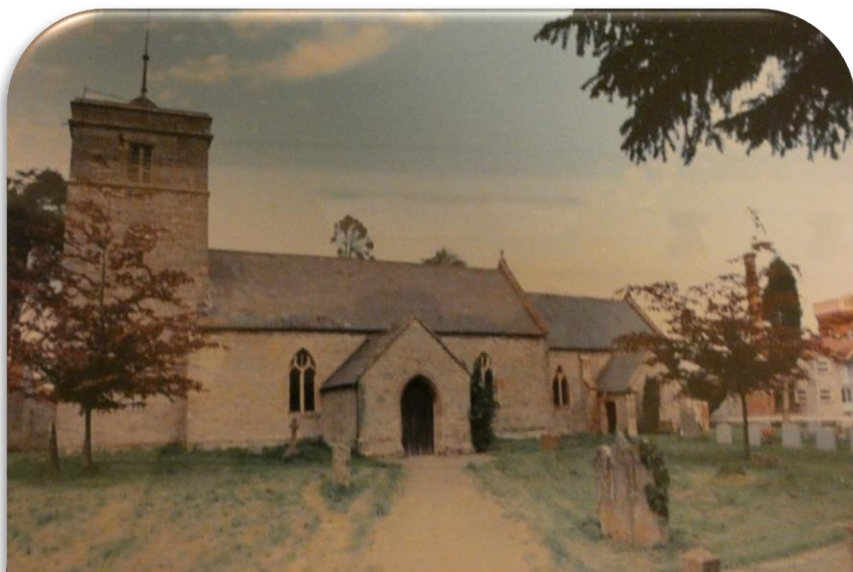


February 2025



60p

# Life



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



MAGAZINE EDITOR LIFE

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Articles for the March edition are due by **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February**

I came across the top picture featured on the front cover, taken incidentally by Bob Lampert, not long after the 2 Copper Beech trees were planted in memory of Diana Lockyer in the late 70's, how they have grown! On the right hand of the same picture, the keen eyed will spot the old Chimney on the factory area which is now a housing estate. My more recent picture at the bottom, shows how much the Copper Beech have grown, and the abundance of leaves shed each Autumn, giving a colourful foreground to our lovely church in Street.

Tim Hindle writes about the Benefice Pantomime on page 5. And all the photographs on the back cover were taken of the performance from the audience by Martin Kennard.

When spring arrives, there is a plan to have another churchyard working party at the Parish Church, therefore it is time to consider whether you could be involved. So, watch this space for a date.

I am also always mindful of the damage to our ancient building the weather causes, especially over this past wet year, and we should all be thoughtful as to how we can help the situation. More of this next month. Roger.

## **Rector's Letter.**

“...we are a church family who aims to: worship God, love our communities, grow in faith.”

Dear Friends,

I was pulled up short recently when in a sermon, I alluded to our church's mission statement (see above) and discovered that very few people could instantly recall it.

I quickly realised that I probably haven't been talking about this enough. A couple of years ago, we launched this mission statement following a PCC day away some 18 months previously and ever since, the mission statement appears at the top of every Lifeline to remind us of who we are and what we seek to do in God's name as a church family.

I think my plan was that this would be something that would trip off our lips as easily as some of our household straplines such as 'every little helps', that of a national supermarket chain.

But a mission statement must surely be more than that, something that we at SWCD Churches can live by both individually and in our lives together as church family.

To unpack the statement a little, to 'worship God' should surely be at the heart of who we are – we worship both together as gathered worshippers and separately as scattered worshippers. Psalm 95 reminds us “O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker”. We are to give God his worth.

To 'love our communities' will look a little different in our 3 parishes, but at its heart, we are to reach out in God's name and share his love with all.

And finally, to 'grow in faith' might involve joining a midweek house group or sustaining a pattern of regular bible study (alone or with others), or praying together, or in some other way, going deeper in our Christian faith taking things beyond the surface. I hope you'll agree that none of us are the 'finished article', we all have more to learn about God and our faith.

My friends, as we continue into the coming year, let us 'worship God, love our communities and grow in faith.'

With my love and prayers, Ana.

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## **The Next Men's Breakfast is Saturday February 22nd**



All men from the benefice are invited to a Saturday morning breakfast at the Mission church on February 22nd 9am -10am. An opportunity to come and start the day by joining with other people for food and relaxed company. There will be an "after breakfast" speaker.

