

February 2026



60p

Life



swcd-churches.org.uk

MAGAZINE EDITOR LIFE



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Articles for the March edition are due by **Sunday 15th February**

New life is always good to see, and snowdrops are usually the first sign that spring is on the way, and the front cover picture was taken last February in the Bishops garden with the magnificent backdrop of Wells Cathedral. This garden is our favourite and most visited one throughout the year, and at any time it never ceases to delight us, the gardeners (mostly volunteers) work hard to keep the garden pleasing the public.

On the back is a lovely picture of Fiona Gibson, the 'soon to be' Bishop of Taunton, and you can read her first letter to the Diocese on page 6.

The January 'Connections' fell on Pam's birthday, so I surprised her with a cake which was shared with those present. See page 14 for the report. The photo was taken by Churchwarden Tim Hindle. Roger.

FAMILY FILM AFTERNOON at Compton Dundon

Saturday, February 28th at 2 pm

Everyone is warmly invited to come and watch 'Doctor Doolittle' in the Village Hall.

A fun film suitable for all ages.

Refreshments will be provided by St Andrew's Church.

Thanks go to the Village Hall Committee for their support. Pat.

Rector's Letter

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 16 - 18

Dear Friends,

This year includes a special focus (led by the Diocese of Bath and Wells) on prayer. For any Christian, prayer should be as natural as breathing, it should be the heartbeat of our Christian lives and yet for many Christians, prayer can often seem to be a struggle.

Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians encourages the local church to 'pray continually' which might seem an impossible instruction. I'm not sure we are to be continually on our knees in prayer, but more a sense that prayer is something that we do and are. Pray is a relationship between us and God – prayer can be deeply personal and wonderfully corporate all at the same time.

It is always a delight to hear testimony to the way God has answered prayer and this is something that happens frequently, spurring us on to continue further in prayer. Prayer is not just for those who seem a 'bit more holy' or even for the 'spiritually keen'. Prayer is something we can all do!

There are countless resources to support the way we might pray, including a prayer app with Lectio 365 which many of us use, specific passages of scripture, patterns of prayer – whatever works for you, please do pray. There are also some excellent books written on prayer including 'God on mute' by Pete Greig which through personal testimony tackles the tricky area of unanswered prayer.

God hears our prayers, sometimes the answer will be a clear 'yes', it might be a 'wait' and it might be a 'no'. But however we hear God, please know that God delights in the prayers of his people, however faltering or polished, however honest and vulnerable.

Let's be a church that prays continually for the growth and transformation of our communities that others may also know God's love and salvation.

With my love & prayers,

Ana

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NEW HOUSE GROUP

I'm delighted that another house group has started in January 2026, meeting on Thursday evenings at 33 Somerton Road, Street, the home of Michael and Margaret Long.

House groups now meet on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and are open to all across our benefice who want to take this opportunity to grow in faith as well as spending time with other Christians for prayer, fellowship and the occasional meal together. If you would like to join one of these groups, you can find details on our website and please contact either myself or the group leader / co-ordinator.

If none of these times work for you and you would still like to be part of a house group, I'm keen to see more groups emerging, perhaps particularly in the daytime. Please also have a word with me so we can gauge interest.

Ana Lawrence

Diocesan comings and goings

Archdeacon of Wells announces departure

Anne Gell, Archdeacon of Wells, who was our guest at our November benefice service, is to step down from her roles in Bath and Wells in May 2026. Anne has been Archdeacon of Wells and Residentiary Canon of Wells Cathedral since 2017.

Bishop Michael, Bishop of Bath and Wells, says, "After serving us faithfully, generously and gracefully for nine years, Anne has decided to move on to take on a new challenge. We are hugely indebted for all that she has given during her time in Bath and Wells. Anne has known, loved and served people in churches and communities across the Wells Archdeaconry.

As our 'local' Archdeacon, Anne has been the person I, our churchwardens and others have turned to for advice from everything from legal complexities to building 'faculties' and we wish her well as she moves on. Watch this space for news of the appointment of her successor.

