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Week ending 19 December 2025

## Connect

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The bulletin for clergy, lay leaders and all who are the Church in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

### Bishop Michael's Christmas Message

This year, Bishop Michael's Christmas message was filmed in Yeovil. He met members of the St Peter's church family, spent time with the pupils and staff of Kingfisher Primary School and visited the new housing estate in Lufton on the western edge of the town.

Watch the video message below, or read Bishop Michael's Christmas message in full [on the diocesan website](#).

Bishop Michael received a warm welcome from everyone he met in Yeovil. [Read more about the work taking place at St Peter's and the other places he visited](#), and the volunteers supporting it.



## Sharing a message of hope and welcome to all

The Rt Revd Arun Arora, co-lead Bishop for Racial Justice for the Church of England has created a poster campaign to share the message of hope and welcome to all this Christmas. The posters are designed to tell people the good news of Jesus' birth and the love he brought into the world for all. [Read more about the posters and download them](#)

New figures published by the national digital team, suggest nearly one in two UK adults will attend a service or event in 2025. Traffic to AChurchNearYou.com (ACNY), the Church's national church-finder, is surging, with public hits reaching 891,000. [Find out more on the Church of England website.](#)

The short social media film below from the Church of England which invites people of all ages and backgrounds to come and celebrate the joy, hope and love of Christmas in their local church, has been seen nearly 2 million times across social media. Entitled 'Christmas isn't Cancelled' the film features more than 20 voices from across the country.





## Thousands gather for online Collective Worship

More than 6,000 pupils and staff from schools across the region came together for a Collective Worship led by Bishop Michael. Joining together as one big family for a time of shared reflection and celebration Children from 47 schools right across the diocese - from Timberscombe to Combe Down in Bath united online to share in the good news of Christmas.

Bishop Michael's reflection focused on the Christmas message from the angels and to the shepherds gathered in the fields outside Bethlehem. He encouraged the children to consider what it means to be an angel today – a messenger of God, bringing God's message of hope, and love to the world. [Find out more about the morning.](#)



## Racial Justice Report

A detailed report sharing the findings of Racial Justice Consultant Anira Khokhar, has been published.

Funded by the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit, Anira carried out a series of in-depth interviews and listening sessions with people across the diocese. Participants included clergy, lay leaders, and parish volunteers, among others, to explore issues around racial justice.

[Read more and download the report.](#)



## Treated like a real family and not strangers

As part of her work with the Diocese of Bath and Wells Anira interviewed people in various roles, from different backgrounds and ethnicities across the diocese, with the aim of identifying and addressing barriers to equity and inclusion.

One of those Anira spoke to as part of the audit was Revd Rona Stuart-Bourne in Milborne Port. The conversations they had not only informed the work Anira is doing they also prompted Rona to think more about inclusion in Milborne Port. [Read more about Rona and Fregil's story.](#)



## Shining a light on social action and advocacy

Bath and Wells has been represented at two national events aimed at shining a light on social action and advocacy. The events brought together church leaders, politicians and practitioners. Deanery and Parish Support Adviser, Claire Horton is also our Magnificat Advocate, representing those parishes which include areas that are high on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Claire says, "It was a privilege and honour to have been invited by Bishop Rob Wickham, CEO of the Church Urban Fund (CUF) to a service at Westminster Abbey and a Christmas reception at No 10 Downing Street." Claire has been working with CUF, on behalf of our diocese and the Magnificat parishes, looking at how to support grass roots social action and advocacy nationally.

[Read the full story](#)



## Preparing for prayer

The team have been very busy this week, not filling up Christmas stockings, but filling the prayer boxes that will be made available to deaneries throughout our 2026 year of prayer.

There are a host of resources in each box to create prayer spaces in a whole range of settings and share the message of prayer in way that works for different people and contexts.

You'll be hearing a lot more about the prayer boxes in the New Year, but if you are interested in having access to a prayer box in your deanery (there is one for each archdeaconry), please email [rich.miles@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:rich.miles@bathwells.anglican.org) or find out more at [bathandwells.org.uk/prayer](https://bathandwells.org.uk/prayer).



## Equipping for ministry 2026

The outline of training events for 2026 is [now available on our website](#). All events can be found on the [events and training calendar](#), with registration links included within each calendar listing. A full [outline of events for 2026 can be found here](#).

