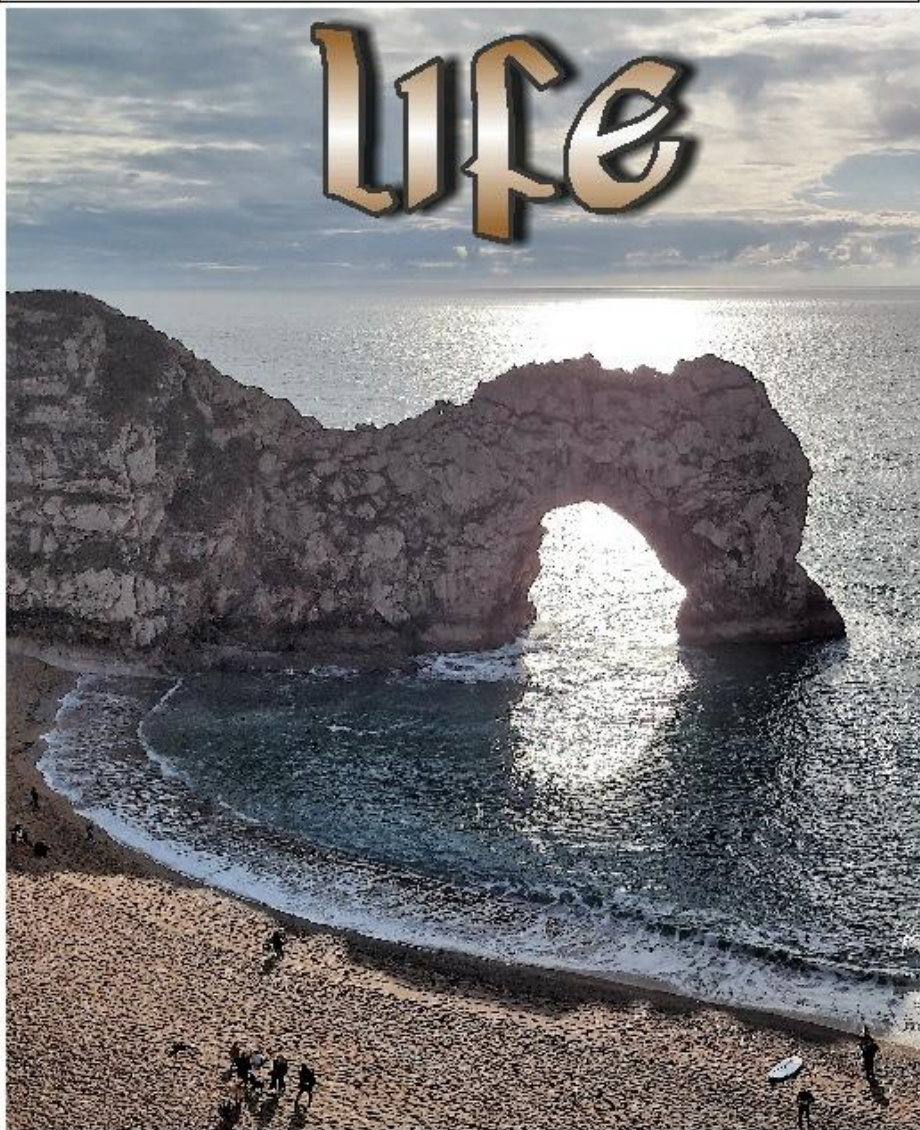


February 2022



50p

Life



swcd-churches.org.uk



Magazine aims to reflect the life of the church and to encourage the growth of the Christian faith in all our readers.

LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Articles for the March edition are due by **Sunday February 13th**

Editorial Notes

Because Life magazine gets printed before the end of the month it is not possible to report Christmas events in January, therefore you will find two reports of events that took place in Compton Dundon on pages 4 and 5. It was good that Christmas was able to be celebrated in this way last year. I have to apologise that on page 6 of Walton Matters there is an event advertised that takes place on the same day that this magazine gets printed! But read on and attend the future event there.

