our fundraising events involve sharing food with others. It is at the heart of family and community and at the same time reflects the biblical principles of hospitality.

By doing it for God we are embodying a spiritual response and I feel called to have as many people as possible round my table.

# Mary Sawyer

Place of Welcome volunteer;  
Mission Group fundraising  
volunteer;  
Sunday morning coffee rota;  
member of Cathedral  
book group



Chosen reference: Matthew Chapter 25 Verse 35-40

For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked, you clothed me, when I was ill you came to my help, when in prison you visited me.

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

The verses in Matthew which I heard regularly as a child have consciously or unconsciously underpinned many decisions in my life. They helped form my political attitudes, and in the churches I attended as I became an adult I recognised them in action. At St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London I volunteered with the social work project, getting to know homeless and lonely individuals I should otherwise not have met or, maybe, should even have avoided.

The values I imbibed from Matthew influenced my career, leading me to teach in schools in poorer parts of London and to work in adult education in Merseyside. I spent my early retirement years very much involved with Asylum Link Liverpool, a centre offering practical help and friendship to asylum-seekers. I made friends with people in desperate circumstances from all over the world and tried to offer the best of me.

Although, disappointed with attitudes I found in some churches, regular church attendance disappeared from my life for almost forty years. The New Testament, and especially these verses in Matthew, still gave me a moral foundation to life. Now that I have discovered at Chester Cathedral a community sharing my values my life has come together.



# Robert and Diana McConnell

Members of Cathedral  
congregation



Chosen reference: Mark Chapter 1 Verse 17

And Jesus said unto them, 'Come ye after me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'

How this verse has helped me in my life:

To select one verse from the Bible does not put it above all others, but this one illustrates for us one of the many readings that are known, due mainly from Daily Worship at school, which made them memorable. Fish are regular features in the Bible starting in Genesis 1 where God said '*Let the waters bring forth abundantly... and created great whales and every living creature... and saw that it was good.*' The fish theme continues with the enrolment of Simon and Andrew on the shore of Galilee, the feeding of the 5,000 along with many other occasions. When visiting Israel, on our very first morning this had particular poignancy when there, on the shore of Galilee, were fishermen with their fish!

Along with the Bible one must include The Prayer Book where there are many worthy sayings - in particular in the Order for Holy Communion ... "*meekly kneeling upon your knees.*"

# George J. Brooke

## Cathedral Lent Bible Talks Coordinator

Image: Cathedral at Night Tour.

Credit: Gareth Rainsforth.



### Chosen reference:

Mark Chapter 10 Verses 36 and 51

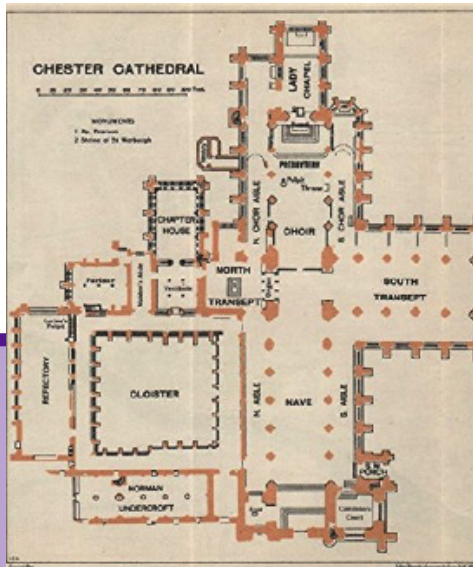
What do you want me to do  
for you?

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

The author of the Gospel according to Mark likes saying things twice so that readers get the point. In Mark Chapter 10 at the end of the story of Jesus's ministry before he goes to Jerusalem, Mark includes just such a doublet. Though I am not inclined to take scriptural verses out of context and apply them immediately to myself, Jesus's responses in the form of a questions have challenged me directly for very many years. In the first story James and John approach Jesus for a favour and he asks them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" Their request for privileged places when Jesus enters into glory is clearly the wrong answer. In the second story blind Bartimaeus approaches Jesus who asks him a similarly-worded question, "What do you want me to do for you?" Asking for sight is evidently a right answer. But how should I answer Jesus's question? I know I am still on a journey because I cannot yet give an answer that I find satisfactory, but I have a sense that the love of God and all that is to be trusted in the universe is contained in that question.

