

## Ralph Adams Cram Society: Planned Giving at the Cathedral

At the height of the pandemic, the Right Reverend Clifton Daniel III, Dean of the Cathedral, received a welcome surprise: a letter informing him that a generous donor had created a charitable remainder trust in the 1980s, with the Cathedral as its sole beneficiary. This remarkable gift allowed the Cathedral to retain staff, maintain our presence in the community, and expand our services for those in need at a time when none of this was certain.

Planned gifts are critical to an organization's financial health. Knowing that a donor intends to include the Cathedral in their estate

plans allows us to prepare for unexpected events, bridge gaps in programming, maintain our beautiful grounds, and continue to serve as a convening and worship space for all. We established the Ralph Adams Cram Society, named for the Cathedral's famed architect, to recognize those giving members of our community who have made their bequest intentions known. If you would like more information on our planned giving opportunities and to learn how to include the Cathedral in your estate plans or join the Ralph Adams Cram Society, please contact Jessica Laufer at [jlaufer@stjohndivine.org](mailto:jlaufer@stjohndivine.org).

## The Close: Our Urban Oasis

With 11 acres, four gardens, three peacocks, lots of honeybees, hawks, and countless pigeons, the Close is an inviting and colorful place to be all year round. Whether you're contemplating the Biblical Garden, picnicking on the Pulpit Green, or gazing at the tangle of creatures piled high on the Peace Fountain, the Close offers quiet respite from urban life.

Phil, Jim, and Harry, our constant peacock companions, remained unflappable even during the darkest days of the pandemic. As longtime friends of the Cathedral know, these birds may be getting older (they've just turned 20!), but they're indefatigable in pursuit of a sunbeam or a stray almond. They continue to enjoy leisurely walks around the Close, nibbling on healthy delicacies like fresh kale, and staying cozy in their stylish heated hutch during these cold days.

On your next visit, be sure to look for the red-tailed hawks who build their nests and lay their eggs around the Close. You might even catch a glimpse of a hawk perched atop the statue of St. Gabriel on the Cathedral's eastern end. We're grateful to our local birdwatching groups, like Morningside Hawks, for keeping tabs on these majestic animals. Local birders have been tracking the Cathedral hawks since 2006, making note of the dozens of chicks that have hatched from their nests. The birders are hoping for a successful hatch this year, and we are too!

Winter, spring, summer, and fall all bring different sights and sounds to the Close. You are always welcome here—to our urban oasis teeming with nature in action.

## The Community at The Crossing: An Intentional Community at the Cathedral

As we look further into the future, our mission of fostering unity and leadership will enter a new phase. Readers of our previous newsletters may already be familiar with the Cathedral's plans to institute a transformational, year-long residential program for religious seekers. This new intentional community—which we are calling The Community at The Crossing—will reignite international ecumenical dialogue and prepare young people around the world to lead with an ethical perspective and a commitment to creating a more just world.

In December 2021, we invited Trustees and friends to a conversation about this intentional community and to meet our partners from England and France. With the strong support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, the Vatican's Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, the establishment of our new community will be a 21st-century realization of a 19th-century dream of fostering unity across differences through shared prayer and service.

Each year, the Cathedral plans to select 10–15 diverse, promising young leaders to live together in prayer, formation, and service. We aim to give participants life-altering experiences through a number of avenues. They will receive education in theology, sociology, psychology, and relational leadership, alongside formation in common prayer and time for private contemplation. They will

be challenged to find compromise and build respect across differences. They will immerse themselves in contemporary social problems, while gaining skills to provide practical care to people in need. And they will experience applying Christian ethical principles to business and social issues.

All of this will be made possible with the support of philanthropic individuals, foundations, and corporate partners. The Cathedral will put this support towards inspiring peace, inclusiveness, and justice in our larger society. We will reinforce positive, life-affirming religion at a time when it is becoming increasingly irrelevant, even suspect. We will create a locus where Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, and others can renew the ecumenical dialogues that many believe have grown cold. We will increase our work of feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and providing other direct services to the neediest among us. And we will transform the lives of participants, who will, we believe, transform the lives of everyone they touch.

We're continuing to work out the details of the Cathedral's intentional community, but the seeds have been sown and we'll soon share the excitement of how they have grown. As a sacred space, a place where people of all faiths or no faith can come together in dialogue and learn from one another, the Cathedral will itself grow from this promising initiative.