Also on the same page Sandra reports on an event in January that features in picture form on the back cover and top left shows Gog and Magog, biblical names for the two ancient oak trees that we passed on the walk. However Gog was accidentally set alight in 2017 by a candle, whether or not the downfall of the tree, Gog is now dead and Magog is on its last roots! Some fungus and wood carvings are also pictured, alongside some walker photos.

At the beginning of January Pam and I enjoyed a weekend away in a B&B at Lulworth Cove where we visited Durdle Door which I feature on the front cover with the low winter sun shining through the 'door'. We enjoyed a picnic on the beach (in January) alongside but distanced from numerous other visitors from far and wide, watching wet suit swimmers and canoeists venturing through the arch.

Through these remaining winter weeks, keep warm, and safe from the perils of Covid. From your editor Roger.

Rector's Letter

Dear Friends,

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” *2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 7.*

This month I am going to write about stewardship and what it means for us to be good stewards. The area of Christian giving, and the mere mention of money can for some, be deeply uncomfortable; perhaps you think that these matters are ‘private’ and not for public discussion?

To give a little context, we as churches, as a Diocese and as the national church are facing tough financial challenges. With almost two years since the first lockdown and the enforced closure of our church buildings for many months in 2020 and again for a few months at the start of 2021, our finances in Street, Walton and Compton Dundon have taken a big hit.

It would be too easy to solely blame the pandemic; but unfortunately, we have been operating in deficit for longer than that – more is going out than coming in, and this, of course, cannot continue indefinitely. In recent months the Diocese, based at Flourish House in Wells have been through a rigorous re-structuring process with many cuts and jobs lost. The issues are at every level. As parishes, we have significant costs in the running of our churches and the payment of the parish share to the Diocese which ensures we can continue with the provision of stipendiary clergy.

A few months ago, our PCC's set up the benefice stewardship team with representatives from each of our 3 parishes. The role of this group has been to explore and reflect on some of the ways we can increase our giving across the 4 churches. This is still very much a work in progress, and you may have seen that there are monthly articles in this magazine from the team addressing

issues of stewardship, but it does have to start with each of us as individuals.

As Christians, we are called to be good stewards of all that God has given us and this includes the way in which we handle our personal finances. In the coming weeks, I will be writing to each of you individually, on behalf of the PCC's to ask you to prayerfully review your giving to the life and ministry of SWCD Churches. As you consider your response, my prayer is that the verse above will guide you.

Yours, with my love & prayers,
Ana

SWCD CHURCHES CHARITABLE GIVING

FOCUS ON HOME FOR GOOD BATH

As each of our PCC's prepare, this month, to consider who our charitable giving should go to, based on recommendations from church family members, a reminder of one of the organisations supported last year, this one by Compton Dundon.

Home for Good, Bath, (<https://homeforgood.org.uk/connect-locally/bath-area>) are a local Christian charity promoting adoption and fostering for children in the Somerset area, working with local social services, churches and others.

In December, church members raised money for the charity by carol singing around the village, helping to ensure more young people, often with difficult starts in life, have access to safe, secure and loving homes.

Kevin Lawrence

INTERMEDII

A Concert of Christmas Music

Christmas came early to St Andrew's Compton Dundon when we were treated to another wonderful concert by Intermedii. On the 12th of December the eight singers gave a delightful performance of songs, ranging from the more well-known, such as Ding Dong Merrily on High, In Dulce Jubilo, Jesus Christ the Apple Tree and Born on a New Day, to less familiar pieces by Rutter, Berlioz and a lovely French carol, Il est Ne Le Divin Enfant.

All were beautifully delivered, and the sound filled the church which was candle-lit and decorated with a magnificent Christmas tree. The choir were conducted by the director of music Shane Fletcher and the organist was Andrew Carter. He gave two Organ Interludes both raising the roof with a fantastic crescendo of sound. Our little organ was certainly put through its paces!