# Stewart Pain

Volunteer Fundraiser,  
LEGO® builder, gardener, and  
Sunday School Leader



## Chosen reference:

Luke Chapter 6 Verse 48

He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded on rock.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

As an engineer, I try to ensure that things are made so they will work, do what people need them to do, and that they will last. That means working out the design based on well-established principles. That could be good foundations, like in this story, or using the right materials, or thinking about how the item is put together.

Our Cathedral has stood for hundreds of years, built on both the foundations of faith and the unseen stone in the ground that holds our great building in place.

I also found that the same works for how we work with one another. While many organisations have many detailed rules about lots of things, I've often found it's better to go back to some simple principles that underpin our faith, such as asking 'how I'd like to be treated under the same circumstances' before deciding what to do.

# Liz Hardman

## Chair of Chester Cathedral Flower Guild



### Chosen reference:

Luke Chapter 10 Verses 30-35

A Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, 'Look after him' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any expense you may have'.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

The Samaritan in Luke 10:33-35 is the caring nature that I adhered to when fulfilling my nursing career of 25 years. I also keep the verse in mind while carrying out my volunteering at the Cathedral, overseeing the Flower Guild Volunteers. I need to be a coordinator and listener for problems that may occur in some of their lives beyond the Cathedral, especially as many of them are now elderly. Attending the Christian Acorn listening course some years ago, has helped me to listen to others and so have happy teams.

# Jen Stratford

## Cathedral Education Officer



### Chosen reference:

Luke Chapter 18 Verses 16-17

But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

Children are like spinning tops they don't stay in the same place for very long. They have the potential to get very excited very quickly and move very fast but they can sit and play very still and quietly.

In all the churches I have been part of I have encouraged a welcoming of children.

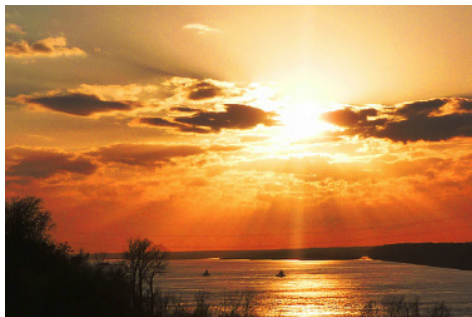
Children and their parents need to see a space especially for them, which is safe but also bright with interesting things to do. The space needs to be there even if we are not expecting children.

Children are the future of the church. Churches that make children fully welcome are able to see things through children's eyes. They can experience the wonder of seeing things for the first time.

Sometimes we lose that excitement and enthusiasm and with day to day worries and stresses, watching a child experience something new for the first time helps me remember the wonder of our world and how amazing it is. Sometimes we need to be that child and see things with their eyes.

# Helen Barber

## Cathedral Safeguarding Officer



**Chosen reference:** John Chapter 1 Verses 1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

### **How this verse has helped me in my life:**

In a world which is so often turbulent, dark and often evil, I find this passage so reassuring and uplifting. To me it is clear and unambiguous. When aspects of life seem wrong or very unfair, I can know that God is in control. Eternally.

God's light of love, holiness and goodness, as demonstrated in the life of Christ, shines constantly. Whenever my life feels surrounded by darkness and evil, I can be confident that goodness and light will also be found. Sometimes it doesn't seem that way! Sometimes I need more patience and faith to seek more determinedly for the good. I always find it – eventually- through prayer and through encounters with other people. If I don't, I think it's because I'm not looking closely enough.

The glow that a light provides in darkness is illuminating. Christ's love illuminates. Darkness and evil cannot ultimately overcome it.

# Tim Stratford

## The Dean



**Chosen reference:** John Chapter 4 Verse 11

The woman said to Jesus, “Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”

**How this verse has helped me in my life:**

I love this woman’s conversation with Jesus. Her encounter with him is represented by a cast bronze sculpture situated in the Cathedral Cloister Garth.

She can see Jesus’s material dilemma quite clearly but she completely misses his deeper significance. He asks her for a drink of the well’s water and offers her living water. The idea that Jesus can provide living water is doubly confusing to the woman. He has no bucket; also, living water in the linguistic culture of the day could have been understood as stream water, moving water, not stagnant water nor well water. How could he give her this?