Resourcing lay ministries in your church

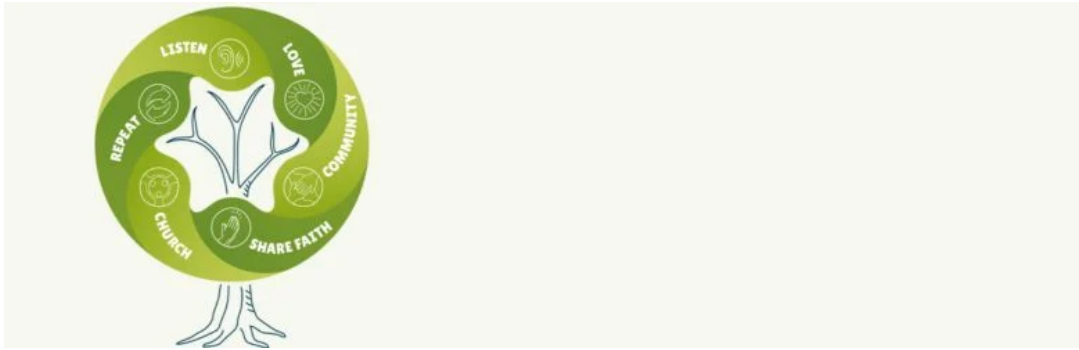
Please note that on Wednesday 5 March, there will be a day to help you equip and resource lay ministry, aimed at clergy, Readers and potential course facilitators. [You can register here via the online form](#).

If you have those in your church looking to become Lay Pastoral Assistants or Lay Worship Assistants - but you are not in a position to run a course - there are places available beginning Thursday 12 February for central run courses in Wells, part of the Lay Ministry Pathway.

## Sarum short courses partnership

Following the success of the autumn programme, we are again partnering with Sarum College to provide a limited number of places at a reduced cost to the diocese on specific short courses. Places will be offered free of charge to eligible participants as part of the Equipping for Ministry programme.

For more information about training and development, please visit our [Equipping for Ministry pages](#) or contact [training@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:training@bathwells.anglican.org)



## New Worshipping Community

Richard Priestley, Christian Community Development Adviser for Bath and Wells, asks us to consider those who may come to our churches for the first time this Christmas. He says, "As we enjoy the Advent and Christmas there will be many people who visit churches for the first time or at least first time this year.

"I wonder what sort of gathering would help them encounter Jesus and reflect on their faith in the coming months. Many do not come regularly due to lack of faith but because what they expect or know happens each week simply does not connect with where they are in life."

Would you like to know how to make connections with people and listen to their story?

Would you like to join with others to explore ways to develop a new worshipping community in 2026?

If so contact [Richard Priestley](#) Christian Community Development Adviser for the diocese.

## The art of thinking together

Saturday 10 January  
St Mary's Church Hall, Frome  
10:00 - 16:00

A workshop from [Mary's House, in Frome](#). Mary's House is a new



The workshop will use dialogue and questioning to reflect on how our minds

community for the spiritually curious, exploring what Christian wisdom might teach us about how to live more fully in an uncertain world.

work. The event will be led by Simon Keyes, former Professor of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding at the University of Winchester. [Find out more and book online.](#)



## Chaplaincy visits – Hinkley Point C and 40 Commando RM

On a recent visit to West Somerset, Bishop Michael and Archdeacon of Taunton, Simon Hill were delighted to spend time at both Hinkley Point C construction site and 40 Commando RM. Their first stop was Hinkley Point C – there, they took part in the licensing of Rev Andrew Hillier as Lead Chaplain and welcomed Heather Culshaw as Night Chaplain.

Later in the day, Bishop Michael and Simon visited 40 Commando RM, where Chaplain Rev Stuart Rason RN, Padre 40 Commando RM, gave a detailed tour of the base and explained their work.

[Read the full story.](#)





## Safeguarding cover during the Christmas period

Safeguarding Manager, Ben Goodhind will be on annual leave from Monday 22 December until Monday 5 January.

The Safeguarding team will provide cover until Christmas day. The team will then be on leave until Friday 2 January. During this time please use the [Safe.Guarding@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:Safe.Guarding@bathwells.anglican.org) email address so that all staff can access emails.

From 25 December until 1 January cover will be provided via the out of hours service 0303 003 1111.

Please note urgent concerns still need to be reported within 24 hours. In the event of a serious incident Ben will be contactable via the Archdeacons or Bishop Michael.

Responses to non-urgent enquiries will be provided after 5 January.



