





LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Articles for the March edition are due by **Sunday 11th February**

Editorial Notes

It's now February, but on pages 8&9 we have Pat's report on Compton Dundon's Christmas activities at which both St Andrews and the village community were busy with their celebrations.

In the Mission Church, celebrations of a different kind were taking place, as Shaun and Alice were married in traditional Caribbean style and the front cover pictures them behind an arch of flowers and greenery.

It was a privilege to share in their special day, and we wish them both all the best for the future.

Some benefice worshippers started the new year with a walk to Walton windmill and back to Walton church where we enjoyed refreshments served by Louise Savage. It was a muddy walk in places, due to a safety detour, but walkers and dogs were suitably exercised. (See top picture on back cover).

A big thank you to the cast, production team, and sound and lighting organisers of the Pantomime 'Angel in the wings', which was enjoyed by a 'full house', (O yes it was! or nearly). It gave David a few minutes shuteye on the settee! (picture censored), and it was good to have a young actress from the Mission Church playing Mary, delightfully. Pictures back centre.

Finally on the back are the compilers, losers, and winner of the Afternoon Teas quiz at the Mission Church, alongside others who enjoyed the tea, cake, and fun. Check on the Afternoon Teas for February on page 12.

Sorry, but there is no 'My Faith Journey' this month, but hopefully it will return in March.

Lastly, our prayers go to the family and friends of Liz Sowerby who we will miss greatly. Roger.

Rector's Letter

Dear Friends,

'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.' Psalm chapter 24
verse 1

During the coming month, we begin the Lenten season, traditionally a period of penitence, prayer and self-reflection. As a benefice, at our Sunday services in Lent we will be exploring what it is to be good stewards of the created world.

I am conscious that issues around the environment and indeed climate change have been prominent in recent years for good reason. Whether you are more of an activist or perhaps even somewhat sceptical on these matters, as Christians we are called and commanded to take good care of the world. Sadly, this care has not perhaps happened in the way God intended and we are now in a position of dealing with a damaged planet, seeking to protect and salvage it for the generations to come.

Christians have a voice in these issues but what I would want to stress is that our emphasis should always be a Godly one looking to the creator seeking his wisdom first and foremost.

There is much that can practically be done, and I am indebted to our benefice eco team for keeping us 'on track' with ideas and plans to conserve the earth. If you are interested in looking more specifically at the benefice eco action plan, I am sure one of our PCC secretaries will be delighted to share this with you. The team have put this together to help us all take active responsibility for our churches, our churchyards and our collective footprint on the planet.

At the heart of these conversations, I am always reminded of the first verse of Psalm 24 (quoted above) that ultimately the earth is

indeed the Lord's. Unfortunately, sometimes we have this the other way round assuming that the earth is ours and we can invite God into our plans, should we wish to!

This Lent, alongside our sermon series, the house groups will be discussing the weekly themes and please, if you are able, consider joining one of these groups even if just for the 6 weeks of Lent. As we take time to theologically reflect on our own attitudes and care of the created world during our sermons and house groups, please also take time to offer this to God in prayer and ask him to show you what practical steps you can take in response.

Yours, with my love and prayers,

Ana

Lent Sermon Series

During the Lenten period, beginning in the middle of February, each of our churches will be following a short sermon series: 'Good Stewards of God's good earth: a Christian response to the climate emergency.'

With issues around climate change and environmental damage to our planet dominating our headlines, how might we as Christians respond theologically and practically.

Alongside our Sunday sermons, there will be an opportunity to discuss these issues further at our weekly house groups to which new members are always welcome. In addition, look out for details of Soulful Nature, a group who will be using both walking and study to reflect on the created world in 2024.

Ana Lawrence

Bishop's Letter

Our precious gift

As Christians, while we may look to reduce our own carbon footprint, we are called to be stewards and witnesses of a much more radical resource. The clue is in the word 'ecology'.

'Eco' comes from the Greek word oikos, meaning house, or dwelling place. Ecology is partly about our responsibility to recognise the precious gift of the Earth, as our dwelling place: to be thankful, and play our part. God made humankind to care for the earthly world: Jesus amplifies the call, as He uses 'nature' as the sign of how we can live in order to flourish and to fulfil God's will.

'Logy' comes from a Greek word logos interpreted as reason, the ordering of knowledge, logic. In John's Gospel, logos is a word to describe Jesus – through whom all things are made and from whom all true knowledge comes. Logos is the word, the source of all goodness and grace, for every human life, and for all of creation.