Welcoming our new Bishop of Taunton

The Venerable Dr Fiona Gibson, Archdeacon of Ludlow, will be consecrated as Bishop of Taunton at a service in Southwark Cathedral, London on Friday 6 February.

This will be followed by a service of Welcome and Installation at Wells Cathedral on Sunday, 8 February, at 15:00. Everyone is welcome to attend. Following this Fiona will take up her role in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Ana Lawrence

Seder or Passover meal.

Food is important for all of us. Some food or meals we only have at certain times of the year to celebrate a special occasion. We usually only eat birthday cake when it is our birthday. For the Jewish people, Passover or the Seder meal is the most essential for the whole year. Great extended families come together, children of all ages. They eat the same food and talk through Passover. This meal has an importance for the Jewish people; it is when they celebrate becoming a free people and going into the land that God is to give them. It is both a national and special religious time. It has a relevance for us because Jesus led a Passover meal for his disciples. However, he went further and shared with us what becomes a communion service. Here Jesus shared bread and wine with all, explaining this and linking it to his death and how this points to his resurrection. Jesus asked us to come together and share bread and wine; this was one of the only things that he asked us to do in remembrance of him.

Therefore, this is what we are going to do. On Maunday Thursday, the 2nd of April. This is the Thursday before Easter, celebrating this at Walton church. All, from across the benefice are invited. We begin at 7.00pm. We will live out and follow the Passover, just as Jesus did and reflect on what this means for us. It will be a time of worship, but we also share a meal. We do not charge for this. However, I will be seeking 'volunteers' to prepare some type of casserole, either vegetable, chicken or beef. (Please don't make a pork one, as Jesus would never have had this) We have found this works best in a slow pot or similar, as this is easy to keep warm. Help making a simple pudding would equally be good. We eat the meal part way through the Passover, just as Jews do today.

This a valuable time to bring the whole benefice together as we come close to celebrate Easter. Sharing time with one another. At the end of the time we share communion, just as Jesus did.

This can be a special time. If you want to know more, please contact me. If you can help, please, say. I hope that you can join us. Jesus said; 'do this in remembrance of me.' David Hatrey

Bishop's Letter

Generations growing in faith together

By Fiona Gibson, who will become the Bishop of Taunton on 8 February 2026

Our extended family recently got together for a celebration. We were nine adults from 24-68, one toddler, and one dog, and it was glorious! The joy was simply in being together, whatever our age.

I sometimes wonder what would happen in the life of our churches if we could adopt the same outlook there? Each generation glad that the other is there. Each generation contributing something to the whole. Each generation looking to the interests of the others, making sure there was something that spoke to the others even if not to them.

The writer of the Chronicles records something you could miss if you weren't looking for it. In 2 Chronicles 20, when Judah was facing attack from Ammon and Moab, King Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast and summoned the people. This is what it says in verse 13:

“All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.”

At a time of great peril, when the king was seeking the LORD, all generations came together to pray.

We often think of intergenerational meaning us older ones passing on wisdom to the younger ones, and that's certainly part of it. But a truly intergenerational family, which the church is, means all generations welcoming one another, valuing one another, learning from one another, and praying with and for one another. It's not a one-way thing.

Our younger generations are ambassadors from the future, with wisdom to give us about their culture, and how to share the timeless truths of the gospel with their peers. They are leaders and learners, just as we all are.

What might it look like across our diocese if we committed to making room for other generations? What might it look like if, like the people of God in ancient times, we came together in our year of especial focus on prayer - adults, young people, and little ones - and sought the power and wisdom of God together? I have a feeling we'd be surprised!

Bishop Fiona.

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Travel companies offer church funding

Did you know that hundreds of travel companies including TUI, Booking.com, Lastminute.com, Haven Holidays, Expedia, Thomas Cook and Hotels.com will all donate money when you book with them?

When their holiday is booked online, the company the booking is made through will send your church a free donation as a thank you, at no extra cost to the shopper. Via easyfundraising.org.uk. All of our parishes are registered so please make the most of free money for your church!