## Life Cycle: The Columbarium Expands

An integral part of Cathedral life, the Columbarium provides sacred space for burials and the committal of ashes to anyone who wishes to entrust their precious departed to our care. Over the decades, many people from all over the world and numerous faiths have mourned their loved ones here. As it has done in the past, the Cathedral recently completed an expansion of the Columbarium, with plans for additional outdoor space to come, so that it may remain actively available for burials.

The Columbarium was first established in the Stuyvesant Baptistry. Its 120 marble vaults sit silently in the curving walls of a space that also celebrates newborns, making it a place of witness to the full cycle of human life. A mere 20 years after opening, the Columbarium became full.

In the 1990s, the Cathedral expanded the Columbarium eastward into the adjacent Gothic-style Chapel of St. Ansgar. This chapel was built above the site of the Cathedral's cornerstone, which was laid on St. John's Day, December 27, 1892. Alongside the cornerstone, officials

placed a Bible, 1893 almanacs, church periodicals, copies of New York City dailies, and a copy of the address given by Bishop Potter at the laying of the stone. It seems fitting, then, that at the place where the Cathedral began we honor lives lived and ended.

The 1990s expansion added 500 vaults to the Columbarium. Covered in warm tones of Rojo, Amber, and Carrera marble, they are situated below two grand stained-glass windows depicting scenes of the Incarnation and the Acts of the Apostles in the early Church. These vaults, each comprised of up to 4 niches, have all been designated.

For a new century, the Cathedral expanded the Columbarium again, adding 682 vaults in the Chapel of St. Ansgar. They are capped in Perle Blanc limestone, whose luminous hues embody the Old World atmosphere of this serene space.

If you would like more information on the Columbarium, please contact the Office of Pastoral Care at 212-316-7483 or email [pastoralcare@stjohndivine.org](mailto:pastoralcare@stjohndivine.org).

## Congregation of St. Saviour

For those seeking a closer connection to the Cathedral, The Congregation of St. Saviour, led by The Reverend Canon Steven Lee, invites you to join the active Christian community at the heart of the Cathedral. For more information, visit [saintsaviour.org](http://saintsaviour.org).

## Stay Informed

Upcoming programs are updated regularly at [stjohndivine.org](http://stjohndivine.org) and on our social media. Follow us and share your thoughts at @StJohnDivineNYC on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

## Reflection From The Dean The Right Reverend Clifton Daniel III

William Shakespeare begins his play Richard III with these words: "Now is the winter of our discontent..." We understand your words well, Mr. Shakespeare. The COVID pandemic has brought us two winters of discontent, disruption, and difficulty.

Over these past two years we've added a couple of not commonly used words to our everyday vocabulary: pandemic and endemic. According to the dictionary, a pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread over a large region. Endemic can also refer to a disease, one contained to a particular place or population. But qualities—like kindness or joy—are also endemic, growing or existing in a specific region.

We've been suffering from the COVID pandemic. The thinking now is that perhaps the virus will become endemic, a regular (if unwelcome) presence like the flu or the common cold. Goodness is already endemic—a present, positive, and, God willing, growing reality in our lives.

The good news of Jesus is that God is active and working in our midst to turn goodness and hope from being endemic to pandemic. That is specifically the mission of this Cathedral and the Church. The good news of Jesus is that hope, forgiveness, inclusion, and equity are the final words in the universe and in human life and that evil is no ultimate threat.

C.S. Lewis, the Anglican author of *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, claims that Christianity is an infection, too, but a good infection, spreading from person to person, becoming a dominant

reality in one's life over time. This good infection of the Good News of Jesus is nurtured through actions like prayer, thanksgiving, and working for the well-being of our neighbor.

It is the mission of each Christian and each church to do all in their power to spread Lewis's "good infection" so that endemic good may become a pandemic of mercy and justice and thanksgiving through the abundance of God's loving kindness.

Ask yourself, "What am I doing to spread this good infection?" Offering a kind word, perhaps, instead of a sharp comment; putting yourself in another person's shoes to see the world through their eyes; being generous; being a witness to the healing power of Jesus Christ set loose in individual lives and the life of the world.

In this way, we can turn the tables so that the pandemic of evil becomes endemic, and the endemic of goodness becomes pandemic. Think of that: a pandemic of goodness! We each have a part to play in that dramatic reversal. Pray that we have the courage, strength, and determination to make that reversal happen, by God's grace and strengthening presence in our lives.

So, I invite you to undertake service in your own way to better the life of your neighbor, and to come worship at the Cathedral: to join in its mission as the Cathedral resumes, in a regular liturgical way, the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus.

Help spread this good infection in any way you can!