Following the concert the audience enjoyed wine, smoked salmon sandwiches and other delicious offerings which rounded off a very happy evening.

Intermedii (La Vigar, Suzannah Chapple, Emily Risdon, Lorna Perry, Crispin Pemberton, Iain Rhodes, Chris Vigar and Julian Walker) were introduced and thanked by Rev Ana Lawrence.

All proceeds of the concert went to church funds and St Andrew's PCC couldn't be more grateful to Intermedii for enabling us to raise over £900. Thanks are also due to Chris Perry Smith who produced programmes and tickets of such high quality. Pat King.

Christmas at St Andrew's, Compton Dundon

Christmas began on December 12th in Compton Dundon, when we were treated to a wonderful collection of Christmas music, performed by a visiting choral group, Intermedii (see the 'Intermedii' review.) The church was beautifully decorated for the occasion with garnished windowsills, an 'angel fall' of around a hundred handmade angels of all varieties and a 15 foot high real Christmas tree, as the supplier had run out of smaller versions and offered it to us at the same price!

The singing continued when two groups enjoyed carol singing around the village on separate evenings, finishing the second evening at 'The Castlebrook Arms.' We were warmly welcomed as people stood on their doorsteps to hear our renditions of all the familiar carols, accompanied by Simon's accordion to keep us in tune. Thanks to their generous donations we were delighted to raise £300 for one of our focus charities, 'Home for Good,' Bath.

It was lovely this year to be able to participate fully in the Christmas services, including singing, albeit it through masks. Amongst the range of readers at the Carol Service were several who were reading for the first time in a church service and this brought a wider congregation into the building. We welcomed the Baby Jesus Rocks to the Crib Service.

This is the first time the rocks have appeared in Compton Dundon and there was great interest amongst those who found one (or more), initiating conversations and media posts which in turn led to exploring the website from the details on the rocks.

The Midnight and Christmas morning Communion rounded off our celebrations and now we look forward in Christian hope to a positive and exciting year in the life of the church.

Watch this space! Pat King.

Walton matters

Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying; "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Luke 2. Vs 28 - 32. NIV.

How lovely to join Church friends on a walk on bank holiday Monday 3rd January. The weather was very kind to us and 14 of us enjoyed a walk at the base of the Tor, finishing with a welcome cup of coffee at Middlewick Farm. Thank you Tim for arranging this for us and for everyone for their company. I hope we can do this again.

Games afternoon.

Come and join us for an afternoon of table top games in the Church on Wednesday 26th January at 2.00. This will be very informal and also very covid friendly with plenty of spacing. There will be a £2.00 charge and refreshments will be provided. If you don't relish games, a jigsaw will also be available or you can simply enjoy tea and conversation.

We hope to have a games afternoon every fortnight but after the first session, we will be changing to a Thursday starting on the 10th February.

Quiz evening.

We are very grateful to our quiz master Liz Brown who will host our evening on Saturday 19th February 7.00 for 7.15. This again will be £2.00 per person and tea, coffee, cake and biscuits will be available but you are also welcome to bring refreshments of your own.

Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

We hope to hold an afternoon tea in and outside of our Church (weather permitting) on Sunday 5th June to join in celebrating such amazing dedication to our nation of our Queens life time of service. Please put this date in your diary and more information will be coming out soon.

Flower rota.

12th February. Brenda Stradling.

26th February. Sandra Gristock.



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Safeguarding

At the moment we are still up to date with all our DBS's. We will be contacting people as and when they need renewing. We do realise though that everyone of us that did our C1 training in person at the Mission Church in 2018 needs to re do this training as it lasts for 3 years. It is unfortunately only being done on line at the moment and to access this, please go to the Diocese of Bath and Wells website and click on safeguarding training.

Follow the link to the Church of England's training portal. It is a very simple process and it won't take long to complete.