It is the 'logos', the word, who inhabits our lives, our creation – inviting us to recognise His light, and allow it to overcome the darkness of our own limited concerns and agendas. We meet the logos in scripture, in worship, in prayer, and deeper reflection.

In Jesus, as logos, we can find the wisdom, the resources and the commitment to play our part in caring for creation. We are able to invite others to recognise the deeper truths about Eco, our common dwelling place, and to see more clearly how we join with others to work out what to do, how to live, and honour the gift of life that we receive through Him. The Logos is the possibility of good news for humankind and for the Earth.

What a responsibility each Christian disciple is called to bear!
And what grace can be ours to enable us to fulfil our calling, and help all of God's children become caught up in the praise and

prayer that gives true life to our dwelling place, and to exercise our stewardship appropriately.

Read John 1v1-14. Become an ECO-warrior – committed our common dwelling place – through celebrating the power and presence of the LOGOS.

ECOLOGY: we know it makes sense.

Bishop Alastair Redfern

Assistant Bishop for the Diocese of Bath and Wells

Deanery Pastoral Reorganisation

You will have read in previous editions of Life of the difficult conversations that are happening across the 25 parishes of the Glastonbury deanery. As a reminder, the numbers of stipendiary (paid) clergy has to be reduced from 6.5 to 5 over the next few years as the current levels of clergy provision is simply no longer affordable. The deanery synod, to which each parish elects representatives have looked at some proposed options and over the last few months each PCC including those in this benefice have been asked to indicate and preference from amongst the options.

As I write, we are preparing for the January 2024 synod meeting, which will consider the PCC responses and hopefully recommend the option that carries most support to the diocese for decision.

If you would like to know more, please talk to your deanery synod representative. These are difficult and challenging discussions driven by the tough financial reality in which our diocese has to operate. Please hold all those involved in your prayers. As Area Dean, with responsibility for seeing this process through, I would particularly appreciate prayers for wisdom and grace.

Ana Lawrence

Walton Matters

Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

Psalm 8. N.S.V.

It already seems a long while ago but December was such a lovely time in our churches and we were all blessed in many ways. Messy Church kicked us off on Dec 5th with a large number of children alongside parents, grandparents or carers and we heard the Christmas message through word, crafts, songs and fellowship.

A group of us had a session painting over 200 pebbles with stars which were hidden around the village during the following week and a half. This was following the theme of 'Follow the Star, sing a new song' from the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Walton school held their Carol service in church on the 14th and were led so well by the year 6 children who are this year's leavers. Our coffee morning was also very special as the school choir came and sang for us all the songs they would be singing in the afternoon to their families, one of which was appropriately Follow the star. Well done to the children and staff for such an uplifting and enjoyable day.

The Church had been decorated beautifully by many ready for all the special services we had prior to Christmas day. We even had a bright new star shining on the tower. Thank you all so much for all your help and skills.

Our church Carol service was on the 17th December and this was very well attended. A wonderful start to Christmas week. We were fortunate to have a crib service and a midnight mass on Christmas eve and both had an amazing turnout. Such a wonderful opportunity to sit back, draw breath and immerse ourselves with the true meaning of Christmas amongst all the frantic rushing around. Thank you to Ana, David and Rachel for leading us and enabling us to enjoy the season so much.

On New Year's Day 13 people were led by Roger on a walk around Walton. Blowing cobwebs away and enjoying a catch up with each other. Refreshments were had in the Church afterwards.

A big thank you to Jane Tompsett for inviting us all to help celebrate her 65th birthday on the 15th December. Many of us went by coach via Monkton Elms for coffee and a break to Exmouth where we met another group of friends for a river cruise. The weather was wonderful and the cream tea served was excellent. We sang along with Andy and Louise Savage, Suzie Williams and Steven Lynas on our way back up the estuary. What a lovely day. Thank you Jane for letting us share with you.

We will be having a friends meeting to discuss our fund raising events for the coming year but our first event will be a quiz evening in church on the 23rd February at 7.00. This will be the 1st quiz for our quiz master Liz Brown after her illness so we all look forward to this very much indeed.

Flower rota.

3rd February. Jo Pain.

Lent. No flowers.

Christmas at St Andrew's

Christmas begins in Compton Dundon when the Churchwardens drive off to Osborne's Christmas Trees in Combe Hill Woods, trailer attached, to select and transport this year's church tree. Amongst a vast array of sizes and varieties there was one that stood out as being just right, and this year we took ownership of a beautiful 8-footer. Next step – decorating it, and the rest of the church, which is always a fun afternoon activity, helped along with Christmas refreshments.

