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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ July 2024

## A time to celebrate

What a joy it is to come together to celebrate. Wedding season is upon us and across Bath and Wells this summer, churches will be the scene of couples pledging their lives to one another. But it also a time for us to celebrate those who minister in the church, both our ordained ministers and those who minister in other ways.

In June, colleagues, family and friends came together for the ordination of our new deacons and priests at Wells Cathedral. St Paul's Weston-super-Mare was the venue for our Celebration of Lay Ministries service which saw people from across the diocese come together to give thanks for all that lay people give to the life of the church and to their community.

In May, many of our women priests, past and present, came together to mark the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women priests. Our PCCs and Treasurers have also been coming together at Wells Cathedral for an



Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women priests.

Evensong with Bishop Michael, followed by refreshments at the Bishop's Palace. "These are all special occasions and an important reminder of how we all serve our God and His Church in a host of ways. In Bath and Wells we are blessed with the gifts of so many people – from those who lead, including ordained ministers, Readers and those who serve in other ways, from mowing the churchyard, to serving refreshments. Our church life is richer for all these gifts and it is important that we take time to cherish them and nurture them as we seek to grow our church and transform our communities together."

# News in brief

## Youthful bell ringing

11 year-old Sophie Taylor from Locking has become one of the youngest elected members of a bell ringers association in the country. Sophie, who rings the bells at Locking Church, near Weston-super-Mare, discovered her passion for bell ringing a year ago, inspired by her father, James. She says, "I found it fascinating, and I loved the history. So, I asked him if I could have a go and after I tried it, I fell in love with ringing."



## Church welcomes new congregation

Around 100 people came together at St James's Church, Yeovil recently for the first gathering of Mar Thoma Church, a reformed Orthodox Christian denomination, rooted in the province of Kerala, India. Some members of the church in the Yeovil area were looking for a place to

## Church Tent returns

The Church Tent returned to the Bath and West Show last month, with a Caring for Creation theme. Visitors were able to access resources and find out how we can care for creation. The tent was staffed by volunteers from local churches who offered free tea and coffee to visitors. There was a drawing wall where people could post their prayers, Bible Chat mats to colour in, as well as a large version, created by the Revd Andy Gray, to explore and enjoy.



hold regular worship and approached St James'. Mark Felstead, Lay Worship Assistant, said, "This was a wonderful opportunity, warmly welcomed by our vicar and Bishop Michael, for which the Mar Thoma expressed their enormous gratitude."

Find out more on these and other stories at [bathandwells.org.uk/news](http://bathandwells.org.uk/news)

# A richness of ministry

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

If we're all alike we tend to think the same. This can be comfortable and reassuring - 'Everyone around here sees things just like I do'. But it doesn't help us think out of the box or worse, spot risks and dangers of which we're unaware - 'Crumbs we never saw that one coming!'. For this reason, companies and all kinds of organisations are seeking to become more diverse. Having differing viewpoints, skills and abilities is increasingly recognised to grow ability to think not only more widely but more effectively too.

Recognising diversity has been very much part of our life here in our Diocese of Bath & Wells recently. Back in May we acclaimed the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. It's almost impossible now to imagine what our church would be like without the contribution of women throughout the ordained ministry. At the end of June the 'Celebration of Lay Ministries' held at St Paul's Weston-super-Mare saw us affirm, thank and bless the many different roles and responsibilities that lay people are undertaking across our churches and in local communities – from leading worship to pastoral care, ministry with children and young people to

preaching and teaching the faith. Again, it's almost impossible to imagine what our churches would be like without such richness. Our hope is that the diversity we've been honouring will only flourish and grow. For it's essential if we're to bring the light of the Gospel to everyone in our communities – and especially those we find hard to connect with. For none of us alone, either individually or as a group, has the ability to reach everyone. All of us are needed. It's for this reason that one of the priorities we're commending across our diocese is 'shared local ministry'. This recognizes that everyone, everywhere, has a contribution to make. Now surely that's something to celebrate!

Bishop Michael



# Celebrating 30 years

The Revd Jo Stobart, St Mary's Ilminster, was one of the team behind the recent service of celebration of the ordination of women priests at Wells Cathedral.



A defining moment for Jo was seeing her name on her church's Clergy Board.

## Why do you think it is import to mark this anniversary?

Significant milestones are always a good opportunity to reflect on where you've been and where you're going. So, this thirtieth anniversary was a chance for all of us in Bath and Wells to celebrate the many gifts and richness that women have brought to ordained ministry over this time.

## What does it mean to you personally?

In 1994, I had just left University and was working as a primary school teacher. I had no sense that ordained ministry would ever be on my agenda. But God, as God so often does, had other plans. This service of celebration was my opportunity to acknowledge the deep gratitude I feel to the women who were pioneers, whose faith, courage, and perseverance made it possible for me, thirty years on, to live out a

vocation that gives me such joy.

## What are your hopes for the future of ministry in Bath & Wells?

My longing is that as people look at our ministers, whether lay or ordained, they encounter the richness of all God's people, a wide variety of role models, who will help them to believe that God just might be calling them too. In terms of patterns of work, family roles are changing rapidly. I hope that ministry can keep up with these changes.

## How was the celebration at Wells Cathedral?

If you have the opportunity enrol on the foundation course do it, you will learn so much. I'm learning so much and I never expected that. It's good for us to move out of our comfort zone and to explore different possibilities and aspects of prayer life because there is so much more to it than shutting your eyes and bowing your head.

[Hear more from Jo at \[bathandwells.org.uk/celebrating-30-years\]\(https://bathandwells.org.uk/celebrating-30-years\)](https://bathandwells.org.uk/celebrating-30-years)

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