Once things get back to more normal times, training will be continued face to face. We appreciate not everyone can do the training on line and understand restrictions. This training is a requirement for all volunteers.

Do get in touch with either of us if you need any help.

Jane Tompsett and Sandra Gristock.

FINANCE FACTS AND FIGURES

You may have read previous articles by the Stewardship team about the financial situation we find ourselves in at SWCD Churches, but it can be hard to imagine what that actually means, particularly if, like many people, spreadsheets and sets of accounts leave you scratching your head and wondering what all those numbers signify.

We will shortly be writing to every member of the church family across the benefice, including in the letter what we hope will be a simple illustration of the situation in the parish to which they belong. However, in the hope that it is helpful, here are a few simple 'facts and figures' on church finances across our benefice.

Some facts:

- 1 It is up to us! Our churches receive no government or regular other income and are funded mainly through the money given by church members. Neither the Diocese, nor anyone else has a 'magic money tree' we can rely on.
- 2 Whilst fundraising events certainly help and can be great fun, they raise only a small percentage of our total financial needs across the benefice.
- 3 There isn't much we can do to cut costs. Most of our income is either spent on our buildings, running our services or paying our parish share to the Diocese (most of which comes straight back to pay for local ministry).
- 4 Money really does help. Whilst what we do would be impossible without the many voluntary hours offered by church members, there are things that we simply have to pay for. Wouldn't it also be great to begin to imagine

all the extra things we could do if lack of money did not constrain us!

Some figures (figures for each parish will vary, these are benefice wide):

1. The average cost, in order to run our churches each week, is around £2,200. With our average Sunday attendance being roughly 115, it means that for us to break even from giving, each person would need to give about £20 per week.
2. However, our current weekly income from church member's giving is £1,472 (the equivalent of roughly £12.80 per person, per week), meaning each week the benefice is spending £763 more than it receives from church members,
3. We do also have other sources of income such as building hire, fundraising events, one-off grants and fees from weddings and funerals. But amounts from these sources are small in comparison and equivalent to about £285 per week.
4. This means that total income per week for the benefice is approximately £1,757 per week. With total expenditure at £2,200, that leaves a weekly shortfall of £443, or £4 a week for each attendee on an average Sunday.
5. Each parish does have reserves, although some are better provided than others. However, as you may imagine from the figures above, these are being depleted quite fast and cannot be relied upon for very much longer.

Benefice Stewardship Team Ana Lawrence, Yvonne Guerin (Walton), Steve King (Compton Dundon), David Yemm (Street), Jill Perryman (Street), Kevin Lawrence (Street).

WATCH

Bible app banned in China

How do you read the Bible these days? The classic book - printed on paper between a hard or soft cover - was the only option 20 years ago: may be even 10 years ago. But today it's different. I am writing this on my phone, which is also my Bible. And I can read it more or less in whatever version or language I choose: King James, NIV, Good News, Amplified, etc. I have also the modern 2017 French version also which I love, and in Romanian which I know only a few words of.

All this is because of a Bible app called 'You Version.' Some of you may know it and use it as I do. I believe there are other Bible apps too.. My printed Bible lies beside my bed, gathering dust. As an older person there are other bonuses too. Many versions you can hear spoken in audio form which is a real boon for those who are visually impaired and also you can listen without disturbing others by using headphones if you wish. Last but not least, by turning the phone through 90 degrees you can view the passage in landscape format with much enlarged print - very useful if you can't find your reading glasses! All this digital stuff has revolutionised the accessibility of the word of God, for which we should be profoundly thankful to our Father God.