Our first Christmas outreach was village carol singing. This year we introduced the theme 'Follow the Star' and beautiful stars (crafted by Celia) were placed in windows where the group would gather to sing. Thank you for bringing joy to homes on both sides of the village. A collection was made for CHARIS, the charity supporting refugees in Taunton.

Our church Carol Service took place in a stunning candlelit church and the cold evening did not prevent a good turnout who all enjoyed the carols and Bible readings telling the Christmas story. Followed by homemade mince pies and the village's own mulled cider. Thank you to the readers, one or two who had not read in church before, and all of whom did a sterling job.

On the Friday evening before Christmas the Church joined with the Village Hall committee for our inaugural village Film Night, the first time of using the brand new screen in the hall. 60 people of all ages enjoyed 'Farmageddon' and the popcorn, biscuits and hot chocolate provided by St Andrew's.

Another full church for the Christmas Eve Crib Service and as Ana and Rachel recounted the events leading to Jesus' birth, children helped by appearing as the characters to bring the story to life. To add authenticity there was even a real-life baby Jesus!

So on to Christmas Day ... how lovely to welcome both regulars and visitors to celebrate Jesus' birth on this most special of days with the Christmas Communion Service.

Finally, I am writing this not long after Epiphany Sunday, when Rachel led a lively discussion about the Three Wise Men (were there really 3? Maybe 12?) She was assisted by 2 year old Ben, who came to each pew to show us the camels who transported them, and was very interested in looking at the other raffia Nativity figures at the end of the service.

A wonderful Christmas season at St Andrew's and we hope and pray that some of those who shared it with us will come and join the church family again soon.

Pat King, St Andrew's, Compton Dundon.



Bereavement Resource

Being bereaved can cause us to feel a myriad of emotions and experience a tangle of thoughts, there is no normal or right way to feel following bereavement and most people find themselves feeling a whole range of emotions. There may be times when it becomes difficult to make sense of those feelings, but friends and family are often all the support we need. Sometimes however, there can be times when a little more is needed.

In support of those who may need a little more or just want to further understand the grief process they, or a loved one, is experiencing The National Bereavement Alliance in collaboration with Good Grief have launched a 'Grief Support Guide'.

This document can be found online at:

https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Grief-Support-Guide_Eng3-Nov-23.pdf and for those of you who would prefer a paper copy please speak with one of the Church Wardens who have paper copies available.

Stephanie Shortland, (Mission Church)

Afternoon Tea and Quiz

On a cold winter day a few of us turned up for the monthly Afternoon Tea in January. We sat drinking tea, eating cake, doing a well thought out quiz and of course chatting about a variety of things. All are welcome to come along to the February Afternoon Tea.



swcd-churches.org.uk

February Afternoon Tea

Join us on

Tuesday 15th February

2-30pm

Mission Church Street

Gillian Williams from Compton
Dundon will be giving us a talk on



Fairtrade



Delyth Wride and The Team

Lent

Lent 2024 begins in mid February; there are many customs and traditions associated with the season. The 40-day period of Lent is used by many as an opportunity to give up something pleasurable, for example chocolate, but often only for Lent. I would not discourage this as it shows that we are capable of changing and may lead to a more permanent difference. The idea of giving up something for a set time has spread with Veganuary and alcohol-free months in the hope of changing behaviour on a more permanent basis, eating less meat (incidentally also associated with Lent) or reducing alcohol consumption. For Lent 2024 consider taking time to pray and reflect on our relationship with the world around us. How can we become better at caring for creation and improving our lives and the lives of others through healthy, eco-friendly and sustainable living? Take actions that bring a real benefit to nature and help improve the environment for people and for ourselves; for example, cleaner energy improves air quality. Use Lent to challenge those ways our lifestyles and behaviour that threaten the wellbeing of God's earth. Look out for further thoughts on this topic throughout Lent, and also for practical ideas in Lifeline.

Repair Cafés

Members of the Eco Church group with others have been involved in setting up the Street Repair Café. Thank you to all those who have volunteered to help, more volunteers would be welcome, email: streetrepaircafe@gmail.com or come to the first session on Saturday 24th February 10 - 12 at the Quaker Meeting House, 36 High Street BA16 0EB. Sessions in Street will be on the 4th Saturday of the month. Compton Dundon church members continue to help with and support the Compton Dundon Repair Café which meets on the 2nd Saturday in the Village Hall. Contact them if you are interested in volunteering there.