Please do let us know that you wish to come so that we can arrange for the catering. There may be a small charge (up to £3). To sign up or for more information contact Tim Hindle (Mission church)

[tim\\_hindle62@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_hindle62@hotmail.com) or 07976 615844

# Reflecting God's love

By Toby Wright, Dean of Wells

Someone once asked the great Anglican monastic theologian Herbert Kelly this questions: 'How do we know what the will of God is?' to which he famously answered, 'We don't. That's the joke.' Kelly is right: we can't know precisely what God's will is in a certain situation. But we can open up opportunities for God to 'come through' our actions, and building community is a key way of doing this. In any situation we can try and tune our lives a bit more to God. And across our diocese our commitment to our communities is key to this.

So, when we meet people, a simple smile shows the person before us we see them as a friend. This is not to suggest ignorance or naivety. We are not unaware of the limitations and imperfections of a person, but we are prepared to focus more deeply, to the depths of the heart in each person. To seek out the goodness that only love and trust can bring to birth. As a Cistercian writer recently put it: 'Let us welcome each person as Christ, because in all truth it is Christ whom we welcome. 'You did this to me' (Matthew 25). Let us look for the beloved face of Christ in each person, for each is his true face.'

But why start our focus on community, with those around us, and not God? Good question. Perhaps it is best explained by a lovely saying from the Desert Father, John the Dwarf: 'You don't build a house by starting with the roof and working down. You start with the foundation.'

They said, 'What does that mean?'

He said, 'The foundation is our neighbour whom we must win. The neighbour is where we start. Every commandment of Christ depends on this.'

**Toby Wright**

**Dean of Wells**

## **Benefice Pantomime January 12<sup>th</sup> 2025**

We all very much enjoyed the Christmas pantomime put on at Mission Church. There was much laughter and audience entertainment. The story, set in a family home on Christmas eve, was a “who done it” mystery with a supporting cast of deaf grandmothers, inept magicians, vain sisters and grumpy neighbours. Amongst all the fun the story gave us the chance to reflect on the real meaning of the Christmas nativity. A big thank you to the brilliant cast which was made up of folk from all over the benefice and beyond. And a special thanks to all those involved in putting this performance together and making it an evening to remember. The night raised much needed funds for our sister Benefice church in Mfuwe, Zambia.

Tim Hindle Mission Church.

## **Time to serve**

At our Annual Parish Church Meetings (APCMs) in each of our parishes this spring we will be electing members of our Parochial Church Council (PCC) as well as church wardens and other representatives. Please be prayerfully considering whether you could stand for election or, if God puts someone else on your heart as a suitable candidate, please share that calling with them?

If you want to know more about the role of a PCC member or a church warden, please talk to one of those currently serving, or contact a member of the clergy team

Ana Lawrence

# My Faith Journey

I am going to begin my faith journey not when I was converted, saved, born again whatever expression you want to use. I believe very often God is at work in your life before conversion. He did in my life. You may put it down to good luck; I put it down to God at work, certainly, in my life.

As a child I remember my granny taking me to church on occasions but after she died church became something you only did at weddings, funerals etc. In a high-class menswear window was an advert, wanted young man to train as a manager. Must have good grades in English and Maths CSE.

I left school on my 15th Birthday without taking any exams. Nothing ventured nothing gained, I thought. I'll just say to him when he turns me down. "If you want second best for the sake of a piece of paper, that's up to you!" I got the job, because of my cheek, I think not. He was a Christian man, knew my circumstances and this was one of my grandfather's old shops. "I'll give you two months to prove yourself." Luck, good fortune or God at work?

After 2 years and I was promoted to assistant manager in a larger shop in Shropshire. The manager and several of the staff were Christians and would start their day with prayers and of course they invited me to join them at church. Living in digs, Sunday was a long day and an invitation to lunch was a no brainer. I sat through lots of services and yes some of the sermons were great and challenged me others were quite boring.

One really challenged me; it was a communion service. I don't know what or why I just knew I had to go up to the rail and offer my life to God. Was this the beginning of my Christian journey? Or did it begin that day I stood outside and read the advert for a young man to train as a manager?

To begin with I was what I call a pew Christian; yes, I read my bible and said prayers that was it until I moved to Devon. As the Anglican Church there was too high, I moved over to the Methodist where I started working with the young people. This led me to the Teignmouth, Dawlish evangelical fellowship. Summer was beach missions' winter. They took films like 'His Land' around the villages.

