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LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Articles for the June edition are due by **Sunday 12th May**

Editorial Notes

We don't need to be reminded how much rain we have had these past winter months, but the high river level shown on the front cover was photographed on the benefice walk on Easter bank holiday which you can read about on page 8 and 9.

All 4 benefice churches are represented on the back, the 3 Compton Dundon crosses being taken down, Annie Makoni with her children Promise and Ephraim during a recent visit to Holy Trinity Walton, which you can read about in Walton Matters on page 11. Some Street Scouts at Street Parish church whilst attending a morning service to celebrate St Georges day, and Neville Broughton playing the Mission Church clavonova to entertain the folk enjoying the Afternoon Teas. Roger.

**"Why do you look for the living
among the dead? He is not here;
He has risen."**

St Andrews churchyard on Easter
Sunday

Gill Williams



Rector's Letter

Dear Friends,

'Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' Romans chapter 12 verse 12.

May has become the month in our year with a special focus on prayer. The global prayer initiative 'Thy Kingdom Come', running from the 9th – 19th May seeks to draw people together from different communities, backgrounds and churches to pray. As a benefice, we will be hosting a dedicated prayer event in the parish church, in Street on the 18th May (please see details elsewhere in the magazine).

Prayer should surely underpin all that we do and are as Christians throughout our lives, whether gathering to pray in small groups, house groups, prayer meetings, alone or elsewhere, our calling to pray is key to our personal relationship with God.

Sometimes, prayer can feel a real struggle when we don't see answers or cannot easily find a way through a particular situation, despite our prayers, but we have a faithful God who understands us and knows the deepest desires of our hearts. Be faithful in prayer.

In addition to the prayer that we will be offering together on the 18th of May, I want to offer some other things in the life of SWCD Churches in the coming weeks which we can underpin with prayer.

Our three PCC's will be gathering for a day away on the 11th of May to reflect, dream and plan together for the future life of the benefice.

Later in the month, we will be holding a community open afternoon in Holy Trinity, Walton as we share our reordering plans.

At the very end of the month, we look forward to the bi-annual flower festival in St Andrew's Compton Dundon (details elsewhere in the magazine).

We are a busy church; there's a lot going on and I'm so grateful for the many people who give of their time and energy to make such things happen. But can we also be known as a praying church, a church that roots and grounds all that it does in prayer before God.

Let us pray.

With my love and prayers, Ana.



Garden Plants available

Spruce up your garden this spring with the St Andrew's plant sale. A selection of plants available to buy in the church porch in Compton Dundon every day from now until mid-June. Donations of garden plants also welcome. All proceeds to the church



For more information, please contact Helen Thomas (Compton Dundon)

Kevin Lawrence

The Bishop's Letter

A challenge offered

There's a fascinating exercise I've often undertaken with roomfuls of church members. I've asked them the question 'To what age do you trace back the beginnings of your Christian faith?' The results are almost always the same. About 40% of us think that our Christian journey started at some point before the age of four. Another 40% of us trace the beginnings of our faith back to when we were less than eleven. A further 20% say before we were eighteen. While only one in five of us report having embarked on the journey of faith as adults.

The findings I've described should give us all pause for thought. For most people, the start of our Christian journey (even if we've dropped out for a while in adolescence and early adulthood) starts in childhood.

So if we want to grow our churches and transform our communities this suggests that it's into the faith development of children and young people that we should be putting our energies, priority and resources.

Our data suggests that more than half our churches have no young person worshipping with them on a Sunday morning. I realise, of course, how hard it is for churches to compete with the demands of football, seeing the extended family, doing any of the many things that are otherwise crowded out of busy family lives. Yet experience shows that when we offer worship at other times and in formats that are attractive to children, young people and families they do come.

This year I'm challenging all our benefices to grow their average weekly attendance by one child (net). If we could sustain such an

achievement over a number of years the impact would transform our churches, our lives and our experience. The support services of our diocese offer extensive assistance to enable local churches to think what could work with the resources you have, the passions and skills you possess and the reality of the situation where you are. Do ask for their help.

Are you willing to take up the challenge I've offered?

Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath & Wells

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PREPARING FOR ORDINATION AS PRIEST

It is hard to believe that I have been with you nearly a year already! When I came to you in June straight after my ordination as Deacon, you all welcomed me and loved me and made me feel right at home! I very much wish to thank you all for your kindness. My thoughts now turn to my Ordination to the Priesthood at Wells Cathedral on June 29th at 3pm. I would love to see some familiar faces there to support me and the other Bath and Wells Deacons as we celebrate this wonderful day. It is always a joy to see the Cathedral full on these special days. I will be presiding my first Eucharist on Sunday 30th of June at Compton Dundon, which is a benefice service. It would be great to see you at either or both of these services. I would like to thank you all for your love and support over this first year and especially to Ana and David for their care and support and I look forward to walking with you in the next years to come.

Sister Rachel Pengelly

When we have more details of any arrangements for the service at Wells Cathedral, we will let you know.

EASTER AT ST ANDREW'S

Easter for us began the day before Palm Sunday, when we had our annual BIG Spring Clean in the church. Every nook and cranny, every piece of furniture and everything else in sight was lovingly dusted and polished. Thanks to the small but hardworking group of volunteers who made such a difference to this special place.



The following day, Palm Sunday, our service began with a procession up the church path with palm crosses while singing 'Hosanna' along with a trumpet accompaniment. A reminder of Christ's entry into Jerusalem when he was greeted by cheering crowds waving palm branches. Good Friday's church service included a moving Passion Play involving congregation members playing the parts of the main characters in the Crucifixion story.

Following the service, we had our traditional walk up to Lollover Hill to plant the crosses and share a reflection. This year the path was muddy and it was certainly windy at the summit of the hill. Nevertheless, as ever such a special and poignant thing to do, and lovely to be joined by members from other churches in the Benefice. The crosses have remained in place throughout Easter week and the week after, a symbolic sharing of faith and the great sacrifice made for all of us.

'There is a green hill far away...'

Finally, David and Rachel led the celebrations on Easter day. Hidden numbered eggs in church told the

Easter story when opened, and the Easter egg hunt in the church grounds after the service was enjoyed by those participating.



Today, the Sunday after Easter, we sang

'Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.'

A message not just for Easter but the whole year round.

Pat King, Compton Dundon.

The Benefice Easter Monday Walk

For the Easter Monday morning bank holiday Benefice walk we were very blessed to have mostly bright blue skies, sunshine and pleasant temperatures. Somewhat a contrast to the weather we have had before and since. There was a real feel of Spring as we set off for a walk around the village of Baltonsborough. We took the scenic river path from St Dunstan's church heading towards Barton St David. The walk passes through fields, orchards and allowed us to be nose-peeking at the back of folk's gardens.

The river was in full flow having been swollen by overnight rain. The arches of the wooden bridge were full to the top. There looked to be the possibility of a dam effect causing upstream flooding, and indeed some fields had quite a bit of standing water in them. We were warned by some other walkers of the need for waders ahead. At the next gateway there was indeed a large puddle which had to be overcome by various athletic feats. Steve leaping onto a dry island, Andy and Glynys managing to get two dogs across relatively dry. Sue and Jenny edging along the rail of a 5-bar gate, and Pat vaulting the gate in spectacular style.

We could not get much further up the river path as a new waterfall had appeared, blocking the way. Faced with this torrent of water we decided the sensible thing would be to find an alternative route along the local road. Hopefully a drier route ...or so we thought. A passing runner told us of a deep puddle ahead and indeed the road was closed to traffic further along by flooding. We watched to see a supermarket van manage to inch very slowly safely through to the other side.

Fortunately, the flooded section didn't prevent us from getting back into the village through a combination of field footpaths and quiet lanes. The dogs Willow and Jasper loved chasing around in one of the fields. Their owners were less thrilled by how muddy

they managed to get. On the way through the village, we followed some of the platinum jubilee heritage trail which gave some of the history of local buildings, businesses and local families.

Some of us seemed to have different step counts (we have different leg lengths I guess) but after something like 3 to 4 miles we reached the church again where we had a quick look inside. Sadly, we were a week late for the cake stall.

Everyone agreed it had been so good to get out for a couple of hours in God's creation enjoying talking, walking and taking in our surroundings in this lovely local area. Tim Hindle.

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Confirmation

Maybe you have recently rediscovered your faith, have seen your faith growing, or have never had the opportunity to publicly declare the faith that you have.