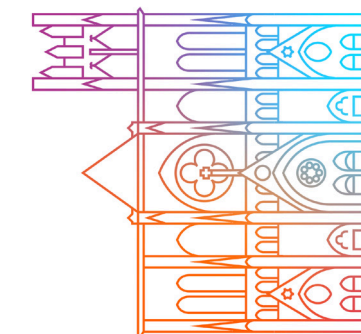


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# Looking to the Year Ahead

at the Cathedral of  
St. John the Divine



Spring 2022



The Cathedral  
Church of Saint John  
the Divine



## Reflecting on the Recent Past, Looking Forward to the Year Ahead

### From darkness, with determination.

As you read this newsletter early in the new year, the events of 2020 and 2021 continue to resonate. The challenges and promise of our unfolding decade have been intertwined at the Cathedral and in the lives of all our congregants, friends, visitors, and staff. We press on with love and dedication—the only way forward—doing our best to withstand everything these long months have thrown in our path. As it has always done, well before the words “coronavirus” or “pandemic” became commonplace, the Cathedral built and bolstered many avenues of outreach to the wider community.

We published our last newsletter in the summer of 2020, just after we were forced to shut the Great Bronze Doors. But even as an unsettling quiet replaced the sounds of the children from **Advancing the Community of Tomorrow (ACT)** adventuring on the Close and the hum of visitors from far and wide, the Cathedral remained vital.



(to say the least), we offered the Cathedral for use as a field hospital and morgue. We also partnered with the New York Blood Center to begin holding regular blood drives—which continue on the first Monday of every month—and became a site for COVID testing and vaccinations in partnership with New York Health + Hospitals.

**The Amsterdam Avenue Steps** took on new life as the Cathedral invited the public to consider it as a front porch where they could gather safely during the pandemic. The stairs quickly became a rallying spot for a range of groups, who came to sing, mourn, pray, and protest in response to the social and political tumult of the past two years. In December 2020, the Cathedral hosted a holiday celebration on the stairs, a Christmas caroling concert given as a gift to a strained city. What started as an uplifting afternoon ended with tragedy when a young man brandished a pair of handguns in front of the Great Bronze Doors and ultimately lost his life in the ensuing ordeal. Days later, clergy and community members regathered on the stairs to pray for that man, for the safety of the NYPD, and for an end to gun violence.

No sooner did the Cathedral’s physical doors close than we opened wide our virtual ones. We took our worship services, guided tours, children’s programming, and musical performances online via a combination of livestreaming and posting a robust array of videos on our website. While continuing this virtual programming, we were thankful to be able to partially re-open in July 2020 for prayer, reflection, and meditation.

Throughout the lockdown, we kept our most crucial services running, including the **Cathedral Community Cares (CCC)** soup kitchen and clothing closet, ensuring that all of our neighbors would have their most basic needs met. With space to spare

We have repeated such prayerful gatherings following moments of national tragedy, including to mark the mounting COVID death toll. Our response to the pandemic also included outreach to many particularly hard-hit communities, and has incorporated the healing power of art and storytelling. Together with the **Zip Code Memory Project: Practices of Justice and Repair**, the Cathedral hosted a months-long series of workshops on the grounds, which brought people together to tell the stories of their lives during the pandemic. In December 2021, the workshops culminated in a public event on the front steps as artists, neighbors, and new friends joined together to reimagine life in a changed but resilient New York City.

Levity has come to the front steps, too. After going virtual in 2020, we were thrilled to welcome back bicyclists in-person for our annual **Blessing of the Bicycles** this past spring. Hundreds of beaming riders gathered on the stairs to have their bicycles blessed before taking a celebratory lap around the Close.

In July 2021, we expanded into the Cathedral again when we welcomed worshippers back inside for daily services. Two months later, we resumed indoor Sunday services. As magnificent as it has been to reconvene inside the Cathedral, the front steps remains an important gathering place. The assassination of Haitian president Jovenel Moise, merely days after we resumed indoor daily services, called us back to the steps for a **Service of Solidarity** for Haitians and New Yorkers alike.

**The Feast of St. Francis**, anticipated by animal-lovers each fall, stood out as an example of the particular challenge of reimagining how to safely bring people together for worship and unity. Prior to the pandemic, a typical St. Francis Day celebration saw the Cathedral filled with pets and their humans. We took the service completely online in 2020. For 2021, we invited the usual menagerie of dogs, cats, horses, hedgehogs, birds, lizards, and, of course, humans to participate in a hybrid in-person and livestreamed service on the **Pulpit Green**. Hundreds came together to celebrate the patron saint of animals and Earth in a way that spoke to both the classic joy of St. Francis Day at the Cathedral and the role of technological ingenuity in all that we’ve done these past two years.