This in turn led me to be involved with Dick Saunders and Don Summers Crusades in the West Country. Moving to the midlands I did a two-year stint as president of the Sunday School Union which took me to churches of all denominations and God taught me it is not important how you worship it is why you worship that matters. I found Christians in all types of churches, from happy clappy to smells and bells. Moving to Cornwall I had the call to preach and became a Methodist local preacher, then moving to a village where there was a very happy clappy Anglican church I became a Reader (preacher) with them. I have found that whenever I said yes to God, He equipped me to do the work, or brought people along side me to guide and help me. Say yes and He will provide for sure.

Blessings Edd (Edwin Reeve Churchwarden)



# Holy Trinity Walton.



A Happy New year to you all.



We are starting off our 2025 fundraising with our usual quiz evening with quizmaster Liz Brown.



This will be on Friday 28th February starting at 7.00pm. The fee will be £5 with tea, coffee and nibbles provided. You are welcome to bring other drinks. This is always a fun evening and it would be wonderful if you could join us. Make up a team or come along on your own and join a team on the evening.



As you may be aware, we will be trying our best to start a separate fund, raising money for a new roof. Our first event will be a barn dance in Walton village hall on April 12th.

Rough Round the Edges will be playing for us and hot dogs will be available to purchase in the interval. The tickets for this event will be £12 and can be booked through Sandra Gristock, Liz Selway and Andy Savage. Dust your dancing shoes off or simply come along to enjoy the music and company as we would love to see you.



We will be having another friends meeting on Thursday 13th March 11.30 after our coffee morning to organise more fundraising particularly for the roof fund. If you have any different ideas for us to try to raise additional money, we would be so grateful to hear. Once we have a building fund we will be able to apply for grants but we need to approach the refurbishment in an alternative way and so need bigger, more ambitious events and schemes.



Sandra.

# **GATHER25.com**

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***Gather25 leader for UK - Matt Redman***

***For more details: [www.gather25.com](http://www.gather25.com)***

***It won't be a gathering of the global church without you!***

***Bernard Sinclair (Mission Church)***

***- [jbernardmsinclair@gmail.com](mailto:jbernardmsinclair@gmail.com)***

## **Connections@theMission**

Various prayers, poems, bible verses and more were shared at our January 'Connections'. We even sang different words to a well-known hymn tune. There were so many contributions brought along that we had to save some for another occasion. The sharing and discussion continued as we had cake and a cuppa. The afternoon seemed to have a theme of, *even if things are not going well, make the most of things and look forward.*

Sue Ripley will be telling us about how she got to where she is now at the February 'Connections'.

### **Connections@theMission**

**Welcome to the Mission Church Street**

**Thursday 20th February**

**2-30pm till 4pm**

**"How did I get here?"**

**"A Life's Story**

**Told by Sue Ripley (Parish Church Street)**

**A cuppa and cake will be available**

**Pam Harmsworth (Mission Church)**

## Updating our records

Our electoral roll, which is the nearest the Church of England has to a membership list, is due for full renewal this year. This means that, even if you've been on the electoral roll for many years, you will need to renew your membership by completing a new form. Electoral roll officers from each of our parishes will ensure there are forms available in each of our churches, or contact them (their details are on the inside covers of the magazine).

Please be assured that all the information we hold is treated in accordance with Data Protection laws. The electoral roll, which is a simple list of names, is a publicly available document, but our contacts list (which we will update separately) is kept solely for the use of church family members who are happy to have their details included and are not shared anywhere else.

Ana Lawrence

## EASTER EXPERIENCE

As part of our outreach to local schools, this year we will be offering 'Easter Experience' an interactive and innovative way of exploring the Easter Story with primary school aged children. The format will involve a number of 'stations' telling a different bit of the story and we need volunteers to lead and help with these.

We have run something similar a few years ago and it was much appreciated and well received by a local school.

We will be welcoming pupils from Elmhurst Junior School into the Parish Church on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March, Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April and Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, during the school day morning and afternoon sessions. If you would like to get involved, please have a word with me.