A Confirmation service gives you the opportunity to do just that as well as being the formal 'liturgy' that the Church of England uses to admit adults, who were perhaps baptised as children, into the faith and as full communicant members of the church.

If you would be interested in being confirmed, please have a word with me. The service will take place, later in the year, in Wells Cathedral, and it would be great to have a group of people who had prepared together and were confirmed together from SWCD churches.

Ana Lawrence

Walton Matters

It is not angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: "What of mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet."

Hebrews 2. V's 5-8. N.I.V.

What amazing Easter services we had with the Church looking beautiful filled with flowers. It was so lovely to be together for a Passover meal on Maundy Thursday. Also, the last hour at the cross was a time for quiet and contemplation. Up lifting and joyful was our Easter Sunday service. He has risen indeed. Alleluia.

Thank you so much to Ana, David and Rachel that made all our lent journeys so meaningful.

Some of our journey through Lent was as follows.

A successful messy Church on the 26th March with the children building an Easter Garden showing empty crosses and empty tomb plus Easter crafts and bible story.

The next messy Church on the 14th May sees us going wild so we will be praying for a dry day so we can be in the churchyard.

The school held a lovely service and also a small group sang for our Thursday coffee morning which lightened our hearts.

Beautiful voices and angelic faces shining out of them. A comment from one child to the head teacher was " I think we might have done something wrong as several ladies were crying " Mrs Toal replied "They were tears of joy and not sadness.

Sunday the 14th April we held a very successful cream tea afternoon and it was wonderful to welcome so many friends old and new. Over 40 of us shared delicious scones and lots of conversation. Thank you to everyone who made it possible and for all who attended.

It was such a joy to welcome Annie Makoni along with Promise and Ephraim at Holy Trinity Walton on the 16th April. After sharing a lovely supper Annie told us of her work and passion to save young people from a life of gang and substance abuse on the streets of Harare. Along with photos we heard some sad life stories but also some very happy life changing stories. Annie told us of some of the work they do at One Hope and some of God's answers to prayers. We also had an opportunity to buy some of the amazing craft work they make from recycled materials. We continue to hold Annie, Malvern and the team in our hearts and our prayers.

Our next fundraising event will be June 15th when we will be having a fun day in the churchyard. More details next month.

Flower rota.

11th May. Jane Doyle.

25th May. Liz Selway.

Sandra Gristock

New Wine United 2024

If you have booked to attend New Wine 2024 this summer on the Bath & West showground in Shepton Mallet please let Kevin or I know.

If you are going you should have registered to be part of our church group but, because of GDPR rules, we won't know who's going unless you also let us know.

It would be great to get together before we go away, to plan to eat together and other such good things.

If you haven't yet booked, it's not too late. If you don't want to camp you can travel in by the day and if you're worried about going on your own, please know there will be a group of others to 'hang out with. See you there! Ana Lawrence

My Faith Journey

In 2021 I had a stroke that changed my life! I get snatches of memory from my life before the stroke but I remember all the important things in life such as my faith in Jesus, and my family.

I lost a big part of my eyesight from the stroke but I didn't lose sight of Jesus. Reading is difficult now so Fleur reads the bible to me. The mid-week Communion Service has been very helpful in helping me maintain my faith. It is difficult for me to hold focus for a long time in busy, noisy environments but this service is short (usually 35 minutes) and with the assistance of a large print hymn book I can still enjoy singing. The cuppa and companionship after the service helps me feel accepted with my disabilities and I look forward to Wednesday.

Throughout my life I have tried to remain happy and positive, to count my blessings in difficult times. Singing this hymn, I was taught as a boy in my Baptist Church has sustained me – I hope it will inspire you too.....

***When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.***

***Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God hath done;
Count your blessings, name them one by one:
Count your blessings, see what God hath done.***

***Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.***

***When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.***

***So, amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.***

(Baptist Hymnal, 1991 – Johnson Oatman, Jr.)

Peter Tudor (Street)

.....

April Afternoon Tea

The afternoon started with one of our attendees playing some piano music, while we connected with each other by listening and talking.

A couple of people had asked about 'Soulful Nature', as they arrived. Luckily Rachel, our curate, was there and was able to enlighten us about this SWCD church group.