We also brought people together again (albeit in smaller numbers than usual) for our annual **Halloween Extravaganza and Procession of the Ghouls**. Spearheaded by the inimitable puppeteer and Cathedral Artist-in-Residence Ralph Lee and his Mettawee River Theatre Company,



this ghostly celebration gave Halloween revelers a delightful fright and, perhaps more in 2021 than ever before, a much-needed escape into a different world.

After Halloween, we moved into the **Feasts of All Saints and All Souls** with a three-day series of services and programs. Through **Lamentation, Thanksgiving, and Hope**, we dedicated worship services, art installations, and public events to mourning the tens of thousands of people who have died of COVID and honoring those who cared for the sick and dying. The centerpiece of these days were the striking el Día de Muertos altars created by artist Sebastian Gamez in collaboration with members of the public. The altars served as sites of communal mourning and remembrance and soon became filled with mementos of loved ones.

Prayer and poetry have always been intertwined at the Cathedral, as evidenced most concretely by **The American Poets Corner**. COVID didn’t stop us from celebrating our 2020 Poets Corner Inductee Audre Lorde, whose life and writing we feted online. We were in-person again for

our 2021 inductee Muriel Rukeyser, who wrote in her poem, “A Birth”: “Lately having escaped three-kinded death / Not by evasion but by coming through / I celebrate what may be true beginning.”

We opened the final month of the year with our annual Cathedral **Christmas Concert**, welcoming guests for two evenings of life-affirming music. By Christmas, however, it was clear that the pandemic was far from finished with us as the Omicron variant surged. We made the sadly inevitable decision to move from in-person to online **Christmas services**. We also had to rethink the **New Year’s Eve Concert for Peace**, a beloved decades-old tradition. With the generous support of the Mount Sinai Health System, and hosted by the Cathedral’s old friend Harry Smith, the performance was livestreamed—without an audience, but presented with all the good-will and hope for the future of our more typical concerts. Thousands of New Yorkers and friends from around the world tuned into the livestream, as together we paid tribute to the outgoing year and welcomed the new.

### Heading into the future, with grace and gusto!

Worship services are the wellspring of Cathedral life, and the progression from virtual services back to in-person gatherings has been a cause for jubilation among congregants and visitors. We entered 2022 with a memorial service in honor of The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu on Sunday, February 13. Archbishop Tutu was known worldwide for preaching a Gospel of radical reconciliation and truth-telling. He spoke at the Cathedral in 1986, bridging continents and worldviews with his human rights advocacy and righteous struggle against apartheid regimes.

The Cathedral also mourned the passing of Joan Didion, whose matchless literary voice found a home here through the dramatic readings of her evocative memoirs *Blue Nights* and *The Year of Magical Thinking*, in 2014 and 2009 respectively. As we move deeper into the year, there are no doubt more complications and transitions ahead. But overall, we give thanks for our friends and neighbors here in the City and around the world, whose support and energy have helped us keep our most essential programs active throughout these challenging past two years.

We know that we’ll be able to regather in person and that the power of music, the heart’s language, will help guide us toward the joy of reunion. Whether in person or via livestream, our concert series of **Great Music in a Great Space** performances continues to bring the power and glory of music to audiences in New York and all across the globe. The series features a wide selection of choral performances and organ recitals of works by classical and contemporary composers from around the world and from the Anglican Cathedral tradition.

Tending to the spirit has always

gone hand-in-hand with nourishing the body and mind at the Cathedral. Maintaining healthy bodies lends to healthy communities. Since 1982, **Cathedral Community Cares (CCC)** has been strengthening the body through food, among many other services. To complement its long-running Sunday soup kitchen, our CCC team is launching two new food pantries, both well-stocked and conveniently located adjacent to the clothing closet.

As visitors to the Cathedral soon discover, young people form the core of the Close community. At **The Cathedral School**, through the range of programming offered by the Cathedral’s **Public Education and Visitor Services (PEVS)** team, and in our beloved **Advancing the Community of Tomorrow (ACT)** program, young people flourish. In fact, it’s hard to find anyone in the neighborhood without a personal connection to ACT. Many of the children in this caring community have parents who were involved when they were young. In 2021, ACT celebrated its 50th anniversary. We marked this milestone with the introduction of a tuition fund, which will cover the cost of ACT’s popular summer camp and preschool for dozens of children.

