

March 2024



50p

# Life



[swcd-churches.org.uk](http://swcd-churches.org.uk)



LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

Roger Harmsworth

[rogerwilliam@talktalk.net](mailto:rogerwilliam@talktalk.net)

01458 445291

Articles for the April edition are due by **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

## Editorial Notes

At the end of this month we celebrate Easter, which for Christians is the most important time of the year, when we celebrate Jesus Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Right now, we look forward to this time with hope for new life and a new hope for the future. Snowdrops and other early bulbs appear everywhere and we feel joy that the darkness of winter is coming to an end and spring will soon be upon us.

The snowdrops on the front cover are on the front garden of the Mission Church and the back page includes pictures from all four churches in our benefice. From top left...Compton Dundon (picture by Pat King), then looking clockwise, some more at the Mission Church, snowdrops and crocus at the Parish Church Street, and daffodils in a tub outside Walton Church. All pictures were taken this year.

In this bumper edition we have a Faith Journey, and ways to 'use your loaf' from Compton Dundon, and from Street some celebrations and some distressing and sad news also. All the Easter celebrations can be found on one of Ana's pages, some scriptural information from Tim, and we find the Bishop sowing seeds and digging to find new ways to find this 'New Life'! There's lots more in this Easter edition of Life....so enjoy as they say. Wishing you all a very **HAPPY EASTER**. Roger.

# Rector's Letter

Dear Friends,

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”. 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15.

I was struck by a comment made to me by one of the parents at a recent Messy Church. This was the first time she and her children had ever come, having previously attended one of our Christmas services. She said to me of that service: “I really loved your talk; I just didn't expect church to be like that”.

I think there are many misconceptions around as to what church is and isn't, what might happen in a church and who even might be there.

Messy Church with the moderately chaotic fun, craft, songs, games and worship looks very different to anything we may see on a Sunday morning and yet it is still an expression of church, it's just the 'packaging' that looks less familiar.

At its heart, I believe that we the church, yes, that's you and me, are here to worship God and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. The Gospel itself is unchanging even in ever changing times, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews chapter 13 verse 8). This must surely be what makes God's church deeply attractive – a place where believers gather to worship Jesus, pray, love and care for one another. A place that welcomes the outsider, the unchurched (never before been to church) and be to the wider community ‘the hope of the world’.

This is the kind of church I am passionate about and am grateful to be part of as we walk together.

Maybe at this time of year you are feeling less hopeful, still coping with long winter nights and shorter days, but the hope in the natural seasons is that Spring is on the way, the birds are singing and flowers are coming into bud. The best is yet to come.

As we journey together, let's continue to be the people of God in our local churches who 'worship God, love our communities, grow in faith'.

With my love and prayers,

Ana

.....

## **Grow in Faith – Spend time reading the Bible!**

What does it mean for us each to grow in the Faith? I think we would all want the following: We want to know what God says to us about who He is, and we want to know what he says about us. He created us so we want to know why and what His plans are for us as humans. We want to know His guidance for our personal lives, how to live a good life, how to be a genuine follower of Jesus....how to grow in faith.

We know the way to grow in faith is to read and take on board God's word as contained in the Bible. Easy to say but not always easy to follow. Our words and answers may be different from our practical living. A fairly recent study of Christians (Christian Times 2017) found that only 14% read the Bible for more than 5 minutes

each week (60 % hadn't read it at all). While not excusing those figures we can probably recognise and understand the reason for them. Reading the Bible is sometimes not easy - difficult passages, obscure language, sometimes it appears not to fit our current living which might put people off.

Yes, Bible reading requires discipline, prayer, a believing attitude and a listening and receptive heart, but we do need to do it. Let's remember that the Bible is **always** God's truth. All things that are necessary to become a Christian, to live as a Christian and to grow as a Christian are contained within the Bible. It shows God's authority, it underpins everything. It contains the Good News. The Bible says of itself "All scripture is useful..." (2 Tim 3v16)

The more time we spend in God's word the more our desire will be for the things of God. So, what will help us and keep us going with daily Bible reading? We are fortunate these days to have technological and practical helps to read the Bible. A Bible with study notes or a good concordance can help our understanding. There are reliable websites out there which can help answer questions and bring out more understanding of the Bible.