Thousands of other online retailers will also donate when you shop on-line.

If you need any help in getting set up, please have a word with me.

Kevin Lawrence



Pet Blessing.

On Saturday the 7th of February 2026, I am delighted to offer a pet blessing service at 3pm at St Andrew's Compton Dundon,

What is it?

A short service (about half an hour) in church, with some well-known hymns, a short talk and an opportunity to bring your pets to be blessed by the vicar. It might be noisy and possibly a little chaotic, but also a lot of fun!

Why a blessing?

A blessing is simply a short prayer asking for God's favour and protection. For example, we always ask for God's blessing on us as we leave church, or in a marriage service for the couple, sometimes even boats & buildings are blessed! We love our pets so why not ask for God's blessing on them too?

Who can come?

Anyone! The service will be suitable for all ages. You don't have to bring a pet with you.

How do we bring our pets?

We are asking that all animals are suitably restrained – eg: dogs on leads, cats/ small animals in suitable carry bags/ containers, insects and reptiles in secure containers. If you have a particularly large pet, eg: horse, donkey or farm animal we suggest they stay on the path or grass and I will come out to them at the time of blessing. If you are bringing a larger animal, please let us know in advance. Please don't worry about your pet making a mess there will be clean up materials on hand!

What if my pet is anxious or unable to come to the service?


If for any reason you can't bring your pet to the service, please bring a photo of them instead. If they are particularly anxious, we would advise this is probably the kindest option for them as much as you might like to bring them. If your pet is, likely to be aggressive, or could be frightening to others, please do not bring them. If you are unsure about whether to bring your pet, do get in touch.

Please do bring a photo of a pet that is no longer with us, as we will be remembering them too.

Please do forward any questions to Sr.Rachel

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Coffee, chat and snacks Christmas meal.

On Saturday 21st of December, the coffee and chat team welcomed 27 people for a lunch. We had a joyful sing-a-long to our favourite Christmas Carols accompanied by Neville on the piano,  before we sat down to a two-course meal of Turkey and all the trimmings with various puddings. We had beautiful table decorations made by Margaret Long that were a wonderful addition to a very festive table. The food was wonderful and I must add, paid for with A Festive Food Grant from Street Parish Council, An anonymous donor and the lovely turkey was heavily subsidised by P&K Meats of Street. I wish to thank the whole team for cooking such wonderful food and for us all working hard together to serve our guests, some who were new to us. If you would like to know more about joining us as a guest or as a volunteer on a rota basis, please do let me know.

Sr. Rachel.



ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

PET SERVICE

Come and join us in church on
Saturday, February 7th
at 3 pm



for a fun, all age service where pets and humans
are equally welcome!

An opportunity for your beloved pets to be blessed,
but do come and join us with or without a pet.

If you are bringing a larger animal (e.g. farm animal)
please let the Churchwarden know (Pat King : 01458 274926.)

Dogs on leads please, and other animals in secure containers
so that they all feel safe and happy together.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT DURING 2025

On behalf of the whole church family, we want to express our gratitude for each and every church member who has offered financial support to SWCD Churches during 2025.

In what are challenging times for many, we are thankful to you and to God for your giving. There will be an opportunity at our Annual Parish Church Meetings in April to hear more about our finances and how our money has been spent in mission and ministry in each of our parishes.

Whilst, following feedback received, this year we do not intend to send out individual ‘thank you letters’ as a matter of course, if you either need or would like a letter, perhaps for tax purposes, please do get in touch with us.

We will continue to provide information about church finances throughout 2026, both in this magazine and elsewhere but if you want more information about ways to give please do get in touch

Sonia Beaty	Treasurer	Street and Walton
Julie Gordon	Treasurer	Compton Dundon

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Connections@theMission

This event is held on the third Thursday of the month at 2-30pm and is open to everyone.

