

## Monthly Letter, April 2020

From the Dean of Salisbury



### **The Word, or the Bird?**

The nationwide lockdown has meant that, like many other churches, the Cathedral has had to increase its digital output and enlarge its online presence at breakneck speed. We have been encouraged by the comments on our efforts that we have received from across the Diocese and beyond. But while it is heartening to note that (for example) our virtual Palm Sunday service attracted far more worshippers than could ever have fitted into the building, it is simultaneously humbling to note that our liturgy and our music are not the most sought-after feature on our website.

That honour belongs to the peregrine falcons who have returned to nest on our roof in 2020. Their live webcam recorded nearly 45,000 page views in March 2020, numbers that outstrip the reach of the clergy's most passionately eloquent sermons!

In our present circumstances the popularity of the peregrines is easily understood. Self-isolation means that time spent online has increased, and home schooling has sent carers looking for resources for every aspect of the curriculum. Of course.

But perhaps there are other reasons, too. While we all adjust to our changed and straitened circumstances – staying at home, social distancing, and looming economic hardship – the peregrines carry on as they always do. They are oblivious to the anxiety and fear that circulate below them. And thus they are a significant reminder that this season will pass, and that another will follow.

They also exult in the glorious liberty that is denied to most of us at present. The falcons can, quite literally, stretch their wings and fly, enjoying long views, hunting their prey, soaring, and diving as

they choose. A glimpse at their webcam shows us the precious freedoms that we have temporarily renounced, and it allow us not to lose sight of them.

And – in early May – the Cathedral should become home to peregrine chicks! Our falcon has laid four eggs. She is sitting on them very determinedly. But one day the eggshells will be shattered. Their broken remnants will be discarded. For something new will come.

Does that remind you of anything? The stone was rolled away. The graveclothes were abandoned. Something new had come.

The sustained life of God's creation. The liberty of its children. The death-defying life of Easter.

I think the peregrines tell a hopeful story.

Nicholas Papadopulos

*To view the falcons' webcam visit: <https://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/visit-what-see/peregrine-falcons-0>*