While these things were happening, Roger took a few photographs.

Ana, our rector, asked for a volunteer to take on the role of organising speakers and activities for the group. ***Please contact Ana, if you think this might be something that you might like to do.***

When we get together on Thursday 16th May, at 2-30pm, in the Mission Church, we hope to have a speaker, as well as the usual refreshments and time to talk with each other. Watch for more information in Life Line, on notice boards and on the SWCD website.

Pam Harmsworth

SHARING GOOD NEWS WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS

Leaving a legacy in your will to your church

Talking about money and our mortality in the same article is never going to be easy but please read on....

Have you considered leaving money to support the ongoing mission and ministry of your church in your will? In the last year alone, research has found that over £4bn was left to charities in wills and this figure is rising year on year. Each of our churches are what is called 'excepted charities' and, as such, are able to receive legacies in exactly the same way as any other charity. Many people have already decided to continue to support causes that are important to them through a legacy. At SWCD churches, such gifts have always been important to us, allowing, for example, the recent reordering of the Parish Church in Street and the planned reordering of St Andrews Compton Dundon, as well as the electrification of the iconic Walton church tower clock. Through a legacy from the 19th century, we are also able to support people in need in Street every year through the work of the Cox's charity.

Supporting your church through a gift in your will is a much simpler process than many fear. If you already have a will in place, you can amend it to add a charitable donation or, if you have not written a will, speak to a solicitor or other will writing service such as the Charities Aid Foundation

(<https://www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving/long-term-giving/legacies>) about doing so. Your gift will help to ensure that the church continues to thrive into the future and serve the next generations. We want to mention two more things:

Many people want to leave money for a specific project in the church and this is entirely understandable. However please have a word with Ana the Rector or a church warden to discuss your idea before writing it into your will. We hope you'll be with us for many more years to come, and so it might be that plans and priorities will have changed before your will comes into force.

These conversations can be really helpful in making sure your wishes are clear and can be honoured.

If you feel able, please let us as Treasurers know, in confidence that you have made the decision to leave money in your will. It's really helpful to have this information; we will keep it private, but it means we are aware of what is planned.

Thank you for considering this and for reading to the end of an article on money and mortality!

Sonia Beaty and Julie Gordon, Church Treasurers

FIRST GRADUATE OF GLASTON BELL RINGING SCHOOL

The first 'graduate' from the Glaston Bellringing school, based in Holy Trinity Street, has now qualified to ring in local church towers.

The school, set up with the agreement of Street Parochial Church Council in 2023, offers those interested in taking up bell ringing the chance to 'learn the ropes' on the bells in our church tower, with special equipment installed to minimise the noise and any disruption to our neighbours as they practise.

More trainees are currently in the system, including three from Compton Dundon, inspired to try their hand after the recent open event at Saint Andrews, held to encourage bell ringing once the bells are rehung at the church.

It's great that our church is being used to train more local bellringers and if you would be interested in finding out more please contact Mike Palmer, Secretary & General Committee Representative, Glaston Branch, Bath & Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers on 07793 812968 or by email to GlastonBranch.Secretary@bath-wells.org Kevin Lawrence

Collecting things for good causes

We are all being encouraged to recycle more and here are three ways, in each of our churches, that you can recycle more and help those in our communities.

There may well be others and, if you know of something going on that you would like to share, please consider highlighting it in a future edition of 'Life.'

1. Used stamps – Mission Church Street. In the foyer of the Mission Church is a small container in which you can place used British or overseas postage stamps. These are collected to raise money for the Children's Hospice South West (please cut stamps out, leaving around one cm of the envelope or packaging around each stamp). For more information, please contact Carolyn Dulborough at the Mission Church.
2. Old greetings cards – Walton Church. These can be handed to Sandra Gristock at Walton Church and are recycled by a volunteer into new cards that are sold for donations in support of the church.
3. Preloved books – Compton Dundon. A 'village library' has been created at the back of Saint Andrews with preloved books that can be borrowed by villagers. If you have suitable books to donate, please have a word with Gill Williams at Compton Dundon.

We're all for recycling and reusing but would ask that you don't just leave other things in our churches in the hope that 'somebody might find them useful.' If you have things that you would like to find a good home for, please use the local charity

shops as they are much better equipped to handle this than we are!

