



PRESS RELEASE

14th December 2007

For Immediate Release

Canterbury Cathedral to offer tours in British Sign Language (BSL)

On the 29th December 1170, Thomas Becket was murdered at Canterbury Cathedral; from that day forward, the Cathedral has attracted many millions of pilgrims, as told most famously in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The Cathedral is visited by millions to this day and the story of this famous landmark, with all of its long history and the gruesome tale of St Thomas Becket's death, still captures the imagination of tourists and visitors. Currently the Cathedral offers tours with professional guides in eleven different languages; and from the 29th December 2007, it will also be offering signed tours of the Cathedral for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On the 29th December, Ms Bridget Bree will give two British Sign Language (BSL) tours of the Cathedral, at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm; each tour will last approx 1¼ hours. After the tour, visitors will be invited to attend Evensong (starting at 3:15 pm) during which the congregation, holding candles, will process to the site of St Thomas Becket's murder, which occurred in the Martyrdom of the Cathedral in the late afternoon.

The Cathedral's Director of Visits Therese Heslop said today 'Improving facilities for the disabled is very much part of our visitor management, as we want to share this very special building, and all that it stands for, with all our visitors. We were thrilled that Bridget Bree, one of our Guides, agreed to help with special BSL days, which we hope to hold regularly throughout the year. Bridget chose the 29th December 2007 for her first signed tour as it is the anniversary of St Thomas Becket's murder, and therefore that day has a special significance for us.' Bridget learned BSL as a result of working with a theatre company which included deaf actors, and she has a degree in Deaf Studies from Middlesex University.

Future BSL days are planned with guided tours throughout the day followed by BSL interpreted Evensong. For dates and more information visit www.canterbury-cathedral.org, which includes a short BSL video. Pre-booking of tours will be essential, as BSL tours will not be available every day.

To book a place on a tour, please contact the Visits office on 01227 762862 (Fax 01227 865222) or email visits@canterbury-cathedral.org.

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- 1 For further information, please contact Lisa Rowe on 01227 865221 or Christopher Robinson on 01227 865282.
- 2 According to the RNID, 9 million people in the UK are registered as hard of hearing or deaf (www.rnid.org.uk)