Ana Lawrence

# Confessions of a Christmas Killjoy

I haven't (hadn't) liked Christmas since my early 20s - that's actually quite a stretch: over 60 years in fact! I used to like it as a child - waiting excitedly for Santa to fill my stocking on Christmas Eve, singing carols round a huge tree at school, getting presents and all that sort of thing. But as I got older that all faded and somehow Christmas became something which I just didn't have the emotional and energy reserves to cope with. Excited anticipation turned into a sense of foreboding bordering on dread. Why did it have to occur in the depths of winter? We need all our energy surely to cope with the ever-shortening hours of daylight / increasing darkness, which so many - me included - find depressing. Hasn't any one heard of 'S A D' (seasonal affective disorder)? Why does everyone have to go on a spending spree way beyond what they can afford to buy very often meaningless presents just for the sake of it? Surely this is a case of mass cultural hysteria which we could well do without? Why can't we just peel our celebrations back to the core of what it's really about - God's intervention in sending his son, born of a humble virgin, born in a stable and laid in a manger for his bed, only recognised and worshipped by shepherds and foreign visitors? Surely we should totally reject the secular commercial way Christmas has come to be celebrated in our Western world?

Such were my gloomy thoughts up until early December 2024 - just a month or so ago in fact. At Christmas time I really wasn't much fun to be around, as those who know me well enough can testify. The lead up to Christmas was something I had to be dragged through. But this time - this last Christmas - was different. I even really enjoyed the lead-up to it, and will look forward to celebrating Advent in Christmases to come! What was different about Christmas 2024? Why this change?

Well, for one thing my wife suggested we read through a book each evening during Advent. Secretly I rather dreaded this, knowing my propensity to 'nod off' when sitting in a chair listening to somebody else. Surprise, surprise, it didn't happen! My wife is a superb reader and I had no difficulty with following the readings and embracing their message. And then there was the Royal Albert Hall. We had spotted that they do a series of Carol Concerts in December in the days leading up to Christmas - no less than 15 concerts in sequence, in fact. We signed up for the first one - a matinée on a Saturday afternoon. I really enjoyed it. There were at least two choirs, an orchestra, a band and a couple of soloists, ably and enthusiastically competed by a young lady with a powerful voice from Ulverston in Cumbria (which is where one of the comedy silent movie duo Laurel and Hardy came from - worth a visit if you're in the vicinity). The concert was a blend of sacred and secular, ranging from the lovely "O Holy Night" and "Once in Royal David's City" to "Rocking around the Christmas Tree" and "I wish it could be Christmas every day". Now I must admit these last two have been a pet hate of mine for a long time - seeming to epitomise the secularisation of Christmas away from celebrating the birth of Jesus. But all that was blown away for me as I realised how the one can lead into the other. One particular lasting memory for me was two very small children dancing in the aisle to "Rocking around the Christmas tree": it was absolutely delightful! So we made our way back to Somerset with flame of the Christmas candle burning brightly in my heart! And it has continued to burn brightly! I started buying and wrapping presents and our tree with a new-found enthusiasm! Celebrating Christmas and the New Year with the family has never been better. And I mean this to continue in the years to come, God being my helper. All thanks and praise to Him!

*Bernard Sinclair*

# Holy Trinity Walton Re-Ordering

Before any work can be started on the inside of the church the roof has to be replaced. For many, many years we have had a leak in the church roof and now it has become multiple leaks depending on the wind direction. There is damage to the timbers inside the spire and water damage internally to the walls in the church. We have put off starting this project, but it can't be delayed any longer. The barn dance will be the first of our fundraisers to go into the roof pot. We are asking for help to work together to save our village church. We don't receive any money from the Church of England or any other source. Everything is raised by the church members and friends regular giving so that we can pay all the bills and regular outgoings. We can't take this huge task on alone as we are few and mostly elderly. (Sorry church family but it is true) We need ideas that go beyond our coffee mornings and cream teas as much as we enjoy them. We would love to hear from you if you can come up with any fresh ideas or if you can help us put an event on. We are sure there will be some ideas or expertise out there. The church is the centre of the village and it's site on the main road is seen by everyone passing. There has been a church on this site since the 1100s and we hope there will be for many centuries more. Why don't you join us for our weekly Thursday coffee morning and have a chat or make a phone call. We are open to ideas, big or small.

Sandra Gristock & Andy Savage (Walton)

## CONGRATULATIONS



To Tabby Lowndes - Northcott (Mission Church) on recently passing her driving test.