And there is another reason too to be very grateful. The CCP (Chinese Communist Party) which governs China has now banned the Bible app in their latest attempt to stifle the Christian faith in China. Previously it had banned the sale of Bibles online and is active in persecuting Christian bookshops, not to mention forcing churches to sing nationalistic songs and display portraits of President Xi and Chairman Mao, and indeed physically demolishing church buildings on flimsy fabricated pretexts of illegality. But these renewed attempts to stamp out Christianity in China by Xi will fail, just as they did under Mao. How do we know this? Because God in the form of Jesus His Son, Emmanuel: God with us, declared that on the rock of belief in Christ as God's

Chosen Messiah, the 'anointed one' who alone has the words of eternal life, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will NOT prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18). But the hard times in China may well within a few decades spread to the whole world. The dragon, the false prophet and, in the background, the enigmatic bear are all set on world domination and may yet prove willing to work alongside each other. Afghanistan fell to the Taliban faster than anyone predicted. The same or similar could happen on a very much larger scale very quickly in our world today. The Bible repeatedly warns us to watch and to be ready, so that we are not taken by surprise.

The psalmist urges us to "hide God's word in your heart" - by that I take it to mean "learn it by heart". Then they can burn all the Bibles, ban all Bible apps, but they can't erase it from your memory. It's surprisingly easy too, if you just take a short passage and learn a verse a day and constantly revise it in any spare moments. I did this with passage from Colossians recently that we'd looked at in our Walton home group, and I'm, so not exactly a 'spring chicken'! The Bible is the 'Sword of the Spirit' (Ephesians 6:17) which Jesus used so effectively against the devil when he was tempted by him in the wilderness - which we'll shortly be remembering in Lent. In the book of Revelation Jesus (yes, it's the only book in the Bible written by him directly, so it's got to be pretty important!) predicts a future persecution of the church so bad that unless the Lord shortens it not even his chosen people - that is the church, you and me - will not be saved. That means it's going to be tough beyond anything known so far in the way of the persecution of believers. We need to be preparing ourselves for that - and preparing our Christian family for it too! "He that has ears to hear, let him hear" is a phrase repeated over and over again by Jesus, emphasising how important it is. Let's not be like the foolish who leave it until it's too late. Have your God-given sword cleaned up, sharp and ready, and practice using it - NOW!

Bernard Sinclair

How to pray

“Everyone Prays. But no-one finds it easy. We all need a little help” Pete Greig has been teaching on prayer – and leading a non-stop prayer movement for more than 20 years. Now, for the first time, he puts his life’s work into a response to the question everybody ultimately asks: *how do I pray?*

This book, written by Pete Greig (who founded 24-7 prayer) fits well alongside the prayer course – you don’t need to read it to attend the course, but it is an accessibly written guide and the best book I have ever read on prayer (apart from the Bible!).

If you would like to obtain a copy, check out Abebooks, Eden or Amazon.

Ana Lawrence

Using your gifts

Many images have been used to describe the church including a hospital, a barracks or a football stadium where a large crowd desperately in need of exercise watches a few people running around desperately in need of a rest.

I don’t know which of these images resonates with you? For me, I have always seen the church as a place where we can all use and exercise our gifts.

There are many ways in which we can all serve both on Sundays and at other times during the week; in church life or in outreach in the places where God puts us Monday – Saturday.

I would love to speak to anyone who is unsure where and how God might be calling them to serve or who have sensed there may be a new calling emerging. Please do talk to Ana.

Finally, if you are reading this and thinking there is nothing you can offer, please be encouraged and reassured that you have unique and special gifts that God longs to see used to his glory. Again, please contact me.

Ana Lawrence

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How Fairtrade fits into our Christian Lives

From the comments of our own farmers and food producers our high street supermarkets seem to use their huge bargaining power to drive down the producer's selling prices to as near the production costs as possible leaving very little recompense for the producer's labour time. This enables the supermarkets to offer the goods such as milk and vegetables to us at very low prices, this is at the expense of the small and less mechanised producers. It means that in times of poor yields through bad weather conditions they could even go out of business.