## Clergy Housing – Christmas emergency guidance

Should you require any housing assistance during the Christmas period when Flourish House is closed, the Property team have created an emergency list of contractors. All the contractors have offered to provide cover and have instructions to make safe in the first instance. The list indicates when each person is available.

To access the list and for more information regarding emergencies during the Christmas holiday, please visit the [Clergy Housing section of the diocesan website](#).

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## The Joy of Christmas

Across our diocese, church communities are sharing the joy of Christmas in so many different ways and with so many different people. Carols have been sung in churches, in the street, in schools, pubs, on the railway station, and in care homes.

Alongside the Christingle services, Advent events and times of worship we have also shared the good news in other ways, through Christmas lunches, get togethers, community events, with moments of welcome and generosity that have brought people together.

Here is a snapshot of just a few of the wonderful things taking place.





## In brief

- Worshipping with the Creed. Sunday 18 January 2026, 12.30pm at Wells Cathedral. A conversation exploring the ongoing meaning, use, and relevance of the Nicene Creed, with Professor Morwenna Ludlow and The Reverend Dr Mark Smith. This talk takes place in the Education Room, and follows the 10.30am Cathedral Eucharist Admission included with entry to the Cathedral: no booking required.
- A new national clergy group for visually impaired has been set up. Clergy who live with a visual impairment are being invited to join the new support group. The group which meets on Zoom, is aimed at offering support as well as sharing tech and techniques used to navigate ministry with a visual impairment. To find out more, contact Rev John Beauchamp at [john.beauchamp@london.anglican.org](mailto:john.beauchamp@london.anglican.org).
- Wells Cathedral is seeking a new member to join its Fabric Advisory Committee. This voluntary, part time role offers the opportunity to support the care, conservation and future planning of one of England's most significant historic buildings. Find out more and apply via [the Cathedral website](#)
- St Swithun's Church, Bathford is removing their redundant, no longer working organ. They are offering the parts to anyone in the diocese who may want them. If you would like to discuss this please get in touch with [Liz Townsend](#).

If you have news to share, tag us on your social media channel or [email the Communications team](#).

## Joining together in virtual song

Three Church of England primary schools in Bath and North East Somerset have found a creative way to celebrate Christmas this year. Instead of meeting at a combined service they have chosen to unite by singing and joining their voices on film.

The schools are all part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. Emily Massey, CEO of The Partnership Trust said, "One of the benefits of being a Multi-Academy Trust is the ability to share ideas and resources. [Find out more about the recording of the song](#).

# Three of the Church Schools of The Partnership Trust have been working together to learn a song for Christmas



## Following the star to Bethlehem

This December, primary school children in the Diocese of Bath and Wells have been taking part in the 'Journey to Bethlehem'. Hosted by churches in Quantock Deanery at Blackmore Farm near Cannington for five local schools; by West Somerset churches on Withycombe Farm for schools from Watchet, Dunster and Minehead and at a new location in Westbury-sub-Mendip. As well as the Seven Sowers Benefice team at Staple Farm, where pupils from Curry Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp and Thurlbear Primary School joined the journey.

[Read the reflection](#) from



## 400-year-old church bells restored

The ancient bells from St John's Church in Biddisham, near Axbridge in Somerset, have been restored and returned to the church following their restoration.

A fundraising campaign was launched, and in June this year, sufficient funds had been raised for restoration work to begin. The bells were removed for repair, marking the first time they had left the church since the 1870's.

They are the only remaining complete set made by Richard Purdue, a renowned bell founder whose individual bells can be found in Westminster Abbey. In November



## Bringing Christmas cheer to Hinkley

Pupils from St John and St Francis Church School, Bridgwater have been bringing Christmas cheer to the workforce at Hinkley Point C construction site. Members of the KS2 choir donned their Christmas jumpers and hats and together with Father Christmas sang a medley of festive songs for some of the workforce on site.

Mrs Edwards, Music Lead at the school, said, "Our children were truly amazing and made our whole school community proud. They sang their little hearts out and sounded so beautiful.

The school said a huge

Steve Gillan, Headteacher  
of Thurlbear Primary  
School.

villagers gathered at St  
John's Church to view the  
newly restored bells and  
take part in a rededication  
ceremony ahead of their  
return to the bell tower.

thank you to everyone  
who generously made a  
donation to the school. In  
total they received a  
fantastic £1,689.35.

### **Diocese of Bath and Wells**

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