Finally, if you have things that need repairing, please don't forget that both Compton Dundon and Street now have repair cafes who would be happy to try and help. Kevin Lawrence



WALTON REORDERING – COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In the April edition of 'Life' we shared details of exciting plans for 'reordering' at Holy Trinity Walton. More details of some of the plans and ideas have been shared with the church family at Walton during a Sunday service in March, but we are also planning a community consultation in May with those who live in Walton and others who may be interested.

On the afternoon of Sunday 19 May our plans will be available in church and those involved in the project, including our architect, will be available to discuss what we propose and to answer questions. There will also be an opportunity to leave responses and comments on the day.

We will be advertising this in the local village newsletter and elsewhere but church members, either from Walton or our other congregations across SWCD churches are also most welcome to attend.

Please continue to pray for these exciting, but also daunting plans.

Kevin Lawrence

Thy Kingdom Come – Praying Together

Between Ascension Day and Pentecost each year we are encouraged, along with churches across the world, to give some more time to prayer as part of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative. This is supported by many church leaders, including our Archbishops.

During 'Thy Kingdom Come' we are specifically encouraged to 'pray for five,' prayerfully focusing on five people we know who are not yet Christians and asking God to come into their lives. Please do continue to pray in this way this year. In addition, we are organising a focused afternoon of prayer on Saturday 18 May, in the Parish Church Street.

There is something very powerful about us coming together, as a church family, to pray for specific things, and during the afternoon there will be a number of topics available to focus your prayer. Some will, I know, be unable to come along please be praying where you are at that time. However, if you can come and pray with others during that afternoon there will be an opportunity to 'sign up' for half hour slots (or longer if you want!). My hope is that we can, as a church, be praying continuously during that time for the life and ministry of our churches as well as the five that God may have put on our hearts individually.

Will you join me in this adventure of prayer?

Ana Lawrence

PCC Day Away

On Saturday 11th May, our three Parochial Church Councils (PCC's) and licensed ministers (Clergy and Readers) will be gathering together in Shapwick to pray, reflect, worship, dream and plan together as we consider the broader life and ministry of SWCD Churches.

PCC meetings can sometimes be so full of the day-to-day business of our churches that we do not have time to focus on some of our broader vision, issues or plans. So this day will be a great opportunity to take time away together to both celebrate all that God has been doing and to prayerfully consider the future. I know that PCC members at our last day away found the time of enormous encouragement and benefit and my prayer is that this day will be of equal or greater value.

Please do be praying for our PCCs in all their work and particularly on this day.

Ana Lawrence

Justice, Climate and Politics

When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous... Proverbs 21:15

Politics is a topic often avoided although it has an impact on all our lives. This article is not support for one party or another; it is about issues that, as Christians, we should think about, highlighting some we could discuss with our prospective parliamentary candidates. Christian organisations such as Tearfund, Christian Aid and Churches working for Peace and Justice are challenging us to raise concerns such as those relating to climate and peace.

The climate crisis is unjust because it impacts most on the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world, including the UK. Nationally and internationally farmers are being impacted by disrupted weather patterns. Communities are threatened by famine and conflict. One of the world's youngest nations, South Sudan, is highly vulnerable to the climate crisis and to widespread conflict. Communities have been displaced causing a hunger crisis, making the path to peace harder. Our link parishes in Zambia are affected by changing weather patterns. How could the UK respond? Although we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions these were from a very high level and calculations do not include emissions from imports. More needs to be done if the UK is to reach the Parliament's net zero commitment. The Government has pledged to provide financial support to lower income countries but the amounts are woefully inadequate and the pledges only partially met. Meanwhile companies continue to make large profits from selling fossil fuels. Whether in government or opposition, your future MP can play their part. Talk, or write, to your general election candidates now about the need for:-

- Significantly increased funding (grants, not loans) to support climate vulnerable countries to adapt, mitigate and respond when climate disasters strike in addition to existing UK aid.
- Taxing the profits of fossil fuel companies to help provide this funding.

- Halting all new oil and gas developments in the UK, and investing in good quality, secure green jobs.