The Fairtrade organisation is based on negotiating and paying a fair price for the produce that they offer for sale as well as ensuring that it is ethically produced with regard to animal welfare and without damage to the local ecology. This means that the producers get what is considered a price that is reasonable for their costs and labour that will not result in hardship at times of poor yields or higher production costs. This applies to producers in this country and abroad. It also means that the price to the public (us) is a little more than we could buy the same thing from the supermarket.

As a large amount of our purchases are of produce from countries where the producers have a much lower standard of living than us anyway, the small increase in their returns when they can have a Fairtrade contract will result in them having increased business security and a more reasonable standard of living.

Why should we consider paying the extra for fairtrade goods?

How often do we ask God and Christ for mercy, the answer is each time we say the confession. In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5 v.7) we are told that the merciful will receive mercy, in our affluent society how many of us cannot afford a few pence extra in order to buy goods fairly priced to give the producer a reasonable living?

Who are the producers? In one of our most well known of Jesus' parables, the Good Samaritan, they are all our neighbours, those producers and workers in this country and abroad.

By considering what we pay for the goods we buy and paying a fair price for the producer and ourselves we are showing mercy to those who could have been taken advantage of for the sake of increased profits and sales for the large companies often involved and also knowing that the minimum of ecological damage was done in their production and transportation.

If you would like to know more about the Fairtrade organisation you can read all about its work and objectives by a web search for fairtrade international. Their website also includes a list of the products available.

Written on behalf of the SWCD Eco-Church Group by David Yemm (Street Churches).

An update on Covid 19 and the life of our churches

I am always reluctant to write about our plans to respond to Covid 19 too far in advance. Our national experience of this pandemic has been that things can change rapidly. However, at present, it does appear that case numbers and hospitalisations are declining and our government have recently signalled a relaxation of restrictions.

As a church family, I am mindful of our need to take care of all our members, those who are anxious to return to 'normal' as soon as possible, those who remain deeply concerned about covid 19 and all those who are somewhere in-between.

Therefore, at present we are still proceeding cautiously in our life and worship together. A few things to be aware of:

1. Whilst mask wearing and social distancing is no longer a legal requirement in our buildings, we are still encouraging those attending our services and events, to do both, if possible.
2. Communion by the 'common cup' will not recommence as yet, but we will now be offering intinction of the wafers by the priest in certain circumstances.
3. You will see elsewhere in Life and Lifeline that we have a full programme of events and services in the coming weeks and months. We will continue for the moment to take reasonable precautions to keep everyone safe and must be open to the possibility, as we have become used to, of sudden changes and further restrictions however much we do not wish them to happen.

Ana Lawrence

STREET FOODBANK

'The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25 40

Our media is full of stories of the financial 'squeeze' that many of us will face in 2022, with rising prices and taxes set to have an impact on household budgets.

This will be difficult for many, but particularly for the poorest in our communities, many of whom already struggle to make ends meet. As a result, the Street Foodbank, run by our friends at the Salvation Army in Goswell Road, is seeing rising demand for the support they offer to families in need and they, in turn, need our help to continue their work.

Donations of non-perishable, in date, food and other items are welcome and can be dropped off at the Salvation Army hall. The team have recently publicised the following items as ones they are particularly short of:

Tinned potatoes

Instant mashed potatoes

Tinned fruit

Tinned carrots and peas

Tinned fish

Tinned custard / rice pudding

Rice

UHT milk

Coffee

Let's continue to support those in need in our community

Kevin Lawrence

The Prayer Course

Many from across the benefice enjoyed and appreciated the Bible Course which we ran, during lockdown, on Zoom. I am keen that as a benefice we continue to grow in our faith and one of the ways of doing this is by learning together. So, this year, beginning in Lent, we will be running a new course open to anyone from the benefice and beyond.

I would like to introduce the 'Prayer Course' which will take place on Wednesday evenings in the Mission Church. The prayer course is designed for everyone and is an 8-week journey that will help you to grow and deepen your prayer life.

The course is based on the Lord's Prayer and breaks down into 8 themed sessions.