Tim Hindle (Street Churches) was the speaker at the January meeting. He gave an interesting talk about his outdoor work in education and his faith. The talk was enhanced by some interesting pictures and short videos. As always the talk was followed by refreshments and even more discussion about various subjects. Pam Harmsworth (Mission Church)

You are Invited to
Connections@theMission
Thursday 19th February

2-30pm

Mission Church
Street

Michael Long (Mission Church)
will be talking about
'Evangelism / my faith in Street'
There will be refreshments

Quiz evening, at Holy Trinity Walton.

We will be holding a quiz evening on 27th February in church. Our quiz evenings are very popular and I suggest you book in advance. Even if you don't have a team do let us know and we will make up teams of up to 6 people. The evening starts at 7 o'clock and tea/coffee and cake will be available. You are very welcome to bring other drinks of your choice. The cost is £5 per head for church funds.

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Songs of the Sea, Walton village hall

In aid of Walton church refurbishment fund



Saturday 11th April at 7 pm we will be in the village hall for an evening of sea songs and shanties. Our band will be Bumpy Roads and it promises to be a great sing-a-long evening. Come along and join the fun. There will be a light fisherman's supper provided and tea and coffee but please feel free to bring your drinks of choice. We will be holding a raffle and tickets for the evening are £12 per head in aid of the refurbishment fund.

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Congratulations



from



Walton

To Rev David Hatrey on celebrating 25 years of ordination. Our love and thanks go to David for all he does for the benefice and beyond.

Sandra

Worship and Teaching

The first of the key areas of Church life covered in the Eco Church survey is Worship and Teaching. Not surprisingly this section underpins all that we do. I offer two opportunities for you to be personally involved in study and prayer.

Study Join me in following The Whole Easter Story by Jo Swinney through Lent, either by using it for personal study, or by joining a study group on Wednesday mornings, after the service in the Mission Church, when we will explore what Easter means for our relationship with God and the whole of creation.

Prayer The Diocese has called on us to make 2026 a year of focus on prayer. One of the suggestions for regular prayer listed on the cards being distributed in church is 'Creation and renewing the life of the earth'. A Rocha who coordinate Eco Church state:

‘Perhaps one of the main purposes of prayer is to align our wills with the will of God, and so we pray, ‘Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’. We might pray for the earth in response to any number of environmental crises. But we should pray for the earth on a regular basis, as a matter of course, for the following reasons:

- **Because we love God**, and we naturally want to acknowledge God’s love for all creation. When we pray for the earth, then we share in God’s delight and concern for, the whole of creation.
- **Because we naturally pray for what we care about**, and care more for what we pray about, in a virtuous circle of praying and caring, reflection and action. ...
- **Because we need to learn a less self-centred language**, in order to rediscover our place within, and dependence on, the whole of creation. As we practise praying for the earth, we expand our understanding of the issues, and our ability to act effectively.

Because humanity can be thought of as the ‘priesthood’ of creation, giving voice to the ceaseless praise that the whole creation offers to its Creator. The words at our disposal are a charism, or gift from God, which enable us to perform God’s purpose, for us and all the world.

They point to the following prayer resources for personal use or for when leading prayer in our churches.

A Rocha UK has a quarterly prayer diary:

arocha.org.uk/get-involved/pray/

A Rocha International offers 26 prayers for the climate and ecological emergency: atyourservice.arocha.org/en/26-prayers-for-the-climate-and-ecological-emergency/

Christian Aid, Green Christian and Tearfund all keep prayer for the climate at the heart of their work:

christianaid.org.uk/pray/faith-resources/climate-justice-resources

greenchristian.org.uk/resources/prayer-guide/

greenchristian.org.uk/resources/lament-hope-40-prayers-for-the-climate-and-ecologicalemergency/

tearfund.org/campaigns/climate-campaign/prayer-for-the-climate/prayer-in-the-park

A prayer from the Tearfund resource:

Creator God,

We acknowledge that as your handiwork,
we stand alongside all that you have made.

Trees and rivers, mountains and valleys,
soaring birds and scuttling creatures,
all are held within your care.

May we grow in our love and appreciation
for the fabulous variety around us;
and may our awe and wonder draw us closer
to the natural world, and through it to you,
the God of all things.

Amen.