There are apps which bring a passage or a daily verse to us. There are apps that help structure a daily Bible reading time. Even some that take you through the whole Bible in a year. Physical paper Bible reading notes for those who prefer not to use phone/tablet/computer for everything still exist. There's a list of helpful Bible reading aids below.

These are just ones I'm familiar with. There are plenty more, I'm sure. Do respond to this article with recommendations that may

be helpful. Look on Eden or other Christian resource shop for other devotional notes.

[www.eden.co.uk](http://www.eden.co.uk)

[Daily Bible Study Notes & Reading | Eden](#)

Daily Bread quarterly magazine

[Odb.org/subscription/uk](http://Odb.org/subscription/uk)

[Subscribe | Our Daily Bread \(odb.org\)](#)

Some apps for your phone/laptop/ device) Every day with Jesus

[www.waverleyabbey.org/encounter/daily-bible-devotional/](http://www.waverleyabbey.org/encounter/daily-bible-devotional/)

[Daily Bible Devotional - Waverley Abbey](#)

You Version

[www.youversion.com/the-bible-app/](http://www.youversion.com/the-bible-app/)

[YouVersion Bible App - YouVersion](#)

The Bible with Nikki Gumbel (Original creator of Alpha) used to be called Bible in one year [bible.alpha.org/en/](http://bible.alpha.org/en/)

[The Bible with Nicky and Pippa Gumbel \(alpha.org\)](#)

Lectio365

[www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/](http://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/)

[Lectio 365 - 24-7 Prayer International](#)

And there are the readings each week on Lifeline. [The Benefice of Street, Walton and Compton Dundon : This Week's Life Line \(swcd-churches.org.uk\)](#)

Some might find Christian radio helpful for readings – As local churches we support Premier Radio broadcasting. [Premier Radio Stations: Premier Christian Radio, Gospel, Praise » Premier](#)

The main take from this article is that Bible reading aids might be helpful to us but so long as we find some way to sit down with His Word on a regular basis then it does not matter which method we

use. In reading the Bible daily we can experience much joy through spending time listening to God and praying through His prompting. As we move into Spring let us find a way to increase our commitment to taking in God's Word. If you want to try out using recent Bible reading notes there is a stock of older notes at the Mission church. Anyone is welcome to take for free.

If you want something to get stuck into for Lent, then do sign up with TEAR fund lent devotionals (one of our mission partners)

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/lent-devotional>

Tim Hindle

---

## What is fair trade?

Fair trade is an approach to business with developing countries based on dialogue, transparency and respect. It supports farmers who are socially and economically marginalized.

### Why should Christians care about fair trade?

#### 1. Unfair trade leads to hopelessness.

Poverty produces desperation. Desperation produces exploitation. Exploitation produces suffering. Suffering produces hopelessness.

The hopelessness of poverty is not God's plan. Rather, the Bible is clear that God's people are to intervene to keep people from becoming desperate and exploited as



slaves or prostitutes, or end up with diseases and addictions that have been forced on them. The Lord requires that we make an investment in the lives of the impoverished.

*“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident so that he can continue to live among you.” (Lev. 25:35 NIV).*

## **2. Fair trade ensures fair wages, child rights and humane working conditions.**

*“Pay him his wages each day before sunset because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you and you will be guilty of sin.” (Deut. 24:15 NIV).*

Prompt and fair payment is critical to those who may go without food, shelter, clothing or dignity, because of their poverty.

## **3. Fair trade restores dignity to the impoverished.**

Fair trade restores dignity as women are freed from prostitution, families remain together because selling a child is no longer necessary, teens receive an education so they can choose a different plan for their lives, and communities are transformed where people for the first time have an income they can depend on.