During the evening, there will be a short video presentation, an opportunity to discuss some questions and a chance to share in a small group in a very practical way, all in a relaxed setting. The course is designed for 'normal' people and is simple and accessible; you don't have to have been a Christian for many years or an 'expert' pray-er.

So do consider joining us. The Prayer course will be on the following Wednesday evenings 7 – 8.30pm: 9th March, 16th March, 23rd March, 30th March, 6th April, 27th April, 4th May & 11th May.

If you would like to come along, please contact the church office on 01458 442672 or email churchoffice8@gmail.com to book your place. For further details, please talk to Ana.

Look forward to seeing you. Ana Lawrence

manna

From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells



February 2022

21st century church

In 2018 an exciting new project was launched to help us reimagine what it means to be church in the twenty first century. The Pioneer Project aimed to encourage a culture shift by appointing pioneer ministers to explore appropriate ways of sharing the good news of Jesus with different groups of people and in different places.

As a result of the project there are nine full time pioneers doing life alongside the inhabitants of nine different towns and villages across the diocese, outside existing church congregations and often on the margins of society. They include pioneers who are coming alongside families, and communities, pioneers focused on the arts and on young people.

Tina Hodgett, who led the Pioneer Project in Bath and Wells until late 2021, said, "The Christian Church in the west has been through centuries of stability. In the past most people accepted the Christian faith but society is changing rapidly and the



people have flowed away from the church door. Jesus spoke our language and pioneered a whole new way of being in fellowship with God and today's pioneers follow in His footsteps."

The project is not just about appointing a few people to do things differently, but inspiring everyone to see how they can share the Gospel where they are and 25 people have completed the Certificate in Pioneer Mission, a year-long course to help them do just that.

Tina concludes, "We've made distinct progress in becoming more pioneering, innovative and imaginative since 2018. The culture shift has started!"

Read the report at bathandwells.org.uk/pioneering-report

A signpost to God

By Rob Martin, Honorary Assistant Bishop for Bath and Wells

2022 has begun, with all its potential for joy and for sorrow. What lies ahead I wonder? Will Covid define us, as it continues to exert its baleful influence and disrupt our plans? Or will the joy of faith-filled lives trump the gloom? Rejoice in the Lord always, begins our key passage from Philippians. Amen!

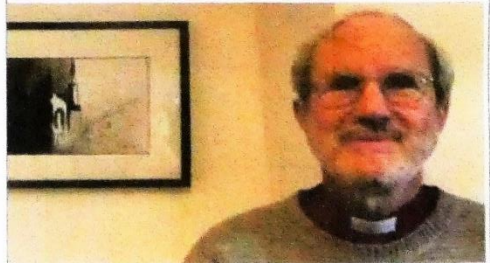
New Year resolutions - have you made any? They are rooted in a godly desire to improve our lives. They say 60 per cent of us make them, but only 8 per cent stick with them! I'm part of the 92 per cent, who try, but usually give up. Sometimes something sticks.

Two years ago, following a diocesan initiative to encourage more prayer, I resolved to get the Lectio 365 app. It has helped me ever since. I'm guided to sit, read, reflect and prepare for my day's activities. It's a form of Lectio Divina, similar to Dwelling in the Word, used in Bath and Wells, which encourages us to mull over God's word, in our own personal time, and in the company of others, allowing God to speak to us.

Lectio 365 ends in this prayer: Father help me to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way. Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to all I meet. Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do, and say.

Our pioneers reach out to those around them, building relationships and using ever more creative ways, to point people to God. Cocktail bars, art work, pizza evenings, outdoor activities, pilgrim walkways... the list is gloriously endless! The Lectio prayer reminds us that everyone is a channel for God's grace, a signpost to God. By encouraging others to grow in spiritual awareness, we can all be pioneers in our own situation.