Jesus is of course talking about something very different. If the water in the well is the source of life, the living water that Jesus gives is the source of new life in the Kingdom of God. And there is another surprise. The life of this Kingdom is a liberation. She is both a Samaritan and a woman! Two things that served to prevent her from any meaningful encounter with a Jewish man like Jesus, let alone sharing her water with him. The living water of the kingdom washes away the barriers that divide peoples.

# Mia Hope Wallwork Manning

Sunday School member



**Chosen reference:** John Chapter 13 Verse 5

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

**How this verse has helped me in my life:**

My favourite passage out of the Bible is when Jesus washes the disciples' feet, because for me it demonstrates equality. Jesus was the son of God which made him an important person with a high status in society, but his actions in this Bible passage don't reflect that status, instead they show that everyone is equal no matter their position in society. Someone of Jesus's status washing his disciples' feet would have been an act that would not have happened back then, therefore making this action all the more powerful. The disciples knew Jesus had a higher society status than them and, at first, wouldn't let him wash their feet but Jesus insisted on it in order to teach people a vital message - to show no matter who you are, we are all the same and equal in God's eyes. I also feel that doing something so personal allowed the disciples to truly connect with Jesus and God, something that would have been classed as a precious gift. The reason I love this passage most is that Jesus teaches us an important lesson that spans the length of time- to treat others equally with kindness, respect and in a way in which we wish to be treated ourselves. In this way, following Jesus' example, allows us to use his actions to help us achieve equality in our world today.



# Corentyn Smith

## Head Verger



**Chosen reference:** Acts Chapter 2 Verse 42

The Fellowship of the Believers: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

Acts 2:42 is the first description of the beginning of something resembling an established church, and lays the basics for what should exist in Christian community. I read the passage to mean; Education, friendship, the sharing of possessions (and food) and to pray and find peace. I moved through a lot of churches whilst at college and university, trying to understand the purpose of church and once I had grasped this passage I knew what to look for. Working for a church for many years now, it is helpful to revisit this passage and its surrounding verses to help me stay on track and focused on what the purpose of this great building, where I spend so much of my life, is. The Cathedral is grand, and the workmanship that has gone into crafting it is quite unfathomable. Nowadays we use it is a multipurpose venue, but this simple short passage, with these four seemingly simple actions helps remind me of what it is truly for. We can come to the Cathedral to learn, to share what we have, to create relationships and find space to pray and take stock of things.

# David Briggs

## Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire



**Chosen reference:** Acts Chapter 20 Verse 35

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

My father taught me to do what I could to help those least fortunate. I have always tried to use my business and legal background to help others. Initially at St John Ambulance and then at Warrington Boys Club - now Warrington Youth Club - which has grown from a small base to now having nearly 2,500 young members. And very soon we will 'break ground' for the building of the new Warrington Youth Zone.

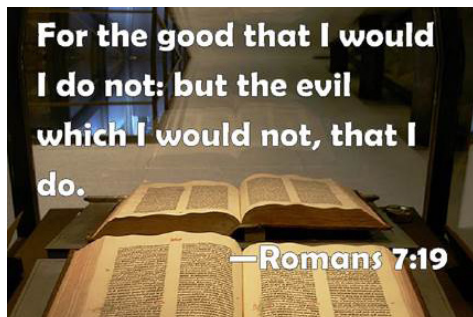
Since becoming Lord-Lieutenant I have been able to open doors to help to make things happen and have been able to play a part in helping a number of Cheshire charities and in helping to set up Cheshire Community Foundation and Cheshire Connect. My biggest learning came when I was asked to Chair Cheshire West's Poverty Truth Commission and that has led to the creation of Community Connectors who are now helping some of the most needy people in our community.

I have been hugely fortunate to have been given a position which has enabled me to play a part in improving some of the infrastructure which helps those in greatest need and I much hope to be able to do more as there is a huge need to connect up the services which do exist to help the needy.

It is impossible to overstate the pleasure which being able to give some little help to others has given to me.