Fair trade gives hope for a better life and restores the dignity God intended for all people. *“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.” (Ps. 113:7 NIV).*

#### 4. Restoring dignity to the poor honours God.

Regard for the needs of the poor worker is required **because of who God is**. We need no other incentive.

*“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God” (Prov. 14:31 NIV).*

What can we do?

1. Look out for products with the fairtrade logo in your local supermarket such as coffee, tea, chocolate, bananas, sugar and flowers
2. Buy fairly-traded items online such as crafts, greetings cards, toilet rolls and clothing from fairtrade companies, such as these:

[wearefairtrade.com](http://wearefairtrade.com)

[fairtradewarehouse.com](http://fairtradewarehouse.com)

[ethicalsuperstore.com](http://ethicalsuperstore.com)

[trueorigin.org.uk](http://trueorigin.org.uk)

Gill Williams



# My Faith Journey

Being a child of the sixties, many may argue that my faith journey was more deliberate and straight forward than the journey to faith that many of our Millennial or Gen-Z offspring must encounter today. I count myself fortunate in having gone to a small, friendly, Church of England primary school in Lewes, East Sussex. School assemblies and religious education (RE) lessons were very traditional and comprised of exciting parables of how fishes were multiplied, water was turned into wine, great seas were parted and sick people were healed at the touch of a hand. These insights into the Bible were reinforced when my sister and I were enrolled in the local Sunday school, only a short walk from our house ... after all, what else could children of our age do on a Sunday morning back in the 60's!? Our parents would walk us to the church hall where we would join a couple of dozen other eager pupils who couldn't partake of the now common Sunday morning food shopping trips or sports clubs. Shops in our area obeyed Sunday trading laws

and remained closed on Sundays until August 1994 when Sunday trading was legalised (surely this wasn't merely 30 years ago!?)

On joining a secondary school, my diet of school assemblies and RE lessons reflected my previous experiences, although we did gain snippets of information about other core religions. As I 'outgrew' the local Sunday school towards the end of my primary school education I was offered the opportunity to join "JUCOs" - that helped further expand my Christian values without this being perceived in any way as being an 'un-cool' activity by my peers, some of whom chose not to attend.

Both our parents were very supportive of our Christian faith journey, although neither of them was overtly persuasive in their guidance. In some ways my mother *should* have been the more dominant parent as she was a resolute Roman Catholic in Germany prior to and during the Second World War. Her father was always heavily involved in the church (both spiritually and physically.) Their family moved from Brilon in Germany to the town of Rheine where he was one of many stonemasons employed in the construction of the local cathedral (St. Anthony's Basilica, a 'modern' neo-Romanesque building that was constructed from the turn of the last century.) Like his father before him, he had no

option but to move their family where the work was, and continued as a church stonemason repairing churches until his death, a few years after the birth of my mother.

As a small child I would spend many hours watching my father constructing diverse items in his home workshop as an accompaniment to his profession as a builder. The way in which he would always strive to do the best work he was capable of was seen by me from an early age to be very spiritual in nature. He could turn his highly skilled hands to many tasks in a range of materials, and although he spent years working for a general builder, he was always the 'go-to' person when a particularly complex task had to be completed or the client would expect nothing less than the highest standards of craftsmanship.

Although my dad would never speak in any depth about his war-time experiences, I was aware that he had some 'close calls' crossing over into Normandy during the D-Day landings and must have witnessed some truly unimaginable scenes. He would never detail any of the dreadful aspects of these dark days, but would sometimes joke about being more afraid of being shouted at by his officers than drowning close to the beach or being shot at. He would never, however, make light of the fact that he learned the benefits of prayer during those early days. Finally, he moved

Northwards into Germany, where he spent a couple of years in Rheine fortuitously meeting my mother who happened to be the best friend of his office translator. In reflective moments he often said that God was looking over him and that I should fear nothing in life as God was looking after me (and my family) as well: All I would ever need would be the faith that God was guiding my actions and keeping me safe.

