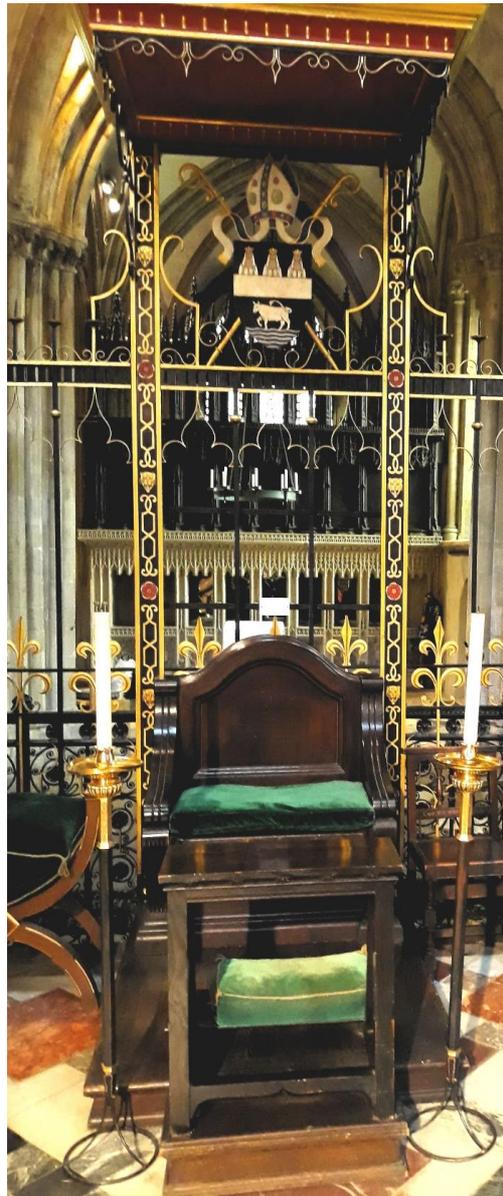




Christ Church

UNLOCKING CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL: FAMILY/SCHOOL RESOURCES

A VIRTUAL VISIT ONLINE The Cathedra



The Cathedra- the Bishop's throne

Introduction:

'Cathedra' is a Greek word and simply means 'seat'. In time, it also came to mean a church that was the principle or 'special' church of a bishop. It is, of course, only a short jump from the word 'cathedra' to 'cathedral'. A 'seat' may sound strange as a description of a building, but we still talk of a 'country seat', meaning a stately home in the countryside!

Now, a church could be a tiny one on a deserted island, but if it had a cathedra then it would be a cathedral. Conversely, there could be a massive church with gold decoration everywhere but, if it did not have a cathedra, then it would be a church and not a Cathedral.

The Bishop sits in a very noticeable, public place high up and near the altar, in an area of the Cathedral called the '**sanctuary**'.

But who sits on the Christ Church cathedra? The chief Bishop at a service is the answer, and that is normally the Bishop of the Diocese of Oxford. Currently our Bishop is the Very Reverend Steven Croft.



Steven Croft, the current Bishop of Oxford

Background:

It is a great honour for a priest to be appointed by the Queen /King to become a bishop. A bishop looks after a diocese, a large area with all its churches, in the same way that a shepherd looks after sheep. Bishops are often seen carrying a **crozier**, which looks like a shepherd's crook, to remind them of their pastoral or caring role. A modern bishop does not see her/himself as a 'ruler' but as someone entrusted with the task of looking after us. Indeed, he/she is our 'shepherd', as Jesus is our Shepherd.

This cathedra is made of oak and quite modern. The wrought iron, painted canopy above it is also modern (for Christ Church!) and was made in the 1950s. On it, you can see the bishop's special hat or **mitre**, with two crossed croziers. You can also see the shield of Oxford, with an ox crossing the ford, or shallow place, in the River Thames. The three women on the shield represent Saint Frideswide, with (some say) her favourite saints, Saint Margaret of Antioch and Saint Catherine of Siena. Other people think the two women either side

of Saint Frideswide may represent her two companions with whom she hid in the forest, to avoid being captured by King Algar of Mercia.

Things to do at home- a few ideas

- **Find 5 pictures, each of a different cathedra.** See if you can find one depicted in a painting. There are Cathedrals all over the world. What might a cathedra look like in other countries? How do the cathedras in more modern cathedrals (eg Coventry Cathedral) compare with older ones?

- Learn about the difference between bishops and archbishops. A **bishop** oversees a diocese, which is a collection of local parishes; and an **archbishop** administers an **archdiocese**, which is just a really large diocese. In the Church of England, there are two archbishops: Canterbury (southern England) and York (northern England).

In the Catholic Church, there are also **archbishops** and **bishops** but there is a rank above that, named **Cardinal**, from whom the Catholic Church elects its highest leader, the **Pope**. Christ Church College was originally founded by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who worked for the Tudor King, Henry VIII.

- Find out about **Medieval Boy Bishops** (sorry, there weren't any girl ones - women bishops are a very new thing!) Write a short story about one. Mind you, there is nothing stopping a girl, for example, imitating a boy so she could be a boy bishop for the day!
- Who was the first **female Bishop** ever? When was she appointed to the American Episcopal Church?
- Find out more about the first women priests who became bishops in the Church of England. In the Diocese of Oxford, we have one woman bishop, the Very Reverend **Olivia Graham**, who is the Bishop of Reading, in Berkshire. Here is a photograph taken at her Consecration, in 2019, in St Paul's Cathedral, London. She is being blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury (centre) and other bishops and clergy.



Olivia Graham receives prayers and blessings during her consecration, in 2019, as Bishop of Reading.

- Make a **model of a cathedra** out of card or stiff paper. They are often very basic in shape, but the decoration could incorporate Christian symbols. If you are feeling adventurous, you could make a canopy for it!
- Think about what it takes to be a **good bishop**. Which qualities would you consider essential to make a woman or man a good bishop.
- Search online for images of **Bishop's mitres** (the pointed hats that are worn on the head by bishops). Design one that YOU would wear if you were bishop for a day.
- If you were to have a verse from the **Psalms** (in the Old Testament in the Bible) written on or above the Cathedra, which one would you choose?
- In **Chess**, each player has one king, one queen, two knights, two castles and two bishops. Find out more about the bishops in a game of chess. How do they move?