There’s always so much to see and explore at the Cathedral. Our PEVS team has continued to rise to the challenge of figuring out how to bring the Cathedral’s countless treasures and tales to life both onsite and online. Just in time for Halloween, we were delighted to bring back in-person Crypt Crawls, which joined perennial favorites like Highlights, Vertical, and Gardens and Grounds Tours. Our educators and guides are poised to welcome you to the rejuvenating spaces of the Close and to illuminate the art and architecture of the Cathedral in 2022, virtually and, increasingly, in-person.

From major development projects to small daily repairs, the work of

**stewarding the Cathedral** for the generations is never complete. Work is currently underway on both the digital aspect of the Cathedral’s world, with a new and improved website anticipated to launch later in 2022, and in the solidly physical. Among our current infrastructure projects are two especially worth noting—and impossible to miss for all the scaffolding they’ve generated (please bear with us, it’s temporary!).

The first one, involving the deinstallation, cleaning, and reinstallation of the **Great Organ** pipes, became necessary when a fire broke out in the crypt on Palm Sunday 2019. Unfortunately, the Cathedral is no stranger to fire. Fortunately, this one was relatively contained. It did, however, throw smoke and soot into the Great Organ’s historic pipes, which must be restored to pristine condition. We expect the pipes to return in time for Easter 2023, when the Great Organ will once again fill the Cathedral with sound. In the meantime, the organ tones you’ve been hearing come from an electric model on temporary loan.

The second project focuses on the dome capping the Crossing, designed and constructed in 1909 by **Rafael Guastavino, Jr.** Originally intended as a temporary roof to be replaced with a spire, the dome has become an historic masterpiece of engineering and tilework. In order to conserve the dome, we began cleaning and maintenance work in October 2019. Part of this involves sheathing its exterior with a protective copper finish, which adds a golden gleam to the Cathedral’s roof. If you’re curious about how to gild the dome of the largest Cathedral in the world, visit [stjohndivine.org](http://stjohndivine.org) to watch time-lapse videos of the work in progress.

Conservation has always been at the heart of the **Textile Conservation Laboratory**, of course. Caring for the Cathedral’s priceless 17th-century tapestries is core to its mission, but on any given day you’ll find the Lab

team at work on a whole spectrum of textiles in need of some TLC. They’ve recently finished restoring a set of five tapestries woven by a woman named Shoshana Comet. An artist and psychotherapist, she wove these tapestries in order to unshackle herself from the trauma of her family’s treacherous escape from Europe at the beginning of World War II. Shoshana Comet died of Alzheimer’s in 2012. Her husband, Ted Comet, brought her tapestries to the Lab to ensure that his late wife’s story and spirit would live on through her weavings.

When we round the bend from winter to spring, we will mark two years since COVID-19 entered our lives and ended far too many. In continued partnership with **The ZIP Code Memory Project: Practices of Justice and Repair**, the Cathedral will open a multifaceted exhibition memorializing the thousands of lives lost in Morningside Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods, while also presenting visions for a healthier, more hopeful future for our communities.

Art inspires life at the Cathedral, and vice versa. This coming **Lenten season**, the Cathedral will become the site of a new installation by artist Jacques Jarrige. Suspended from the ceiling of the Nave, the figure of Christ, cast in hammered aluminum, will be a fitting focal point for the observance of Easter. We are also planning for the next in our series of Cathedral-wide exhibitions. Informed by the Cathedral’s Anglican history and American legacy, and by the experiences of people in the City and around the world during the pandemic, we will present **The Value of Testimony** to explore another core facet of human experience through the lens of contemporary artistic expression.

Nobody knows exactly what spring will bring, but one thing is certain: this is your Cathedral, and we will be here.

## Daily Worship Schedule



Virtual Morning Prayer,  
Monday – Saturday 8:30 a.m.

Midday Holy Eucharist,  
Monday – Friday 12:15 p.m.

Virtual Evening Prayer,  
Monday – Saturday 5:30 p.m.

Holy Eucharist,  
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

This schedule reflects the Cathedral’s worship services at time of printing. Please watch our website for updates on the Cathedral’s daily worship schedule as we continue to navigate the pandemic and aim to regather in person.

## Become a Friend of the Cathedral



PHOTO: CHRIS LEE

Make an impact today! Whether you connect with New York’s Great Cathedral through our spiritual offerings, arts and architecture, music, education, or service to the community, we invite you to become our partner in mission. Please consider making a gift securely online at [stjohndivine.org/donate](http://stjohndivine.org/donate) or by calling our Development Office at (212) 316-7570.