So, to conclude, it wasn't really the academic teachings of parables or the RE lessons, or Sunday school lessons that rounded my faith, but more so the fact that I looked upon my Dad, in particular, as an early Christian role-model for me in so many different ways. Subsequently my wife, Pat (who I also met whilst we were both working in Germany), my son Patrick, and many other fantastic churchgoers in our Benefice, have proved to be valued guiding figures. My weekly House Group meetings enable me to further explore my faith, supported by like-minded, enthusiastic Christians. This I believe is a crucial element of faith: recognising Christ as the ultimate role model to guide our daily life and interactions with others.

**Steve King, Compton Dundon.**

## **Afternoon Tea in The Mission Church**

The February meeting carried on despite Delyth Wride from Street, one of our main organisers, passing away after a short illness recently. Del had asked Gill Williams from Compton Dundon to come and talk to us about Fairtrade.

After a struggle with the technology the talk started. Gill gave a very informative talk and her husband Gareth played a video about fairtrade chocolate. Gill encouraged us to buy fairtrade items if possible. The afternoon continued as we asked questions and explored some fairtrade items that Gill had brought along. The time spent together with tea and cake afterwards generated some interesting conversations between us.

We will carry on having our Afternoon Teas on the third Thursday of the month from 2-30pm till about 4pm. It would be good if people continue to help out with any task that comes up during our get togethers. Pam Harmsworth

**Afternoon Tea at The Mission Church  
Street**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

**2-30pm**

**Everyone Welcome!**

**Our Rector, Ana Lawrence will be giving  
a talk on Easter**

**There will be tea, coffee, cake, biscuits  
and time to talk**

*Cream tea anyone?*



You are invited to come and share a cream  
tea on

**Saturday, March 2nd, from  
2pm - 4pm.**

Join us in the

**Meadway Hall, Compton  
Dundon**

for an afternoon of good food and good  
conversation. We will be  
asking for donations for  
the work and mission of **St  
Andrew's, Compton  
Dundon**, but we promise  
we won't be checking  
whether you put your jam or cream on first!  
We look forward to seeing you there ...



[swcd-churches.org.uk](http://swcd-churches.org.uk)

# FREE MONEY FOR YOUR CHURCH WHEN YOU SHOP ONLINE

Whilst not for everyone, more and more of us are now shopping online, whether for everyday essentials or for bigger items like holidays, insurance etc.

Why are we mentioning this in a church magazine?

Well, as a church, we have set ourselves up on a website called easyfundraising which, if you go through their site to make your purchases, makes automatic and free donations to your church when you shop with certain brands and companies. It's a simple, absolutely free to you and a no risk way of making donations to the church when you spend money. So far our benefice has raised over £200 by using this service with only a few of us involved. Imagine how much more we would raise if more people signed up?

find out more visit <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/>

Kevin Lawrence



## **Congratulations!**

Maisie Day (Mission Church) on recently celebrating her  
18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Sylvia Yemm (Parish and Mission Church) on reaching her  
90<sup>th</sup> recently.

## Just one thing...

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” Psalm 24 v 1

Earlier this week I sat on the bench in the top photo on the next page, bringing to mind the verse above and the beauty of creation all around me. As you read your March ‘Life’ we will have begun our Lent sermon series exploring the question ‘Why should Christians be green, and how?’

We are stewards of God’s earth and as such we have a responsibility to be conscious of caring for our planet so that it can be enjoyed by our descendants.

In our first service in St Andrew’s thinking about ways in which we can be ‘green Christians’ we learned about cocoa farmers and the ways they are exploited. Fortunately Fairtrade supports farmers that grow products such as cocoa, coffee, bananas, sugar and cotton.

Fairtrade changes the way trade works, through better prices, decent working conditions and a fairer deal for farmers and workers in developing countries.

You may have shared in the February Afternoon Tea highlighting the work of Fairtrade.

So how can we develop as eco Christians? In church we were challenged to consider and record *‘just one thing’* to move us along in our eco journey. A good aide-memoire for this is the mnemonic LOAF : **L**ocally produced; **O**rganically grown; **A**nimal friendly; **F**airly traded. Use your Loaf! So your ‘one thing’ could be as simple as buying free range eggs, herbs or vegetable seeds to grow at home, or a Fairtrade pack of coffee. Next time I am tempted to buy a bar of chocolate I will ensure it is a Fairtrade one!

