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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ March 2025

A season of renewal, and transformation

Lent is a time to draw closer to God and prepare us for the joy of Easter. As we fast, pray, and seek God's presence, we are reminded that true discipleship extends beyond ourselves. This year people across Bath and Wells are taking part in the Lent Cross Challenge, a simple daily focus in the 40 days leading up to Easter which aims to keep the cross at the heart of Lent. Churches in the Ilchester with Northover, Limington, Yeovilton and Podimore Benefice will be taking part in the challenge.

Rector of the benefice, The Revd Bruce Faulkner says, "It gives us the opportunity for personal reflection. A chance to think more about the cross, our Christian symbol and to think of it, not just as a symbol, but something that we're called to in deeper ways. We are not called to climb up onto a cross and be a martyr, but we are able to offer of ourselves in love to the gospel.

"Taking part in the Lent Cross Challenge gives us the opportunity



Spot, find, discover, make, bake or create a cross shape each day during Lent.

to ask ourselves what the shape of our own cross might be.

What 'shape' might it be for each of us as we offer our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice sent in the power of the Spirit to live and work to the praise and glory of God."

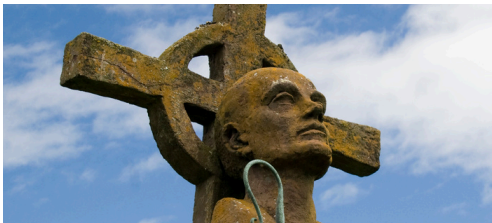
As we journey through Lent we reflect on our own faith and think about how our lives may reflect the hope of Christ and open our hearts to God's call, to deepen our commitment to His work, and become vessels of His grace in the world around us.

More information about the Lent Cross Challenge can be found on the diocesan website: bathandwells.org.uk/lent-cross-challenge-2025

News in brief

Holy Island artist residency

The Revd Gill Sakakini, Pioneer Minister for the Arts based in Shepton Mallet, has been invited to take up a residency on Holy Island, Northumbria in May. During her time on the island Gill will be working on a creative project that blends history, spirituality, and community collaboration. As part of the initiative, Gill will also link students from St Cuthbert's School in Wells with a school in Lowick, near Holy Island, to create a shared learning experience.



40 years of friendship

Forty years ago, six churches—Badgworth, Biddisham, Christon, Compton Bishop, Loxton, and Weare joined together to form Crook Peak United Parish. Four decades later the community celebrated this special milestone with a time of joy and reflection.

Monument restoration

After nearly ten years the Willis Monument, an 18th-century Grade II* listed structure in the churchyard of St. Edward's Church, Goathurst, has been restored. The project team overcame numerous financial hurdles to enable the restoration to take place. Churchwarden Brenda Smith says, "I have become increasingly aware of God's timing in the restoration and how important it is for us to respond to opportunities positively when they arise, rather than be daunted!"



A whole series of events designed to honour history, faith, and fellowship took place, giving thanks for the past four decades that the benefice has stood together in faith and the strength it has through a shared a purpose and connection.

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Open yourself afresh

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

Did you ever wonder where the term 'Lent' comes from? The word is a gift from our Anglo-Saxon past. It means 'lengthen', a naming of the longed-for reality of this time of year when we become aware that, at last, the short days of winter are coming to an end, the nights are drawing out and the days are getting longer, they're lengthening.

As well as naming what we're seeing, Lent has its meaning within the life of the Church. Its season of 40 days is a time of preparation for the coming of Easter, our annual celebration of Jesus rising from the dead. It reflects the 40 days that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness after his baptism. So for much of Christian history it's been a time of prayer and fasting - the origin of our 'giving something up for Lent'.

Lent developed from the practice of the early Church. Back then, as still happens today, converts entered into the faith through baptism. The main time that baptism took place was Easter Eve, the night before Easter Sunday. Lent marked the final, intensive 40 days of preparation experienced by those to be baptised (known as catechumens)

in readiness for their embarking fully on their new life with Christ.

The time to get ready for Lent is now. This year its first day, Ash Wednesday, falls on the 5th March. There's so much we can do to bring this season home into our hearts. Why not join your church's Lent Group? Read one of the Lent books available at this time of year? Take something up? Commit to a regular time of prayer? Find out about getting confirmed?

Lent is a rich gift to us to go deeper into our Christian life. As the days lengthen and the light comes I encourage you to use this time to open yourself afresh to the one who comes to us afresh with new life at Easter - the risen Lord, Jesus Christ himself.

Bishop Michael



Growing closer to God

The Growing Good Toolkit is a free six session course which some churches are using this Lent to explore the connection between social action, discipleship and church growth.



Fr Brendan Clover, priest in charge of All Saints & St Saviour's Weston-super-Mare and Vicar of St John's Clevedon is using the Toolkit in Lent.

Why did you decide to use the Growing Good Toolkit for Lent?

The resource provides tools to help us think critically about growth and mission in our community, building on an already growing congregation.

How can this resource help churches grow?

It encourages us to think outside the box about evangelism and discipleship. But more than just a resource, it fosters important Spirit-led conversations.

Can anyone join in?

This isn't just a clergy-led initiative but something the whole church can engage with. When that happens there's shared ownership and a stronger commitment to growth.

Would you recommend the Growing Good Toolkit?

Yes. Lent is a time for reflection, and the Growing Good Toolkit provides a structured way for churches to think about mission and community engagement.

[Hear more from Brendan at bathandwells.org.uk/March-Manna-interview](https://bathandwells.org.uk/March-Manna-interview)

Revd Eleanor King, Vicar The Quantock Villages, used the Growing Good Toolkit in one of the churches in the benefice.

How useful was it in a rural setting?

It provided a way to explore mission and hospitality in a structured way. It helped the team develop an action plan with fresh ideas for bringing the community together and welcoming visitors and families and proved a vital resource in strengthening local engagement and fostering a renewed sense of purpose. It also helped the church to identify the gifts of their community.

Find out more about the Growing Good Toolkit

<https://shorturl.at/sVEOD>

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