

INTERVIEW: Liverpool Cathedral to hold city's first Passion Plays in Holy Week

by Laura Davis, [Liverpool Daily Post \(http://ldp3.liverpooldailypost.co.uk\)](http://ldp3.liverpooldailypost.co.uk)

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Liverpool Cathedral is telling the story of Christ's crucifixion in the city's first Passion plays, Laura Davis reports

FRIENDSHIP, betrayal, a weeping mother and a man coming back from the dead – the Easter story has all the elements of a soap opera plotline. But it's the one of the best known tales in history – also one of the most controversial – so how can it be told in a way that will encourage people to see it through fresh eyes?

Liverpool Cathedral associate organist Dan Bishop has taken inspiration from the past to stage the Easter story in a new way.

He and co-writer Mark Lovelady, a teacher at Glenburn Sports college in Skelmersdale, have created Liverpool's first Passion plays, to be performed over three days during Holy Week.

Visitors will be taken through different spaces within the Cathedral as the story is relayed through a combination of liturgy, new writing and music.

The cast is made up of regular worshippers, choristers and members of the Cathedral's Overcrofters youth group.

Most recent Passion play revivals – including the BBC's live televised version in Manchester in 2006 and Hollywood actor Michael Sheen's Passion in his hometown of Port Talbot, Wales, in 2011 – have taken place outside in the streets.

"Rather than use other places in the city we thought the Cathedral was built because this

story happened so it's the ideal place to use for it," says Bishop.

"We want people to experience the story how it might have been and to ask questions about it and themselves."

The first 40-minute performance, on Monday, March 25, begins in the Cathedral Well, where Jesus (played by Mark Lewis, a member of the Cathedral's catering staff) expels the money changers from the temple on his return to Jerusalem for Passover.

Jesus's washing of his disciples feet will take place near the font beforeact one concludes with Judas Iscariot considering his betrayal of Christ to the chief priests under the Nave Bridge.

"We will leave the audience with a question and if they want to find out the answer they will have to come back again for the following two nights," says Bishop.

Tuesday's performance begins where Monday's concluded and takes in the Last Supper, which will take place in the central space between the choir stalls and incorporate words from the Eucharistic prayer as well as two soloists singing the anthem The Father's Love by Simon Lole.

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