Bishop Rob



News in brief

Funding step forward for flood church

St. Peter and St. Paul's Church Muchelney, near Langport on the Somerset Levels, has moved a step closer towards becoming a community hub after receiving a £12,500 grant from South Somerset District Council. The grade one listed church was a focal point for its community during the floods of 2013/14 when the village was cut off for more than ten weeks. The latest grant, together with £44,000 already raised will go towards the estimated £75,500 needed for the first phase of the development; to build a toilet and put in mains water. Churchwarden Sarah Nicholas said, "We can make the church building the heart of the community again." ■



Looking out to the town and beyond

New Minster for Taunton

On March 13, St Mary Magdalene, Taunton, is designated to become Taunton Minster. Already the civic church for the town, as a minster it will play a more active role in bringing together and supporting the whole town and wider area. Revd Tobie Osmond, Vicar at St Mary Magdalene says, "This is particularly important as the town adapts to meet the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic." ■

Join with us this Lent

Join with us this Lent as we explore 'Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God'. There'll be a range of resources focusing on the themes of offering and receiving welcome, hospitality, inclusion, and generosity as a way of better knowing and understanding others, ourselves, and God during

Lent 22 and beyond.

The resources will include videos of new residents of Somerset, weekly bible reflections with study questions, a weekday video and conversation starter, and useful links relating to the themes. Find out more at: bathandwells.org.uk/lent-2022 ■

A pioneering journey

Trevor James became a pioneer in Keynsham in November 2019



Trevor James (centre)

What led you to become a pioneer? The journey started before knowing pioneering was even a thing. I just felt called to stop doing the ministry that I was doing; it wasn't stop and leave, it was simply stop and so I knew something was coming.

How has your role developed over time?

It's been a journey. I came with lots of plans. Six months in and we had lock down which transformed everything. It got to a point where I thought I'd got this wrong; do I need to just hand my notice in? But God being God just transformed the journey and that's where the Sanctuary Garden came in.

What's the Sanctuary Garden?

It is a holistic space on the river where I do a regular prayer meet for people to come and be together at the beginning of the day in God's presence. I have also met pastorally in the garden with a bunch of folks, including young people. The things that we've done through the garden space have been so fruitful it has completely shocked me.

Who are you engaging with?

The people that I am meeting wouldn't go inside the church. It's not because there is anything wrong with it, it's just not how they live out their faith. That's especially true of the younger ones.

What have you learnt about pioneering?

The element of play. The more I push into the adult and the strategic side I don't see fruit. When I let go and allow myself to be a child in God, to enter the playground of His Kingdom and play with Him in ministry, it is so freeing and fruitful. Read more from Trevor at bathandwells.org.uk/keynsham-pioneer

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Living the story. Telling the story.

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'... LET LOVE GUIDE YOUR LIFE, FOR THEN THE WHOLE CHURCH WILL STAY TOGETHER IN PERFECT HARMONY.'

Colossians 3:14 TLB

It's always easier to stand on the sidelines and take potshots than get involved and make a contribution. God warns us repeatedly not to criticise, compare, or judge one another. When you criticise what someone else is doing in sincere faith, you're out of your jurisdiction! Listen: 'What right do you have to criticise someone else's servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right ...' (Romans 14:4 CEV). So unless you're their Lord, keep your nose out of it!

Don't stand in judgment looking down on those whose views differ from yours! Paul writes: 'Why, then ... criticise your brother's actions, why ... try to make him look small? We shall all be judged one day, not by each other's standards or even by our own, but by the judgment of God' (Romans 14:10 PHPS). Whenever you judge God's children four things happen:

1. You upset their Father
2. You expose your own pride and insecurity
3. You set yourself up to be judged by the same standard
4. You hurt the fellowship of your church.

A critical spirit is a costly vice. Instead of harping, start helping! Time spent comparing and criticising is time that could be spent on better things. The Bible says, '... Help others with encouraging words; don't drag them down by finding fault' (Romans 14:19 TM).

Unity is the soul of fellowship; destroy it and you rip the heart out of Christ's body. So, make up your mind today to protect your church!

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