*Pat King, Compton Dundon*

## Some views from Compton Dundon Church .



## Walton Matters

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your

faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.  
James 1. V's 2-4. N.I.V

After receiving our beautiful purple altar frontal and pulpit drop before advent last year, we received another wonderful gift. Adrian Huggett has made us an exquisite oak notice board to replace our existing board that we can no longer use. We can't wait to see the board up and functional and our enormous thanks goes to Adrian for his skill and generosity. We are so blessed.

We will be having a cream tea in Church at 3 o'clock on April 14th. This is more of a social catch up rather than a fundraiser but all are welcome to join us for a natter and a delicious tea. We would be thrilled to see you. There will be a £5 charge.

We have several plans for the summer months so watch this space for details.

## **Operation Christmas Child.**

have heard that the majority of our shoeboxes have gone to different areas in Central Asia. Our boxes were part of 237,735 sent from the UK and 11,330,126 sent globally. Isn't that amazing. Each shoebox gift brings so much joy and shows a child they are loved, planting seeds and building goodwill between communities of all faiths and none. If you are able, do take a look at the Samaritans Purse website and read of individual stories and the gifts that delight them most. Looking at the smiling faces of children holding boxes gives me such joy and I know it will thrill you too. Well done everyone.

## **Flower rota.**

We will meet on Saturday 30th March to decorate the Church ready for Easter.

Sandra

## Remembering Delyth Wride (Street)

Looking back many years we occasionally had picnics on the rectory lawn. Del and her husband Andrew would support these and other church social events over the years.

A previous rector encouraged Del to put her teacher training into practice by helping with the running of the Sunday School. Del and Andrew enjoyed doing this for many years.

They opened their home in West End, Street, for a weekly House Group. Many of us went along to this group and made friendships that are still going on. Del was known to fall asleep for a while during the evening. This was after working hard in the Clarks Shoe Factory during the day. After the bible study, lively discussion and prayers Del made cups of tea and provided biscuits.

Back in the days when we had Summer Fetes and Christmas Bazaars Del would be in the small group of organisers. She could be found on the toy stall alongside Andrew, selling toys and other articles that they had collected throughout the year.

In 1994, Trinity Handbells were formed, and Del, alongside Andrew joined the team, and she continued enjoying playing, entertaining and joining with other HRGB members at rallies, almost to the end. She did miss a few sessions due to Andrew's health, but as a loyal member of the team, she will be missed.

Another memory we have of Del is the shop they ran together in Somerton, from where Del made endless trips to the wholesalers in the car, and generally supported Andrew.

After Andrew died in 2015, Del continued to attend church services and join in with activities. After a while she brought along a new partner, Graham. They both enjoyed holidays in their campervan, especially to Del's beloved Wales.

In later years Del was a willing helper after services at the Parish Church, Street, when refreshments were served, washing up and tidying away afterwards. With encouragement from our Rector, Ana, Del took over the running of our monthly Afternoon Tea get togethers. Sadly, Del passed away at the beginning of February. God bless you Del, we will miss you dearly.

*Roger and Pam Harmsworth.*

## **Whole-life Worship**

The concept of whole life worship may not be a familiar one and yet this book 'Whole life worship' by Sam and Sara Hargreaves (publisher IVP) describes how worship is far more than what is done in church on a Sunday morning. To quote the blurb on the back cover "Worship is a more than just music; it's a lifestyle."

Throughout 2024 at our monthly Celebrate@6 services, the preaching will be on this theme of whole-life worship.

Some of the teaching will be drawn from some of the material in this book. If you're wanting to delve a little deeper into this subject, I highly recommend you putting this on your reading list for 2024.

Available as they say, from all good bookshops. Ana Lawrence

## **Children matter to us**

Our February Messy Church in Walton was a noisy slightly chaotic but joy-filled occasion with record numbers of children and families packing into the church to enjoy church, but perhaps not as some of us would recognise it.