Sue Ripley (Street) for Eco Church group

BUSY BUILDINGS – A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE

Those of you who regularly pass the Mission Church in Street during the week may have noticed that the car park is often full and the building busy with groups and activities, both from the church and local community organisations.

It is great, I hope you will agree, to see the building used in this way as we seek to be a church that 'love our communities', whilst the hire fees paid by those using the building bring in much needed income for our mission and ministry. But it is not just the Mission Church, our other three churches are being increasingly used for all sorts of things from bellringing to coffee drinking, prayer meetings to concerts and all are also open each day to welcome visitors, pilgrims and worshippers.

As well as sharing this as an encouragement as we seek to make our churches places for everyone in our communities, this increasing busyness does create a few practical issues, particularly for church family members! Please read on for details of how we are responding and how you can help to ensure things run smoothly in all our churches.

Booking your meeting or service. Our churches are, first and foremost, places for worship, ministry and witness and this should remain our priority. To make sure that you can always get access when you need it, please ensure that you book any meeting or service that you are organising via the church office, ensuring that they know all the time you need including any extra for setup, rehearsals etc. These will be added to the church diary which will also help us to advertise what you are planning via Lifeline etc.

Leaving it how you found it. The chances are that there will be another group or activity that are following on from you and so please return the chairs, tables etc back to the way you found them or check whether something else is required. You would be amazed at the number of times our wardens and caretakers have to move furniture during the week and anything you could do to make their job easier would, I am sure, be hugely appreciated.

Leaving stuff. With more and more people through our doors each week, leaving cards or other 'stuff' for others to collect from our buildings increasingly risks them going missing or getting lost. If possible, please try to deliver things directly or give it to the church office or a warden, labelling it with the full name and church of the recipient, to reduce that risk. Please try and avoid leaving stuff or publicity material just because it might be useful or interesting for 'somebody'. Please, instead, pass such items onto a charity shop or sell them on behalf of the church (see the article on 'stuff' in a previous edition of 'Life'). If you are aware of an event or activity that you think may be interesting to others in the church, why not consider writing an article about it in a future edition of 'Life'?

Invite others in. If you are as proud as I am of our church buildings, why not invite other groups that you know of to come and use them too? There are details on our website or in our buildings of how you can do this.

Thank you for your understanding as we work together.

Ana Lawrence

DREAMING BIG AT HOLY TRINITY WALTON

Over the last few months, the Parochial Church Council at Holy Trinity Walton, supported by a small working group of which I am part, have been dreaming about what alterations they could make to the church building to both enhance our worship and better serve the community in which we live.

A few years ago, some temporary changes were made, including removing the pews from the chancel, but at the time, this was done as a short-term measure whilst more detailed longer-term plans were drawn up.

What is proposed is still very much in the discussion stages, but we are being encouraged to 'dream big' as well as using the opportunity to address some of the longer-term issues that successive external 'Quinquennial Inspections' of the building at Holy Trinity have revealed.

As plans emerge, we will share more details, but we are deliberately not rushing this process, making sure that we have considered all options and thought carefully and prayed hard about what we eventually propose. Watch this space and please pray.

Kevin Lawrence

Wednesday evening bible study

As some of you may remember, last year a lent course was run on Wednesday evenings at the Mission Church. We are planning to pick up this group again (and anyone else who would like to come - all would be most welcome) from 7th February at 7.30pm at the MC (probably in the kitchen). Initially, we will be studying Desmond Tutu's book, 'In God's Hands'. You can come to as many or as few sessions as you like, and the sessions would be led by David Hatrey or Vanessa Adams and Kay Savage. David will be setting the questions and overseeing the running of the group. The intention is to continue as a house group after Easter, if there is sufficient interest (with a break in summer). If you wanted to buy a copy of the book in advance and start reading it, that would be fine, or we may be able to buy it for you (about£3.50). If you would like to come, please contact David, Vanessa or myself. Kay Savage

TIME FOR YOUR ANNUAL REVIEW?

We all get those annual letters or emails, don't we, telling us it is time to review this that or the other. Insurances, car tax, memberships of whatever clubs and societies we belong to etc etc. And, more often than not, the same communication also tells us that the price has gone up! Maybe we also get annual letters with better personal news? Perhaps they tell of a pay rise or an increase in the pension we receive?

Such reviews, we know, involve change. Yet when, I wonder, was the last time that we undertook a review and changed our financial giving to the life and ministry of our church? Maybe you give regularly via standing order or through the envelope scheme but, now you come to think of it, it has been a number of years since you last reviewed or increased the amount you give?

