



**Press Release 17/08/2023**

## **The Dean of Worcester Retires After 16 Years**

The Dean of Worcester, the Very Reverend Peter Atkinson, will officially retire on Friday 25 August, after more than 16 years in the post, and 43 years as a priest in the Church of England. His resignation was accepted by Queen Elizabeth II very shortly before her death.

Peter was installed as Dean of Worcester in 2007. Born and brought up in Kent, he studied in Oxford, Cambridge, and Rome, before he was ordained deacon in 1979, and priest in 1980. He served as a curate in Clapham in south London after which he was Priest-in-charge of St Mary, Tatsfield, in Surrey. He was then Rector of Holy Trinity, Bath, after which he moved to Sussex to be the Principal of Chichester Theological College, and after that Rector of Lavant. He was Canon Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral from 1997 to 2007.

Peter married Lynne in 1983, and they have three children and three (soon to be four) grandchildren. They are now moving to Kirkbymoorside in North Yorkshire.

During his time as Dean, the Cathedral has seen the completion of the restoration programme inaugurated in the 1980s, and the unveiling of a plaque by The Queen on her Diamond Jubilee visit; the restoration of the Edgar Tower; the restoration of the east and the west windows; the conservation of Christ in Majesty, the mediaeval sculpture in College Hall; a series of projects to do with the historic library; the refurbishment of the vestry in the song school; and the remedial work following the collapse of a pinnacle in 2021. Perhaps the most striking project was the award-winning conversion of the medieval Undercroft to become a centre for the Cathedral's learning programme and wider community use. A project to re-landscape College Yard has also been launched. The Cathedral's choirs have been restructured to give equal opportunities to girls and boys, and the Cathedral is now committed to a comprehensive and ambitious eco agenda.

Peter has been the Master of St Oswald's Hospital (the ancient almshouses in the Tything), a governor of the King's School, a member of the Worcester Conservation Area Panel, and a trustee of the Worcester Festival. For ten years there was an annual Shakespeare production in the Cathedral, in which Peter always had a part. In 2014 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by the University of Worcester.

In 2008, an introduction to the Bible which Peter wrote for young readers, entitled *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible*, was published by Lion Hudson. Earlier this year, a collection of his sermons, entitled *A Way of Putting It*, edited by Michael Brierley, was published by Sacristy Press.

In June, the community was invited to attend 'A Very Irreverend Evening with the Dean,' where Peter shared some of his memories and anecdotes from the past 16 years.

Marking his retirement, Peter said: "To have been Dean of Worcester has been the great privilege of my life. My family and I have lived in the centre of an historic city, and at the heart of a beautiful county. I have had a small share in the custodianship of one of England's great cathedrals and been surrounded by a wonderful team of people. I thank God for all that I have learnt during my time here, and I will continue to pray for the Cathedral under the leadership of a new Dean."

The Vice-Dean of Worcester, Canon Stephen Edwards, has been appointed Interim Dean by the Bishop of Worcester, and will serve in the role until a new Dean is appointed and installed.

Canon Edwards said: "The Cathedral has been greatly blessed by Peter in so many ways over the past 16 years. His ministry has brought superb preaching and public speaking, the counsel of a wise priest, and connections and engagement across the city and region. All these gifts, together with his leadership, friendship, and generosity as Dean of Worcester, have inspired and nurtured so many people. In this and so much more his achievements and his oversight are admired with great appreciation and fondness. We pray for Peter and Lynne as they leave Worcester and enjoy their retirement."

A special Evensong will be held at the Cathedral at 4pm on Sunday 10 September, to mark the Dean's retirement. All are warmly welcome to attend. The Cathedral's Guild of Bellringers will also ring a full peal from 12-4pm to celebrate Peter's time in post and all that he achieved during this time.

For more information about Worcester Cathedral, please visit [www.worcestercathedral.org.uk](http://www.worcestercathedral.org.uk)

**ENDS**

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## **Notes to editors**

Worcester Cathedral has been a place of Christian worship and prayer for fourteen centuries; the present building dates back to 1084 and is dedicated to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Described as possibly the most interesting of all England's cathedrals, especially architecturally, Worcester Cathedral was founded in 680. Saint Oswald then built another cathedral in 983, and established a monastery attached to it. Saint Wulfstan began the present building in 1084 replacing the earlier cathedrals.

The Cathedral's attractions include King John's Tomb, Prince Arthur's Chantry, the early 12th Century Chapter House, St Wulfstan's Crypt, medieval cloisters, magnificent Victorian stained glass and spectacular views from the top of the Cathedral tower.