



The Dean's Charge to Vestry 2026

*God, open our ears, our eyes, and our hearts
that we may hear your Word and receive it with grace this day. Amen.*

As we gather for worship today and for the work of our annual Vestry, the Gospel of John gives us a story that begins with a simple human reality: thirst. Jesus, tired from the journey, sits beside a well in Samaria in the heat of the day. A woman comes to draw water, and Jesus says to her, "Give me a drink." At first it seems an ordinary moment—two people meeting beside a well, one asking for water. Yet as the conversation unfolds, we begin to see that this encounter is about more than physical thirst. It speaks to the deeper thirst that lives within every human heart. We are thirsty for meaning, thirsty for belonging, thirsty for hope—and, whether we name it or not, thirsty for God. Jesus meets the woman exactly where she is, in the middle of an ordinary day and a complicated life. He does not wait for her to come to the temple; instead, he meets her at the well and speaks of living water—a life with God that satisfies the deepest thirst of the human heart. In that simple place beside the well, an ordinary moment becomes a place of encounter with God.

When we look at the world around us, we see that same longing everywhere. People long for grounding in uncertain times, for community in a culture that can feel isolating, and for beauty and quiet in a world that often feels hurried and harsh. Many may not use the language of faith to describe this longing, but the thirst itself is unmistakable. And wherever there is thirst, people begin to look for a well. And whenever a well is found, a community begins to gather around it.

Christ Church Cathedral is, in many ways, such a well in the heart of our city—a place where people come seeking prayer, music, beauty, conversation, or simply a moment of stillness. Some arrive intentionally; others wander in almost by accident. Yet again and again we see something remarkable: people encounter hospitality, beauty, and peace—and sometimes, quietly, they encounter God. Like every well, this place is sustained by the care and generosity of people who keep the water flowing.

The Gospel reminds us that the story does not end at the well. After her encounter with Jesus, the woman leaves her water jar behind and runs back to her community with a simple invitation: "Come and see." Her encounter with living water becomes an invitation for others. If the world is thirsty—and it clearly is—then our calling is not only to guard the well but to ensure that the water continues to flow. A living cathedral is not built of stone and glass alone; it is built of people: people who pray and sing, who welcome and serve, who care for one another, and who give generously of their gifts.

Part of that calling is expressed through the contemplative life of this Cathedral. In a restless world, spaces of beauty and reflection are increasingly rare. When music fills this nave, when silence is honoured, when poetry is spoken and art invites us to see the world differently, people encounter something that nourishes the soul. In the coming year we hope to deepen

this dimension of our life by cultivating the sacred arts—especially visual art and the spoken word—as ways of exploring faith through creativity. Through exhibitions, poetry readings, storytelling, and artistic collaborations, we hope this Cathedral will become an even more vibrant place where faith and imagination meet.

We also hope to deepen our relationship with the wider Diocese of Ottawa. A cathedral is not only the parish church of its own community; it is meant to be a spiritual home for the whole diocese. Yet many across our diocese have never visited this Cathedral, and in the coming year we hope to invite parishes to spend time here—to worship together, explore the Cathedral, and experience the ministry that unfolds here week by week. In the fall we will host a Women in Leadership gathering celebrating several milestones: the 25th anniversary of our Girls' Choir, the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women, and the 130th anniversary of the Diocese of Ottawa. Alongside these celebrations we look forward to a book launch and other gatherings that invite conversation about faith, leadership, and the life of the Church.

This will also be an important year for our Diocese as we support our new bishop in the early months of her ministry among us. The Cathedral will play a particular role as we help her settle into her ministry, host her consecration, and serve as a home for her among us. We will also welcome the Anglican Military Ordinariate and host the consecration of the new Bishop Ordinary of the Ordinariate. Each of these moments is more than an event. They are opportunities for our diocesan and wider church family to gather—to pray, to celebrate, to be renewed in faith—and to drink from the well that sustains us.

And that well is sustained by the faithful care of many people. I want to pause for a moment to give thanks for the many people who help keep this well flowing. Our clergy, wardens, and staff, and the many volunteers and lay leaders of this Cathedral offer their time, gifts, and leadership with remarkable generosity. Much of what sustains the life of this place happens quietly and faithfully week by week, and I am deeply grateful for the care and dedication that so many bring to the ministry of this Cathedral.

Like every well, this place must be tended with care if the water is to continue flowing. And yet the life of a cathedral is always a living work, never something finished. There are still many people in this city who are thirsty and who have not yet discovered this well. Like every cathedral in North America today, this work requires both people and resources—not to preserve an institution for its own sake, but because the mission entrusted to us matters. If we believe that this Cathedral is a well in the city—a place where people can encounter beauty, prayer, community, and the living presence of God—then our calling is to help keep that well open, welcoming, and full for all who come seeking.

The woman at the well arrived thirsty, and she left overflowing. Through her witness an entire community came to know Christ. My prayer for this Cathedral is that we will continue to be such a place: a well in the city, a home of beauty and prayer, and a gathering place for those who seek God. May God give us wisdom in our decisions today, courage in our commitments, and generosity in our hearts as we care for the well that has been entrusted to us. And may all who come to this place—whether for worship, music, prayer, art, or simply a moment of quiet—discover here the grace of God, the welcome of this community, and the living water of Christ. For the well is here, and the living water still flows. Amen.

The Very Reverend Beth Bretzlaff