I want to assure you, particularly if you live in Street or Compton Dundon that my heart is to reach children throughout the benefice and not only in Walton. Whilst Messy Church in Street may not have 'worked' in the same way that it is doing so in Walton, I am prayerfully and actively looking at other ways to reach out.

If you have ideas or God-given thoughts in this area I would love to hear from you. Ana Lawrence

## Easter Celebrations

In the next few weeks, we will be celebrating Easter. As well as welcoming Elmhurst Junior school into the Parish church in Street and Walton Primary into Holy Trinity, Walton for their Easter services and events, we have a number of services and activities in Holy week (starting Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March). Our final Lent lunch will be on the Monday (the day after Palm Sunday). Some of us will be attending the annual Chrism Eucharist in Wells Cathedral on Tuesday (26<sup>th</sup> March) then that same afternoon, we will be hosting our Easter Messy Church in Holy Trinity, Walton. On Maundy Thursday (28<sup>th</sup> March) we will be gathering for a Passover meal, sharing in the Communion service and some hot food.

As the week moves towards its climax, our Good Friday services will include:

Good Friday@theMission, a short all-aged focussed time of food and reflection from 9.30am in the Mission Church.

Our traditional service and walk up Lollover Hill in Compton Dundon from 11.30am ending with refreshments.

Last hour at the Cross, a service of silence and reflection from 2pm in the Parish Church, Street.

Then on Easter Day when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus there will be Communion services in all of our churches. See elsewhere for details.

We have Good News to share, so please share these opportunities to celebrate together. Ana Lawrenc

# Weddings

For the first time since I joined you in the benefice, we currently have no weddings booked into the church diary. Seeing a couple come together and getting married in church is a huge privilege and of course always a joyous and special occasion.

There has been a trend in recent years for couples to get married elsewhere (not in churches) and in some cases deciding not to get married at all. You won't be surprised to hear that I think the very best place to get married is in church.

We have some beautiful buildings in our benefice and if you have relatives or friends in this area who might be thinking about getting married, do encourage them to consider marrying in church.

Many people assume that they wouldn't be allowed but actually, although there are legalities to be observed, it's rarely if ever that such weddings simply cannot be celebrated. As a first step, I'd always encourage a conversation. Ana Lawrence



# CHARITABLE SUPPORT IN 2023

As part of our charitable giving our parishes are now sending the support that our Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) agreed to our mission and charitable partners.

We will publish letters of thanks and other information from these charities around our churches in due course and also update you on the causes PCC's agree to support for 2024, following recommendations from church members.

In addition to the support that individual parishes offer to their chosen partners, as a benefice we committed to support our partner Parish at Mfuwe in Zambia financially and funds will shortly be sent there via the Diocese of Bath and Wells Zambia link

During the year we have also responded to particular emergencies via collections, for example, for the Turkey and Syria earthquake through Tearfund earlier in the year and through the appeal for Gaza and Israel through Christian Aid before Christmas.

Finally church affiliated groups such as coffee mornings, have sometimes done individual fund raising for a number of organisations including the Salvation Army food bank in Street and Macmillan, whilst collections at special services held in our churches during the year have raised even more money for organisations like the Children's Society and the Royal British Legion

Overall, across our churches, nearly £12,000 has been raised for local, national and international organisations working in some of the areas of greatest need and thank you so much for your generosity during 2023, particularly at a time when finances have been so tight for so many.

Kevin Lawrence

## **Bishop's letter** – New life for all the world

Sowing seeds, chitting potatoes, choosing varieties. Easter acts as starter's orders for the gardening year. Beds are cultivated, lawns mown, plans for all the growth and new life that spring and summer will bring made and then turned into action.

There's a much greater connection between gardening and Easter than it merely being the time to dust off forks and spades. For in the Bible, a garden is the setting for Easter itself. In John's Gospel (Jn 20:1-18) Mary Magdalene meets the risen Jesus in a garden. Indeed, Jesus's appearance to Mary is so unexpected that at first she can't believe it's really him. So she mistakes the man she meets 'supposing him to be the gardener' (John 20:15).