# Margaret Bass

Member of Cathedral  
congregation



Chosen reference: Romans Chapter 7 Verse 19

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer that I do it, but sin that dwells within me.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

I was a student nurse mid-training, at the Royal London Hospital. I knew the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm and thought that being a Christian was being kind and nice to people so I always said I was a Christian. However, at this time I was very miserable, worn out, bad tempered, anxious and feared that I would have to stop training. I wanted Florence Nightingale as a role model but I felt more like Attila the Hun. A friend invited me to an evening service at her church: I didn't want to go but I did. We got to the first reading, Romans 7. All I heard was that someone knew about ME, knew about wanting to do good but letting myself down and feeling bad. To my mind it was obviously someone who had seen me in action, so I scanned the congregation for someone I knew, and drew a blank. I hissed to my friend 'Who wrote that?' I was a bit nonplussed when she hissed back 'St. Paul' because even I knew that St. Paul was dead. That was in October 1967. I finished the nursing course but above all through that chapter I learned of God's love for me. ONE day I will see God, face to face. What more could I ask for?

# Jacqueline Rainsforth

Cathedral Sunday School  
Coordinator



**Chosen reference:** Romans Chapter 8 Verses 38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

This quotation from Romans, was the favourite verse in the Bible of my R.E. teacher at Secondary School.

Each week she would read to us a particular quotation from the Bible and explain it in her own words and what it meant to her. She asked us to try and remember these verses, whenever there were difficult situations that may crop up in our lives.

In later years, when I worked for the Health Service in various departments of the hospital, maternity, accident and emergency and administration, I sometimes came across difficult situations, when dealing with patients or in my own working life.

When thinking through these situations, St Paul's words always came back to me and helped me to remain positive. In fact in nearly all of the problems I came up against, everything had a positive ending.

This quotation has also helped me in family life, through bereavements, in bringing up children and helping friends and work colleagues in difficult times in their lives.

# Ann Woodward

Volunteer Welcomer,  
Education Volunteer, and  
Cathedral Guide



**Chosen reference:** 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 Verse 13

In a word there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of them all is love.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

Some years ago a very dear friend who I came to the Cathedral with brought me a bookmark back from a holiday. It had this verse on it. When she died years later, her family asked me to read a Bible passage at her funeral. They chose '1 Corinthians, Chapter 13'. They knew nothing of the bookmark.

Looking back I realised this passage had been my guide through life.

I, like most people, have had highs and lows. I have two sons but between them, lost a daughter at just 8 days old. The loss of my parents and then the greatest loss, my beloved husband who died very suddenly after 35 years together but despite all this it was my faith, hope and love which got me through.

If everyone lived by faith, hope and love the world would be a better place.

# Elaine Graham

Canon Theologian,  
Chester Cathedral



**Chosen reference:** 2 Corinthians Chapter 5 Verse 19

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting our sins against us, and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

I am fortunate to be able to make frequent visits to Gladstone's Library in North Wales. Every weekday morning, there is a Eucharist in the chapel, but the order of service can catch you out if you're not expecting it. That's because absolution, or forgiveness, is given before the congregation has said the confession. That feels as if it's the wrong way round: surely we have to ask for something before we can get it?

But there is a very important truth here, which is also expressed in this verse. It is that God grants forgiveness before we even have to ask. God's love is not something we have to earn; it's offered freely and unconditionally, as a gift from one who loves us and wants nothing more than to be reconciled, or united, with us.

It's often quite hard to accept that we can be ever worthy of that kind of love: to know that we are valued, whatever our faults and failings. But this verse also reminds us that this knowledge and experience of being recipients of that forgiveness can inspire in us that same spirit of generosity and reconciliation towards others.

# Chrissie Taylor

## Member of Cathedral congregation



**Chosen reference:** 2 Corinthians Chapter 12 Verse 8

He said to me “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”

Paul the Apostle: Therefore I boast all more gladly of my weakness so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

When as a small child in a cot, I caught a virus, Infantile Paralysis (polio), I never knew what difference it would make to future. There was no modern medicine of today but electric shock treatment, iron in the shape of callipers, night splints and great pain. When I say pain it conjures up mental as well as physical.

On reflection I can honestly say I dealt with blows without help from God. I had to wear ugly shoes whereas now I buy modern ones and have them adapted. I went to Sunday school and was confirmed by the Reverend Jacks who also had an affliction to his foot so for many years I wondered ‘How could he really believe in God?’