The next UK Government could use its voice, money and influence to be a force for peace in the world. For example by:

- Addressing the root causes of wars by tackling economic inequality and the climate crisis.
- Spending more of the UK aid and defence budgets on peace-building.
- Stopping arms sales to governments or groups who are violating international law or human rights.

What can you do?

1. Don't ignore the 2024 election whenever it is to be
2. Help to shape the tone of the debate; contact your candidates and ask questions on aid and on climate
3. Vote

Election practicalities

There have been Parliamentary Constituency Boundary changes and the rules about voting in person have changed; you now have to present photo ID. Older or disabled individuals can use a bus pass if they have one but not younger people. If they do not have valid ID such as a driving licence or passport they will need to apply for free ID on the Government website. Your voting card will have details of what you can use

1. If you don't already know, find out what constituency you are in
2. Make sure you have valid id
3. Decide which issues are important to you and contact your candidates to ask them about their views.

Information for this article is taken from several sources including Tearfund, Christian Aid and Churches working for Peace and Justice websites where you can find further details.

Sue Ripley (Street) for Eco Church Group

PARKING PERKS IN STREET

As members of SWCD churches, you would be welcome, if there is space, to use the Mission Church car park if you need to pop into Street for shopping, doctors' appointments or similar.



Whilst we do have a number of groups and activities who use the Mission Church during the week, so the car park can get busy; there can be space during the day for you to leave your vehicle for an hour or two if you need to.



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Rather than paying for parking at one of the commercial car parks in Street you can leave a donation in the wall safe in the church foyer or use the contactless machine you will also find there

If you want to leave your vehicle for longer than an hour or two, please check with the church office in advance. You can also talk to Pam Harmsworth, our Mission Church caretaker, to check if the car park will be busy at a particular time.



Please enjoy this 'membership benefit' but we would ask that this is also one piece of 'good news' that you don't share too widely beyond the church family, to prevent the limited space we have being overwhelmed.



Kevin Lawrence

INVITATION TO A CELEBRATION OF LAY MINISTRIES

The below Diocesan event is open to all in the church family

It is our joy to invite you to our annual Celebration of Lay Ministries event this year, taking place at St Paul's Weston Super Mare on Saturday, 22nd **June** at 2pm. The Celebration is an opportunity for both lay and ordained to come together to be valued, affirmed and thanked for the unique contribution we make to church and community.

This year our theme is 'Harmony', recognising that we all have a 'voice' and how together we can make harmony.

At the event there will be:

- A Celebration Service
where we will hear from a range of different voices as people share how they have heard God's call and responded
- A Marketplace of stalls
Where we can see and explore the variety of ministries that are on offer
- A time to meet old friends and to make new ones!

And again there will be cake...

We'd love it if you could come. To book your place and for more information, please visit

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/celebration-of-lay-ministries/join-the-celebration-of-lay-ministries>

Please note: As seats become filled quickly, we advise early booking. If you have any queries, please contact Charmain Gilmour at the Diocese:

charmain.gilmour@bathwells.anglican.org

The Spirit-filled life

“... BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.’ Ephesians 5:18 NKJV

The new birth doesn't automatically eliminate the old nature. We live in bodies that are susceptible to sin, so we must stay filled with God's Spirit. Paul says: 'Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh' (Galatians 5:16 NAS). Then he gives us a familiar illustration: '... do not be drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18 NKJV).

Notice:

First, Paul's talking about yielding control of our life to God's Spirit. When someone's drunk we say they're 'under the influence.'

Second, Paul's statement is a command. 'Be filled.' He didn't say, 'If you'd like to,' or 'It would be nice'. No, if you are going to please God then you must be constantly filled with His Spirit.

Third, this applies to every believer. Sometimes we look at someone and say, 'They love Jesus so much; why can't I be like that?' You can. The difference is the filling of the Spirit, not the fact that they have something you don't.

Fourth, you can't fill yourself. Like filling your car, you must regularly pull up to the pump. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Matthew 5:6 NIV). Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?

Fifth, it's a continuous action. You can't run your car on a single tank of petrol; you've got to keep going back to the source. The Spirit's filling is a dynamic, moment-by-moment experience. Why is it that way? Because we live in a world that depletes us spiritually and contend with a core of carnality that seeks to defeat us. So, '... be filled with the Spirit.' (Ephesians 5:18 NKJV).

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.

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