In John's account, all the new life contained in the first Easter chimes with a much earlier story set in a garden too. This is of the new life of another man and woman, the creation story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and contained in the book of Genesis (Genesis 2:4- 3:24). In that story, Adam is the gardener (Gen 2:15), only for things to go wrong. In John, Jesus is portrayed as the new Adam – come to bring new life that has no end.

What would happen if we were to think of our churches as gardens, primed to welcome the spring that is the new life of Jesus this Easter? What would happen if we imagined ourselves called to be gardeners – like our father Adam and the new Adam, Jesus? What would we expect to grow? What might need pruning or weeding? What new plans for the coming season would we make and turn into action? What would be the harvest that we'd sow for, tend and then reap?

For I reckon we should see Easter as the starting point of all that God wants to do among us and with us. Jesus's resurrection opens us to being part of God's new creation. Easter offers us a fresh start for life, relationships and the life of our churches: new life for all the world.

Happy gardening and a very Happy Easter to you all.

Bishop Michael



DIOCESE OF  
**Bath & Wells**

## Sharing the Easter story

Living the story. Telling the story.

With Easter falling at the end of March this year, preparations are well underway for some creative celebrations across Bath and Wells during Holy Week – in our churches, in our schools, as well as in our homes and outdoor spaces.

Suzi Darwin, Children and Youth Worker at St Swithin's, Bath is one of the organisers of an event designed to share the good news by recreating the wonder of the Easter story in the city's Victoria Park, in the area below the Royal Crescent. Between 2pm and 4pm on Good Friday, Suzi and other volunteers from six Bath churches, will be holding the [Easter Adventure in the Park](#). At stations dotted around the park they will be telling stories and engaging children in a range of ways, from waving palms to mark Jesus's journey into Jerusalem to sharing squash and biscuits at a Last Supper.

She explains, "Last year's event was really lovely, with people from different churches getting involved and acting out the Easter story at churches around the city. Around 100 people joined in with the event last year, some who regularly attend church and some who don't, including some families who attend our church toddler group.

"This year's event is going to be very interactive. The children can get fully involved and at the end we hope to be able to give them an Easter egg and a Bible. By holding it in Victoria Park we hope that even more people can join us - and can meet and come to know Jesus."

You can find out what your church has planned for Holy Week by visiting [achurchnearyou.com](http://achurchnearyou.com).

Looking for something creative to do at home to engage with the Easter story? Why not download our Easter Bible Chat Mat at [bathandwells.org.uk/chat-mats](http://bathandwells.org.uk/chat-mats).

# Jesus 'Took the Fall' for you!

'...CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED ... THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST ...' 1 Peter 3:18 NKJV

---

At the cross we see two things:

1. **How God feels about sin.** God, Who is holy, finds our sin in all its forms to be totally offensive and punishable by death. 'Thus says the Lord to this people: "... they have loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will ... punish their sins"' (Jeremiah 14:10 NKJV). The subject of repentance isn't too palatable in a generation that rationalizes sin. But a good doctor will tell you how sick you are in order to get you to take the medicine that will save you.
2. **How God feels about sinners.** 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life' (John 3:16 NKJV).

According to the Chicago Tribune, on June 22 1997, parachute instructor Michael Costello, forty-two, of Mt. Dora, Florida, jumped out of an airplane at 12,000 feet altitude with a novice skydiver named Gareth Griffith, aged twenty-one. The novice would soon discover just how good his instructor was. For when the novice pulled the ripcord his chute failed. Plummeting toward the ground he faced certain death. But then the instructor did an amazing thing. Just before hitting the ground, the instructor rolled over so that he would hit the ground first and the novice would land on top of him. The instructor was killed instantly. The novice fractured his spine in the fall, but he was not paralysed.

At the cross Jesus 'took the fall' for you. Today He asks you to live for Him. Will you?

*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](mailto: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](http://ucbmedia.co.uk)*