Susan Ripley, Street Parish, SWCD Eco Church group

CONGRATULATIONS

To Ruth Tidball (Wednesday congregation) on recently celebrating a significant birthday.

To Steve King (Compton Dundon) on recently celebrating a significant birthday.

To Kath Sully (Walton) on recently celebrating a significant birthday.

To Aileen Withers (Street Churches) who celebrated her 90th birthday recently.

25 YEARS OF MINISTRY AT SWCD CHURCHES

February marks the 25th anniversary of David Hatrey's licencing to this benefice as an ordained minister. We are deeply grateful to David for his committed, faithful and creative service to the people of SWCD Churches. Please find your own ways of saying thank you to both David and Pauline for all they are and give to our life together as he marks this special anniversary.

Ana Lawrence

BOOK A CELEBRATION OR EVENT AT SWCD CHURCHES

Did you know you can book our church buildings for a party, celebration or event?

Whether marking that special day, organising a meeting or planning something else, why not talk to us about using one of our buildings?

Not only are they great venues in their own right but booking also helps to raise much needed revenue for our ministry and mission.

For more information pick up a leaflet in our churches or contact the church office Kevin Lawrence.

REORDERING PROJECT AT ST ANDREWS, COMPTON DUNDON

Towards the end of 2025 we heard from the Diocese that we had been granted 'Faculty permission' to proceed with the internal reordering project at St Andrew's, Compton Dundon.

This will involve reconfiguring the Chancel area of the church to make it once more usable as a worship space for smaller services, as well as creating a more flexible area at the rear of the building to allow for other events and serving of post service refreshments.

We recognise that there has been considerable local debate about this proposal, particularly around how we should handle the moving of what are known as the 'children's pews' and some other furniture within the church. We acknowledge that some hold strong feelings about these issues and we are actively working with the national 'Amenity' Societies such as the Victorian Society to ensure that we do this well and sensitively.

A group appointed by St Andrews PCC will now move towards securing the funding from trusts and beginning the work to make the changes agreed in the faculty.

If you have any questions, please contact me in the first instance.

Ana Lawrence



WHAT IS COMMUNION?

Holy Communion also sometimes called the Lord's supper or Eucharist is something that we share regularly together as a church family.

However, how often do we stop to think about what we are doing and what lies behind what we do and the words we say? During Lent this year we will be running a short sermon series exploring this in a little more detail. Our children's groups at the Mission Church as well as our house groups will also be exploring this subject.

Part of what prompted this study was work that our Parochial Church Councils are doing to develop a policy around children and communion. With more children coming to our churches, many of whom perhaps have not followed the 'traditional' Anglican pattern of baptism and confirmation, we are looking to consider how we respond in an inclusive and theologically appropriate way.

If you want to read more on this I can highly recommend 'The Meals Jesus gave us' by Tom Wright.

PCC members have been invited to share any thoughts on children and communion with me but if there are others who have strong views they would like to share then please know that I would be happy to talk further with you.

Ana Lawrence

ANNUAL PARISH CHURCH MEETINGS – SAVE THE DATE

Our Annual Parish Church Meetings are a chance to elect church wardens and other representatives, receive reports and information about the life, ministry and finances of the church over the last year and reflect and pray together about the future.

Please do put dates in your diary and make every effort to come along. Meetings are open to all on the parish electoral roll and if you are not yet on the electoral roll, please ask the relevant electoral roll officer for forms to join (details can be found on the inside covers of this magazine)

Walton Monday 27th April 7pm in Walton Church

Compton Dundon Tuesday 28th April 7pm in St Andrew's
Compton Dundon

Street Wednesday 29th April 7pm in the Mission Church

Ana Lawrence

NEW 'NURTURE' GROUP

On Tuesday evenings a new 'nurture group' has recently begun designed for those either exploring the Christian faith or learning more about their newfound faith.

The group is open to anyone who would find this of value and if you are interested in joining, it's definitely not too late, please have a word with me.

Ana Lawrence

News of Persecution of Christians in Nigeria

This information is from Open Doors which is a mission organisation supporting persecuted Christians around the world.