If that is you, why not treat this article as a prompt to review your giving alongside the other reviews that will come your way in the coming weeks and months? Could you consider increasing your regular gift in line with the last salary or pension increase you received, or, if it has been a while since your last review, perhaps look to bring your giving back in line with recent changes to some of your other income and expenditure?

Your church is not immune to the rising costs that we all have experienced in recent years, and we depend entirely on the giving of the church family in order to finance the work we do.

Is it time to review? If you have any questions or need any help please speak, in confidence to your Church Treasurer (Julie Gordon at Compton Dundon or Sonia Beaty at Walton or Street).

Kevin Lawrence For the benefice stewardship group

Women's Day Conference

This year's women of God conference, 'Rise up' will be on Saturday 17th February in the Gateway centre, Yeovil. Those of us who have attended in previous years can testify to what a great day this is. If you're interested in going along as part of a group, please speak to Ana or book via <https://womenofgodconference.org.uk/> Tickets are £30 or £25 if you are over aged 65. Ana Lawrence

New Wine Summer Conference

It's great that a group from the church family at SWCD Churches will be going along to New Wine this year following its return to the Bath and West Showground near Shepton Mallet. If you would like to join us either on team or as a delegate, either camping or as a day visitor it is not too late to book. For more information, please talk to Ana or Kevin Lawrence or book via New Wine <https://www.new-wine.org/events/newwine24/>

If you are going, please also let Ana and Kevin know as, because of GDPR, New Wine cannot share details of bookings. Ana Lawrence

APCM reports

By the time you read this, these reports will be being prepared for all aspects of the ministry and mission of our churches. Please do 3 things:

1. If you have been asked to write a report, please get it back by the deadline.
2. When the reports are made public, please read them and encourage those who wrote them.
3. When the APCM dates are published, please come along to encourage each other for all that God has done.

Thank you. Ana Lawrence

Manna

Making space for nature

Across Bath and Wells, our churches are working with local communities and schools to care for the environment, with more than a third of churches in the diocese engaged with the Wilder Churches project. Launched in 2021 with Somerset Wildlife Trust, it offers free online training sessions to help communities learn more about the land in their churchyards and burial grounds, appreciate its wildlife value, and explore ways to enhance the biodiversity.

Churchyards are often the oldest enclosed parcels of land in a parish. Unaffected by agricultural changes, they often have diverse ecosystems containing wildflowers, ancient trees, a variety of wildlife, and provide habitats for numerous species. These natural ecosystems contribute to clean air and water, and often provide good carbon storage.

Sara Emmett, Climate Justice & Environment Adviser for the Diocese of Bath and Wells says, "Our churchyards form a network of pockets of space for nature within the heart of our communities and for our communities. They are vital for species and habitat survival as well as for people to connect with our world. Every churchyard that supports nature in its care and management is contributing to this bigger picture and even the smallest actions make a difference."

Hundreds have taken part in the Wilder Churches online training sessions and get-togethers or watched the recorded sessions.

This year the diocesan Environment and Everyday Faith teams plan to hold interactive sessions in parishes, to provide young people with the opportunity to learn more about caring for God's earth with practical sessions on constructing bird boxes, bug hotels, and more. Find out more at

bathandwells.org.uk/environment

Through Christ, you can conquer your habit.

'THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT ... JESUS.' Hebrews 3:1 NL

Let's say you're trying to lose weight, but you love doughnuts. How can you overcome temptation? By repeating, 'I must not eat doughnuts, I must not eat doughnuts, I must not eat doughnuts'? No, the more you think about doughnuts, the more you're going to want them. Instead you must focus on something else (or someone else – Jesus!) who can help you overcome the temptation. Your problem is not in the doughnut shop, it's in your mind. That's where victory is won or lost.

Paul writes: 'Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect' (Romans 12:1-2 NLT).

You can lock yourself up in a room and still think about doughnuts. On the other hand, you can get your mind on Jesus, draw strength from Him, and drive victoriously past every doughnut shop in town. The same principle applies to any habit you want to break and any sin you want to conquer. Does victory come easily, or overnight? No, Satan tempted Jesus repeatedly in the wilderness, and he'll keep tempting you until he realises his strategies no longer work. 'Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him' (Matthew 4:11 NKJV). Through Christ you can conquer your habit.

From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: ucb@ucb.co.uk UCB is short for United Christian Broadcasters, who also produce Christian radio and TV programmes available on DAB digital radio, TV and online. Details at ucbmedia.co.uk