Over years with going to the YMCA in Lewes three times a week before school for the treatment by electricity hopefully in the understanding it would help. Children were not kind but looking back I held my own. I left school at fourteen and got a job saying I was fifteen which I was in September (you could in those days) as well as a second job in a well-known chemist positioned in the record department where I sold the first Beatles record ‘Love Me Do’ in 1962.

I will not say life has been easy but I married, had two wonderful sons and now grandchildren whom I love unconditionally. When I was low many years later I knelt in Chester Cathedral and asked for help. This arrived with people of faith who cared and the ability to write poetry. I have been a member of the congregation for over 20 years and now realise I had been given strength I did not know I had.

My story ends. If you can imagine two people in Northumberland sitting on a bench at Nether Springs Retreat House over looking the wonderful countryside and talking of God’s creation. The words of my scripture passage was told to me, “Go and look it up.” This has been with me ever since and I thank the Holy Trinity for My Spirit.

Blessings to all who read our words.

# Mike Meynell

Chester Street Pastors  
Coordinator



Chosen reference: Ephesians Chapter 6 Verse 16

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

How this verse has helped me in my life:

This is the Bible verse that was given to me when I was baptised, as an adult, and it has stayed with me ever since! 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11:6) and 'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God' (Romans 10:17). So, by living a life of faith, in accordance with God's Word, the Bible, I can please God and with the 'shield of faith' I can defend myself against any and all attacks from the devil. The devil only comes to steal, kill and destroy but Jesus came that I might have a life that is lived to the full and is overflowing (John 10:10). Thank God that, through Jesus, I can live a meaningful and fulfilled life.



# Keith Sinclair

## Bishop of Birkenhead



**Chosen reference:** Philippians Chapter 3 Verse 10

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

This verse was given to me at my baptism on 7 December 1969 (I was 17 years old!) The verse quoted which is written on the back of the baptism card signed by the Minister, actually leaves out the second half of the verse which reads in the NRSV “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death”. This knowing of Jesus Christ has had for me this pattern of resurrection and suffering. The pattern was especially meaningful to me when my father died, I was chaplain at the Children’s Hospital in Birmingham and when I worshipped at a black Pentecostal church in Handsworth. All through my Christian walk I find the two going together, including as a bishop! But that is how Jesus Christ makes himself known and how he has made himself known to me; yes, this is suffering but this is also the power of his resurrection.

# Ian Bishop

## Archdeacon of Macclesfield



Chosen reference: 1 Timothy Chapter 6 Verse 6

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

When I was at an early stage in my ministerial life this verse was given to me by a trusted friend. He was to me like the old man St Paul gently teaching the young and enthusiastic Timothy. I have always come back to it at times of difficulty and challenge. Holiness/Godliness is a constant struggle for us all. The promise is that the path of godliness has its reward. What follows is contentment leading to a gain of peace, deeper than any human understanding. Conversely it is also true that ungodliness will always lead to discontentment and guilt, anxiety and shame. Follow the path of holiness and contentment and find the gain of peace in your heart.

# Martin Smith

## Lay Member of Chapter



### Chosen reference:

2 Timothy Chapter 2 Verse 13

If we are faithless, he remains faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

I first read this verse as a student sitting on a bench at Waterloo Railway Station in London nearly 50 years ago. Paul's letter could be subtitled God's advice to a young man. It spoke to me then and still speaks to me now about the way in which God wants me to live: honouring and staying true to the full message of the good news that Jesus brings. In my Christian journey I am all too conscious of the way I often continue to fall short of that goal; how I proceed in my own strength rather than trusting in Him; how I ignore His promptings and 'do my own thing'. I am thankful that in spite of these failings the God of the Universe remains *faithful* in His love for me, even when I have been *faithless*. I know and trust that will remain true for all eternity.

# Mike Johnson

## Social justice campaigning



### Chosen reference:

James Chapter 2 Verse 14

What good is it, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?  
Can such faith save him?

### How this verse has helped me in my life:

My interest in social justice began at about the same time that I became a Christian as an adult. Perhaps less of a coincidence than I first thought!

Our world can seem so challenging with conflict, persecution, natural disasters, and is heavily influenced by those greedy for power and self. The flipside to this is the amazing generosity that organisations and individuals demonstrate to help those in need.