How are Christians persecuted in Nigeria?

Though number 7 on the Open Doors list for where Christians are most persecuted, Nigeria continues to be the most violent place to live in the world for believers and much of this comes from Islamist militant groups, such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). They target Christians and church buildings through intense attacks and converts from Islam are especially mistreated.

In northern Nigeria, 12 states have implemented Sharia (Islamic law) which creates a system where Christians are treated as second-class citizens. Communities fall victim to Fulani militants who hide out in forested areas and launch attacks on schools and churches, kidnapping believers and holding them for ransom. Others are killed and entire communities thrown into fear.

Who is particularly vulnerable in Nigeria?

Believers who live in the northern part of Nigeria face the most extreme persecution, though this violence has spread further south in recent years.

Please pray God, we grieve with our brothers and sisters in Nigeria who endure such unthinkable violence. Be a strong shield and a rock for those who are displaced; be a comfort to those who grieve the loss of loved ones; restore the hopes of those who have been the victims of sexual violence; pour out Your Spirit upon Nigerian Christians, that they would catch a glimpse of Your work in their hearts and in their lives. Change the hearts of those who attack Christians. Bring peace, O God. It seems like an impossible prayer, but we know you alone can do this. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Shared by Jane Tompsett (Mission Church).

No Excuse Sunday

To make it possible for everyone to attend church next Sunday we are holding a 'no excuse Sunday'.

Beds will be placed at the back of the church for those who say that Sunday is the only day they can sleep in.

Optrex will be available for tired eyes from watching TV late on Saturday night; Steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I came to church".

Blankets will be provided for those who complain the church is too cold and fans for those who find it too hot.

Scoreboards will be in the pews for those who wish to count the hypocrites present.

There will be TV dinners for those who can't cook lunch and come to church on the same day.

A section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to find God in nature.

We will give hearing aids to those who say that the preacher speaks too softly and cotton wool for those who say he/she is too loud.

Finally, the church will be decorated with a Christmas tree and Easter lilies for those who have never seen the church without them.

(Source unknown) Contributed by Edwin Reeve

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SUMMER (AND NEW WINE) IS COMING

It may still feel like winter but the festival booking season is in full swing and the same applies to the New Wine Christian conference at the Bath & West Show Ground.

A group of us will be going in late July, some of us camping for the whole time and some of us travelling by the day. If you would like to join us please get your booking in before prices rise any further and make sure that you both record your membership of 'Street Walton and Compton Dundon' and give New Wine permission to share your details with the group organisers so that we know who is coming from SWCD Churches. We look forward to seeing you there. Last year the sun shone, the worship and teaching were great, and we look forward to even more in 2026.

Ana Lawrence

Overcoming temptation

‘... PUT ON THE FULL ARMOUR OF GOD, SO THAT WHEN THE DAY OF EVIL COMES, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND ...’

Ephesians 6:13 NIV

The story is told of an overweight man who wanted to shed some pounds. So he decided to change his route to work so that he wouldn't drive by his favourite doughnut shop. He told his co-workers about his decision. Then he arrived at work one morning with a huge bag of doughnuts. When his co-workers asked him about it he said, 'These are not ordinary doughnuts. They're from the Lord.' Amazed, they asked, 'What in the world are you talking about?' He replied, 'Well, it's simple. On my way to work I accidentally drove by my favourite doughnut shop and saw all those wonderful pastries sitting in the window. I knew I had to pray for strength so I said, "Lord, if you want me to have any of these you're going to have to give me a parking place right in the front of the doughnut shop." And sure enough, after eight trips around the block, there was a parking space right in the front!'

Count on it: you will face temptation every day. It's part of the spiritual battle you must fight if you're to grow in grace. Now, those who don't trust God are tempted too, but they are spiritually defenceless because they don't have His weapons to fight with. But it need not be so. God has provided us with spiritual armour, enabling us to suit up, stand up, show up for battle and win the day. So each morning when you get up, be sure to '... put on the full armour of God, so that ... you may be able to stand your ground ...'

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

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