## News from St Andrews

December is a busy month in any church and St Andrew's is no exception. Following the success of our Community Carol Service and Film night, we were delighted to see so many people at our church Carol Service, lit by candlelight and followed by mulled village cider. Our Crib Service on Christmas Eve was great fun, led by Sister Rachel, who established a wonderful rapport with the children, all in costume, who loved spotting her 'deliberate mistakes' as she told the Christmas story.

Sister Rachel has also established strong links with Compton Dundon School. They have visited the church on several occasions, including a special Christmas service, where they wrote Christmas prayers on stars to place on the tree. Students from the school have also been helping at our monthly CAMEO events and enjoyed serving mince pies, stollen and cakes at our December meeting,

Pat, Rachel and I were invited to a special Christmas assembly at the school, which looked at how Christmas is celebrated in different countries. We were treated to carols from Ireland, Poland, Australia and the USA, as well as music and readings performed by the students. We look forward to strengthening our links with the school in the coming year.

Gill Williams.



## Safeguarding within our Benefice

Many of you upon paying a visit to one of our church toilets over the past year, will have been confronted by a poster displaying the visages of your local Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs). Once the initial shock of seeing our faces displayed in these less than flattering venues has passed, you may be asking yourselves “*what is that all about?*” or “*couldn't the Church Warden find anywhere better?*” In truth, we hope that none of our congregation will *ever* need to contact their PSO for any matter that constitutes a concern, but *if you do* feel the need to reach out to us, you will be able to take a contact number or email address discretely and without fear of attracting unwanted attention.

There may be a whole host of reasons why a PSO may need to be contacted, ranging from physical to mental abuse issues. In order to promote a safe environment for worship, your PSOs put in many hours of work, discretely, behind the scenes. They initiate DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks for all volunteers, ensuring detailed back-ground checks are made before people can take up their posts. Your PSOs also ensure various levels of safeguarding training are maintained every three years for those requiring it. To facilitate these tasks, they themselves undertake rigorous PSO training in terms of their role and the use of software packages designed to manage all the aforementioned demands. Furthermore, they meet regularly with the Clergy, and each other, and publish

records of their activities to the PCCs of your churches and at the ACPM.

The Church of England has always striven to promote a safer environment and culture. To safely recruit and support all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church. We aim to respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation. Unfortunately, failures in these aspirations do occur, as was borne out in the deplorable case of John Smyth QC, indicating the need to stay on top of all possible safeguarding infractions at all levels.

The INEQE review in March 2025: (INEQE is the largest independent Safeguarding Company in the UK and Ireland, Specialising in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.) The INEQE audit is part of a national programme, commissioned by the Archbishop's Council, to conduct an intensive and comprehensive review of safeguarding at each diocese and cathedral in the Church of England. Posters have been displayed in our churches pointing the way for each member of our congregation to have had an input, should they wish to.

Your PSOs continue to strive to create an environment where everyone feels safe, valued and respected.

*Steve King, St Andrew's, Compton Dundon, on behalf of our 3  
Benefice PSOs.*

## News in brief from Manna

### Energy Footprint Tool now open for 2025

The Church of England's [Energy Footprint Tool](#) is now open for churches to enter their energy use from 2024. The data collected helps churches understand their carbon footprint. This work is an essential part of caring for God's Creation, by helping to combat global heating and climate change. The easy-to-use online tool reveals a church's carbon footprint, based on the energy it uses to heat and light its buildings. Last year 60% of churches in Bath and Wells used the EFT. This year, the diocese wants to get as close to 100% as possible to help achieve the target of Net Zero by 2030.

### Diocesan Bible Passage

Over the past few years, the Diocese of Bath and Wells has developed the habit of choosing a [Diocesan Bible passage for the year](#), which is used in a variety of ways. The passage for 2025 will be Isaiah 55. 1-9, suggested by Jo Stobart, Area Dean of Somerset South. One of the ways in which this passage is used is through the practice of Dwelling in the Word – listening to God through scripture and each other.

### Offering a warm welcome

Churches throughout the Diocese of Bath and Wells are providing a Warm Spaces for those facing challenges in heating their homes or seeking community during the cold, dark winter months. Initially launched in response to the sharp rise in fuel costs, these Warm Spaces have proved so popular across all age groups that many churches have continued them. They remain committed to offering a haven of warmth, hospitality, and connection to everyone in their community. **The Manna Team.**

Some of the performing cast in the 2025 SWCD Pantomime at the Mission Church. Oh yes they are !