This verse encourages me to put my faith into positive action and to campaign for those in need. It also reminds me of the occasions when Jesus spoke of the necessity of reaching out to the poor and oppressed.

James 2:14 has encouraged my involvement with Chester & Wrexham Amnesty International Group, and the Chester City of Sanctuary Group. These are non-faith groups, and I consider it important that I reach out beyond Christian organisations.

Having been encouraged and motivated by James, I am frequently challenged by the question I ask myself; 'Who is my neighbour?'

# Mike Gilbertson

Archdeacon of Chester,  
Member of Chester  
Cathedral Chapter



## Chosen reference:

Revelation Chapter 21 Verse 3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

These verses come from the very end of the Bible. They are part of a wonderful vision of the future, when God will have re-created the earth to be the perfect place he always designed it to be, and when we will live with him face to face. I find this an immensely inspiring vision, full of the love and hope we have in Jesus Christ. As we think about pilgrimage and walking with God, this is a picture of our ultimate destination. It picks up on prophecies from the Old Testament to offer a promise of a future where death, mourning, crying and pain are done away with, conquered by the love and grace of God. This promise has had a profound effect on my life, encouraging me to live here and now in the light of the hope we have in God’s faithfulness, based on the resurrection of Jesus. I took this photograph of the Knife Angel which stood outside the cathedral for a month last autumn. Knives which had been used to bring death, mourning, crying and pain have been transformed into a positive and hopeful work of art. That illustrates for me the enduring promises of God.

# Valerie Connolly

## Cathedral Server and Places of Welcome volunteer



**Chosen reference:** Revelation Chapter 21 Verse 4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

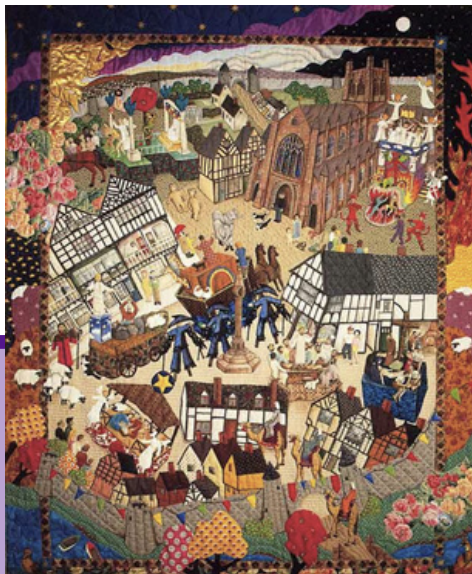
### **How this verse has helped me in my life:**

When I was growing up my Grandparents lived with us and my Grandfather was my constant companion. From him I learned to love literature, poetry and especially music. He was a born storyteller and spent much time telling me stories – our favourite stories were Bible stories. From this developed the beginnings of my faith. When I was upset or hurt I would go to him and with love and understanding he would wipe away all my tears and say – ‘All things will pass’.

Eventually he would say the words of this verse and try to explain what it meant. Since then I have experienced much greater sorrows and losses, not least the loss of so many people I have loved. These words have stayed with me and in the midst of pain they bring hope and comfort. We may not understand but we can hope that all former things will pass away.

# Nick Fry

Cathedral Bedesman,  
Guide and Server



Chosen reference:  
Revelation Chapter 22 Verse 13

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the  
First and the Last, the Beginning and  
the End.

## How this verse has helped me in my life:

The Chester Mystery Plays are performed every five years in the city and in 2013 were presented in the Cathedral itself. These extraordinary medieval plays are based on the Bible, telling the epic story of man's redemption from the Creation to the Last Judgement and are believed to have been written in the cloisters of the Cathedral in the fourteenth century. These words are spoken by the actor playing God, and I have lucky enough to perform that part twice; it is an extraordinary feeling to speak these words only yards away from where the plays were first written down and they remind me of two things. Firstly, the history of the plays themselves - that I am speaking words spoken by generations of performers before me, people in the city taking part in the plays as an act of devotion. And secondly, the timelessness and infinity of God - he is Eternity, all Space and Time, and yet amazingly we are all His children and he cares for each of us as individuals. It's extraordinary to think that we can have a parental relationship with the Creator of all and yet, this is what he promises to us all.



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